

# The Wild Man of Cape Cod

By FRED MacISAAC

*William Warburton had to have those bonds at any cost—but in the price he did not reckon robbery, kidnaping and murder*

## LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

STEVE COBB was fully aware that with his father's death and the subsequent loss of the Cobb Concrete Company to the unscrupulous William Warburton that the bulk of his fortune was gone. So Steve decided that in the future his life was to consist of "plain living and high thinking." Whereupon Steve went to live at a simple little shack which he had on Cape Cod, adjoining his old family estate, now owned by the Warburtons.

But Steve had one possession remaining from his former financial wealth—a block of Cobb Company bonds. These securities Warburton is extremely anxious to buy or to procure at almost any cost and by any means, fair or foul. His anxiety is based on the inconvenience this single

holding will cause when he wants free rein to manage the Cobb Company. Warburton sends his "trouble man," Frank Hutton, to get hold of the bonds. He encounters Steve at the hut, and they have a desperate fight, resulting in Hutton's death. Steve had unintentionally killed him. Wondering how he will dispose of the crook's body, Steve swims out in the sea late at night, taking the corpse with him.

On returning to his shack, Steve finds the place in an overturned condition. The bonds are missing! Immediately Steve makes for Warburton's mansion, enters stealthily in an attempt to retrieve the bonds, and finds himself in the bedroom of Mrs. Warburton. They are surprised during their talk together by Mr. Warburton, who almost

He whipped a revolver from his pocket



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shoots Steve. But Steve manages to leave unharmed. Still believing that Warburton has the bonds, Steve contrives to take from the mails a registered envelope which Warburton has sent to his New York office. But to his sorrow, Steve learns that the envelope does not contain the missing bonds. Meeting Lucinda, Warburton's daughter, on the beach the next day, Steve is chided by her for apparently "visiting" her step-mother. Steve denies any attachment, but his denial does not seem to satisfy Lucinda.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE VILLAGE SLEUTH.

HE cast a backward glance along the shore and observed that the green yawl was beating into the harbor. He grinned as he wondered if the remarkable Mrs. Warburton had made a date with its owner for tonight.

As he was passing the post office, Eben Cobb, a remote relative, came out of the Souvenir store opposite which he owned and beckoned. "Hey, Steve. Want to see you a minute."

Eben was a typical Cape character, a man of sixty who wore policeman's suspenders over his shirt and was always coatless. Upon the right suspender was pinned a carefully shined silver badge which read Cobbport Chief of Police. Eben was not only Chief but the police force as well. As the job paid a pittance, he earned a living running a souvenir and notion shop in a village which was off the state road and therefore not much frequented by tourists. Incidentally his souvenirs were badly chosen and slow moving.

"Got to ax you questions," he stated importantly. "Police business."

Steve grinned. "Fire away," he invited.

"Wall, it seems that a man named Frank Hutton, whose a guest of Mr. Warburton's, left there last night and ain't been seen hair or hide of."

"You don't say?"

"Yes siree," said the Chief emphatically. "And Mr. Warburton was in here personally and talked to me. He suspects foul play, he does."

"I'm shocked," said Steve gravely.

"Seems he set out to call on you," said

the Chief, pulling reflectively at his gray goatee and gazing sharply at Steve with his small pale blue eyes.

"Not likely. Don't know him."

"He comes down here 'bout eleven o'clock and he asks the gas station boy where you lived."

"Sort of late for calling, eh?"

Eben nodded. "That's what I ben thinkin'. Howsomever, he had your house pinted out to him, and he was seen going up that way. And nobody has seen him since, Steve." This was said most dramatically.

"Eleven o'clock," remarked Steve. "Well, now, Eben, I can't help you. I didn't sleep in the house last night. I went up on the hummock with a blanket like I often do. You know that."

"Yep. You know it's my duty to investigate."

"Sure. And how you love it," Steve said with a grin.

"Now about this robbery at your house."

"Robbery?"

Eben cackled. He was a wisp of a man swelled with his own importance.

"Ain't nothing gets by me. I seen Myra Sears." He cocked his head to one side like a cheeky sparrow. "Myra says she seen a light in your place and she went up and woke you up and told you there were robbers. You went down there—"

"And there was nobody there," said Steve tartly.

"That's what you told her—but Myra says she heard a racket and voices."

"Myra was using her imagination. She came to the house and saw there was nobody in it."

"That's your story."

"Eben," said Steve sternly. "I'm going to grab your whiskers and pull them out by the roots if you insinuate—"

"I ain't insinuating," Eben declared hastily. "But it's very suspicious, it seems to me."

"You seem to insinuate that a guest of Mr. Warburton's went down and broke into my house. Isn't that absurd?"

"I ain't sayin' it was this Mr. Hutton. Don't seem likely—"

"**Y**OU'RE investigating the disappearance of Hutton. Whether or not there was a burglary at my house is no affair of yours unless I lodge a charge."

"Maybe it wasn't burglary. Maybe Mr. Hutton that was inquiring for you went up to your place and you and him had a ruction—"

Steve grasped the gray goatee and twisted it until the chief of police howled.

"It's not likely that a guest of Mr. Warburton would call on a man he didn't know at eleven o'clock at night," the young man declared. "Forget it."

"Wall," said Eben doggedly. "I ben up to your place, and you not being to home, I looked round. I seen evidence of things being broken. I seen glass, lots of broken glass in your ash barrel. And this is what I dug out of the door jamb with my penknife."

He held up between thumb and forefinger a leaden bullet.

Steve gasped but instantly rallied. "You chump," he said, laughing, "that's probably been there for ages. I never noticed it myself. I give you credit for being a smart investigator, though, Eben. Not one policeman in a thousand would have dug out that bullet."

"I ain't no fool," said Eben complacently. "I keep up to date by reading detective stories."

"Now let me tell you something," declared Steve. "See that green yawl? She was here last night but gone this morning when I woke up. That ought to suggest something to a bright mind like yours."

"What?" demanded Eben.

"Not finding me at home, if he ever did call on me, Hutton might have gone out to the yawl. No doubt its owner is a friend of Warburton's. And the yawl might have taken him down to Woods Hole where he could get a train for somewhere."

"By gosh," exclaimed Eben. "I bet that's what happened. I'll go out and have a talk with the folks on that boat."

Steve, however, was considerably perturbed as he went on to his house. There had been plenty of breakage which he had swept up and deposited in the ash barrel. The bullet was one of those fired by Hutton, of course. He had a clear case of self defense in the killing of Hutton, and he had destroyed it by concealing the killing and getting rid of the body. The frightful part of it all was that his defense of his bonds had been to no purpose. They were gone. And if a thick-headed local constable like Eben could discover as much as he had turned up, what might a competent police detective find.

"I'm a double-distilled fool," Steve said dismally as he pushed open his door and entered his tiny house.

**T**HE offices of William Warburton and Company occupied half a floor of a high building on Broadway near Wall Street. At ten on the morning following the events of the last chapter, Mr. Warburton entered his private office and there filed in after him his three partners, if men who received a very small percentage of the annual profits of the concern could be called his partners.

"Have an easy trip from the Cape, sir?" asked Partner James Worth solicitously.

"Tedious, but swift and satisfactory. I left the Cape landing field at seven and here I am. What's the Washington report, Worth?"

Mr. Worth, who was a spruce young man with a brown mustache, smiled complacently. "Splendid, sir. I've had an interview with the attorney general in person, discussed the new Securities Act and he agrees with me that there is no longer the slightest reason for holding up legitimate stock issues since the perilous clauses in the former Securities Act have been eliminated."

"Oh," said Warburton thoughtfully. "Mr. Brown."

"Prospectuses on the Cobb Concrete Company are prepared, sir, and I have gone over them. They are quite satisfactory. There is every reason for an increase of

capitalization from ten to twenty-five million dollars and our banks are ready to underwrite the issue. With the vast boom in building industries due to the Federal expenditure of billions, all development work, plants, imports and such are perfectly justifiable and sure to be very profitable. The N. R. A. is much pleased with our intention to double our working forces at a ten per cent increase in wages. I had a talk with the President of the Mammouth Bank who holds a good many of our notes and he was very much pleased."

"Nevertheless," said Warburton, "we've got to hold things up. We're not ready."

"But why not?" demanded Mr. Brown. "I have everything ready. The underwriting is arranged as I have explained. It's a matter of engraving the stock certificates—that's all."

"Hold things up. I didn't expect the Washington end would be cleared up so soon—" To himself he added: "I hoped it wouldn't."

Brown looked very grave. "We can't hold things up," he persisted. "We're extended like the devil. "The Cobb Company is the only thing we have which we can put over in a big way at this time. We have three millions in loans coming due in four weeks. I've had no intimation from the banks that they will be called, but if we don't float the Cobb Issues, they are apt to think there is something wrong and call our loans pronto."

Warburton bit his lip. "I expect to be ready in a week or ten days," he said. "Something has come up that I want to look into—"

"Nothing I hope which affects the Cobb Issues," said the third partner, Mr. Price, anxiously. "It's our ace, Mr. Warburton."

"Nothing serious. Go back to your desks, gentlemen. That's all."

After they had gone, the president of the company sat at his desk staring into vacancy. His business was "Other People's Business." His firm created nothing, but hung about like a vulture to swoop upon an industry which was in difficulties

and which promised juicy pickings. The Cobb company had been a prize—nothing wrong with it except depression and need of immediate cash. It had taken all that Warburton possessed and had been able to borrow to push the Cobb Company into the precipice, but its tangible assets were great and after he had floated the new securities he could pay off his loans and retain control of the concern without an actual cent of cash invested.

His was a magnificent office. Outside a score of clerks and typists worked steadily. The bright young men who were his partners knew nothing of the seamy side of the firm. That was all under Warburton's hat. It looked like a powerful legitimate business enterprise, that of Warburton's, but the head of the firm took what he wanted any way he could get it and he had employees too disreputable to show their noses on lower Broadway.

**E**VERYTHING connected with the Cobb Corporation had seemed set.

As far as the loans were concerned, the banks, knowing the situation, would not press Warburton for them until Congress had made it possible to carry on re-financing without peril to the financiers. But if the Cobb Issues did not come out at the first opportunity, they'd jump the firm of Warburton and Company.

Warburton had been in possession of the Cobb Company for a month before the horrid discovery was made of the existence of a forgotten bond issue which throttled expansion. Under existing laws, ignorance was no excuse for misrepresentation. If Warburton refinanced without having secured and retired the bonds, he could be sent to jail.

There had been another six weeks in an effort to locate Steve Cobb who owned the bonds, whom Warburton had assumed to be laying low thirsting for revenge and waiting for his opportunity. There was the bright light of hope when it was found that Steve was loafing at Cobbport and that the bonds, apparently, were in his possession there.

And then Hutton, who rarely failed, had failed and disappeared. And Cobb laughed at offers to purchase his securities and impudently inaugurated an affair with the wife of the new owner of the Cobb Company.

Warburton, sitting down to dinner on the Cape, had been informed by phone that Washington had given its "O. K." and all that was necessary was his consent to the flotation of the big stock issue. It had brought him post haste to New York to hold up the business until he knew where he stood.

Unused to being thwarted, Warburton fumed as he sat at his desk. He refused to answer telephone calls and scowled at his secretaries who dared to open his door. Finally the door opened and a heavy footed, heavy jawed man with a derby hat and big hands walked into the Presence.

"Detective Sergeant Murphy from Police Headquarters," he announced.

"How in hell did you get in here and what in hell do you want?" roared the capitalist.

"I forced my way in, if you want to know," said the cop truculently. "I been waiting out there for fifteen minutes and them rabbits you have working for you was afraid to tell you I had to see you."

Warburton forced a smile. "Sorry," he said in a different tone. "I was busy and didn't want to be interrupted, but I am always at the service of the authorities."

"That's fine," grinned Sergeant Murphy. "You got a man in this office named Frank Hutton?"

"Not exactly. That is the name of one of my field men."

"Where is he now, Mr. Warburton?"

"I would like to find out," said the millionaire eagerly. "I haven't heard from him for several days."

The policeman took a big envelope from his pocket, opened it and drew forth a salt water stained wallet with the initials F.H. on it, and a mass of soggy papers.

"Some of these are visiting cards with his name and this address on them," the officer stated. "They deciphered that somehow down at headquarters."

Warburton turned slowly pale.

"What does this mean?" he asked anxiously.

"The Coast Guard boat, Tecumseh, picked up a corpse in Nantucket Sound yesterday. He was clothed, boots and all, and no water in his stomach so he must have been killed. Big bruise on his forehead. Murdered and thrown overboard from somewhere."

"Good God!"

"Hadn't been in the water more than twenty-four hours by the looks of him. Think you could identify him?"

Warburton shuddered. "I—I don't know."

"When and where did you last see him?"

"WHY—why, he was at my house at Cobbport on Cape Cod. He—er—left the house—this is Friday—it was Tuesday evening for—er—a walk. He didn't return. I notified the local chief of police that he had disappeared and asked him to make inquiries, the next day."

"Cobbport. Is that on the south side of Cape Cod?"

"Yes. On the Nantucket Sound."

"It's him all right," said Murphy with satisfaction. "Sure. They found the body off Nantucket. Think of that now!"

"It's most distressing!" said Warburton from the heart.

"It lets us out," said Murphy with satisfaction. "The feller was murdered all right, but in Massachusetts. You come with me and identify him and then we hand Massachusetts a nice murder mystery and good luck to them."

"I—I'll send a man who knows Hutton with you, Sergeant. It would be too painful to me."

"Why? You and him have a quarrel?" demanded the policeman sharply.

"No, no. Not at all. I don't want to look at a partly decomposed corpse."

Murphy's suspicion vanished. "I don't think nothing of it," he declared. "But a lot of folks are like that. How about his wife and family?"

"I believe he was a bachelor."

"Well, his landlady, then. We need a couple of identifications."

Warburton pressed a buzzer. A young woman entered.

"Get me the address of Frank P. Hutton, please," requested the head of the firm.

In a moment she returned with an address typed on a slip of paper which she gave to her employer and which he handed to the officer.

"Murray Hill, eh?" commented Murphy. "That's a swank apartment house. This guy got money?"

"I believe he had considerable," replied Warburton, who ought to have known, since he had paid Hutton large sums from time to time.

"Have much cash on him when he disappeared?"

"I doubt if he had more than a few hundred."

"A few hundred," remarked the sergeant. "I was on Cape Cod once. From what I seen of the place a few hundred would look like a lot of dough to them codfish eaters. You going to be in town, Mr. Warburton?"

"I'm returning to Cobbport, Massachusetts, this afternoon."

"Oh, well, the Massachusetts cops will get in touch with you. How about this identifier?"

Warburton rang again. "Have Chase go with this officer to the morgue to identify a body believed to be Frank Hutton," he said. "Chase knows him quite well, Mr. Murphy. Will you go with this young lady?"

"Much obliged," said Murphy who sauntered out in the wake of the secretary.

It was very clear to William Warburton how his trouble man had met his death. He had been caught robbing the house of Stephen Cobb who had murdered him with a blow of his fist and had tossed the body into the sea.

It ought to be easy enough to pin the crime on young Cobb who would have to sell his bonds to secure funds for his defense, but Cobb didn't have to sell them to Warburton. There were half a dozen in-

terests which would pay big money for a chance to wreck the house of William Warburton.

Cobb, after slaying Hutton, had broken into Warburton's residence, in murderous fury. The promoter thumped his desk. Diana as usual was a liar and as usual his jealousy of her had warped his judgment. Cobb, knowing that Warburton had sent Hutton to steal and murder, had come to beat William Warburton to death. He had blundered into the wrong room and Diana, with her natural complacency, had assumed he had come to pay tribute to her charms.

He rose and walked to the window. A great liner with four funnels was moving up the river. Four red funnels. Fifty thousand tons of steel. An irresistible force. That's what he'd be in the case of Steve Cobb. Crush him to powder.

No half measures. No delay. If the police arrested Cobb for murder they would ruin Warburton and Company. He put on his hat and on his way out of the office said to the girl at the information desk;

"I have an engagement which will detain me for some hours. I'll return here for a short time before taking a plane to the Cape."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LUCINDA MEETS A CYNIC.

"DO you mean to tell me you are one hundred years old?" exclaimed Lucinda Warburton in a tone of awe.

General Seth Burton grinned and his white porcelains gleamed in the sunlight.

"I told you nothing of the kind," he declared. "I'm a hundred and one years old. I'm old enough to be your great-great-grandfather, young woman, and maybe I am, fur all I know. I was a great man with the ladies in my day."

Lucinda giggled. "You're an old sinner," she declared. "But I like you."

"Does my old eyes good to look at you," replied the General gallantly. "As purty a piece as I've seen for many a day. Who's your feller?"

"I haven't any particular fellow," said Lucinda meekly.

"Wall, you grab yourself one quick. Women ain't got much time." He wagged his head sagely.

Miss Warburton, who had encountered the old gentleman abusing the workmen at her beach barrier, had introduced herself and invited him within. They were now sitting on the sand getting acquainted.

"Not much time?" she said perplexedly. "We have as much time as men. Why I read somewhere that the average woman lives longer than the average man."

"Stuff and nonsense. Oh, I seen old woman that might have been ninety, but they ought to have been dead, being without their faculties. What I mean is that a woman has to catch a man quick fore she withers and dries up into an old maid. How old are you?"

"I'm twenty."

"You ought to have been married long ago. You got mebbe five years."

"Huh," she scowled ferociously and then laughed. "I suppose you were courting girls away back in 1850 when they wore hoopskirts and were afraid to say their souls were their own and married at sixteen and had sixteen children."

"They were well brought up and didn't talk back to their elders," he said significantly.

"The poor miserable things!"

"I married my first wife in 1857. She died in 1870. We had four children. I married my second wife in 1872. Lemme see. I think we had three children. My third woman come along in 1879. She was puny and didn't last long. My fourth wife—let's see, it was in Cleveland's first administration—we didn't have no children."

"I should think not—an old man like you—"

"I was only fifty. It was her fault."

Lucinda laughed derisively.

"Say," said the General complacently, "I could beget children now only I ain't interested in women for a long time. What I mean is I'm a hundred one years old and I know all about the female sex."

"You're a hundred years behind the times," Lucinda informed him. "Modern women are beautiful till they are fifty and maybe longer and they can marry any time they like, but, if they are smart, they wouldn't be annoyed with men."

"Sez you," sneered the General. "Woman is like a flower. She blooms for a brief time and traps a man and then all she's good for is to produce children."

"You're a horrid old man. You don't know anything. Since the last good looking woman spoke to you, the sex has become the equal of the male and in some respects its superior. There are women judges, congressmen and governors of States but you probably can't read and wouldn't know that."

"I bet you don't even know that women vote."

"I was opposed to that," said the General, "on account there were too many ignorant voters already."

"Women have as good an education as man. They can talk to him on any subject—"

"They always could but they didn't know nothin'," retorted the centenarian. "I've heard of these here educated woman. There was a girl I once knew that cut off her hair and wore men's clothes and was screeching about woman suffrage—lemme see, that was back in the fifties or sixties or along there—I disremember. Her name was Mary Walker. 'I said to her father—'If you had took a stick to her when she was young, she'd have turned out decent, though mebbe she wouldn't.'"

"You mean Dr. Mary Walker? You mean to say you knew Dr. Mary Walker? Why she was the mother of woman suffrage."

"That's the only kind of mother she was then. Sure I knew her."

"You got lots of notions like these girls that go to college," said the General grimly. "You go get yourself a man quick as you can and have five or six children right away so he's have to scratch to feed and clothe them and won't have no time to chase younger and prettier women. That's the

only way to keep a husband. The sexes have been together for thousands of years and ain't changed any 'cept women is getting more brazen. All a woman is good for is to bring up children and that's all she'll ever be good for."

"**B**UT General," protested Lucinda, "haven't you heard that a girl swam the English Channel and flew an aeroplane across the Atlantic?"

"Those were old maids that were so homely they were desperate," declared the old fellow. "They only done it to catch a man. Just trying to attract attention to themselves, they were."

"You're incorrigible," she declared angrily. "I'm not trying to catch a man. I wouldn't be annoyed talking to one. I hate men."

General Burton struck at a rock with his stick and cackled sardonically.

"I'm mighty spry," he stated, "and even if I can't read the fine print of newspapers, I can see darn good and my hearing is fine. I seen you making up to Steve Cobb tother day and you was on the beach crying cause Steve wouldn't marry you, probably."

"Oh!" cried Lucinda. "Oh, you nasty, mean, contemptible old man! How dare you say I want to marry Steve Cobb. I wouldn't wipe my shoes on him. He's despicable. He's a roué and a libertine."

The old man grinned like a gnome. "That's the kind women like," he said blandly. "Heh, heh, heh. Steve's a lad after my own heart. I was a roué and a libertine and I'm proud of it."

"I was crying because I was angry—he—he was making love to my stepmother. I told him what I thought of him."

"I seen her," said the General. "I seen her like often in my time. She shakes her hips when she walks. First time I seen her come down the Street I sez to myself. 'Jezebel or Salome,' that's what I sez. Helen of Troy was like her and Cleopatra, and Lucrezia Borgia and Lola Montez. I seen Lola Montez out in California. This one is the spit and image of her. A man can tell that kind a mile away if he's a

hundred years old like me. No smart man marries them. He makes love to them. Jezebel 's the only one that got her just deserts. The dogs ate her up. Don't blame Steve, though. Don't blame him at all. Now, now, baby, don't you cry. Don't listen to a ramblin' old man."

"I'm crying because I hate her so. She's breaking my father's heart. I thank you for the word, Jezebel. That's just what she is."

"The scarlet woman," said the old man gravely. He grinned queerly. "I met lots of them. One of them made me lose millions back in the nineties. Made a fool of me, but I didn't marry her. Courtesans. Lucinda, they have all the best of it. They make their mark on the sands of time, they do. Come to think of it, those kind of women are the only ones in history whose names come down to us. The good women die unsung but the scarlet women live in history."

"That's because men write histories," said Lucinda bitterly.

"Madame Pompadour, Messaline, Sappho—I'm old; I can't remember any more of them."

**L**UCINDA eyed him reflectively. "You are a most amazing old man," she said. "I suspect you're lying about your age, but you are remarkable. And you're right. I'm going to be a famous Courtesan."

"No," said the General. "You ain't the type. Mostly they have red hair and they all have the devil in them. You're a good woman type. You grab yourself a husband."

"What kind of a man is Steve Cobb, really?" demanded Lucinda.

"A fine boy. Just like me at his age."

"Hump. Judging by your confession, you were pretty rotten. Four or five wives and lots of mistresses, no doubt."

"I," said the General proudly, "was a man. I was a soldier and a general, and I fit Indians and; when I saw a woman I wanted, I got her." His mood changed. "And what good did it do? Peace is what

a man really needs. Communion with the waves and the wind and the good earth. I'll speak to Steve about you. He might do worse."

"You will, will you?" cried Lucinda, shaking her fist at him. "Don't you dare. If you mention my name to that big idiot, I'll see that you don't live to be a hundred and two."

To her astonishment the old man seemed to crumple and his face was distorted with fear. He lifted his left arm as if to protect his face.

"No, no," he croaked. "You wouldn't hurt a poor old man. I got to live to be a hundred and two. I—I'm afraid to die."

Lucinda stared at him, filled with pity. After all, despite his amazing lucidity, he was a wretched, doddering creature who had lived a quarter of a century too long.

"I wouldn't hurt you, grandfather, for the world," she said soothingly. "I love you, really I do. I think you'll live to be a hundred fifty."

He laughed, a senile laugh. "Certainly I will," he mumbled. "I'll be the oldest man that ever lived."

She helped him to his feet and conducted him across the barrier, and then with the light of battle in her eye turned toward her home.

"I'm going to have an understanding with that Jezebel," she said aloud through clenched teeth.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### MYRA GOES THROUGH A WINDOW.

**M**R. AND MRS. BEN SEARS were entertaining visitors in their cottage in Cobbport. The hour was eight in the evening. The Sears had just had their supper which consisted of boiled eggs, borrowed from Steve Cobb, fried fish caught by Ben, hot biscuits, flour lent by Steve Cobb, and tea with cream which Myra had brought home from a visit to Steve early in the evening.

Ben Sears was "on the relief," being a member of the unemployed—permanently

unemployed—but he was saying at supper that the New Deal didn't go far enough. Nothing short of an equal distribution among the population of the nation's wealth would suit him, he declared. There ought to be a law against people like Warburton who lived in luxury while decent people couldn't make a living. The Cobbs had been just as bad. He, for one, thought Steve Cobb was getting his just desserts in being broke and having to earn a living like other people. Mr. Sears was talkative because he had a new gallon jug of gin.

As Mrs. Sears pointed out to him frequently enough, they wouldn't have to borrow the necessities of life from their neighbors if Ben would bring home the relief money instead of spending it for liquor. Myra ate silently, occasionally gazing upon her father with a frown of intense dislike.

Ben was a slab-sided, lantern-jawed, vacant-eyed man of forty-five who had the Cape Cod equivalent of the Southern hook worm. He was too lazy to go fishing until the larder was completely empty. He affected lumbago when it was desirable to dig a mess of clams. Mostly he spent his days in the shade with several other residents of Cobbport who had anarchistic tendencies.

Mrs. Sears was a very thin, very angular woman with an unattractive face and a disposition which, from years of living with Ben, had soured. She was taciturn by nature. Her ambition was to save enough money to buy a new dress. Myra, who was pretty as a picture, believed, privately, that she didn't belong to these people. She had built up quite a romance about having been stolen from charming and loving parents shortly after birth. Some day, these people who really owned her would drive up in a sixteen cylinder car and take her away from the Ben Sears. Or else Steve Cobb would make a lot of money and marry her, when she got old enough.

Upon the family circle there had intruded without warning Eben Cobb, the Cobbport chief of police, and a round red-faced Irishman introduced as Mr. Noonan,

who was a Massachusetts state detective, and who had big hands and feet and a harsh voice, but Myra thought, rather a nice twinkle in his small blue eyes.

Ben Sears, aware of numerous small speculations which might have come home to roost, turned gray when the officers entered, but it was Myra they came to see, not her father.

"Myra," said the Chief, "I want you to tell Mr. Noonan what you told me 'bout Steve Cobb."

Myra grew very white. "Steve hasn't done anything," she protested.

"I ain't said he has," replied the Chief. "It's about the other night when you thought you saw a burglar in his house."

"Why don't you talk to Steve?" she demanded.

"He ain't to home so we come over here, being as Mr. Noonan is in a hurry."

"Well," said Myra, "I was looking out my window and I thought I saw a light in his place and I knew Steve was sleeping out."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Noonan. "And why does he sleep out?"

"'Cause he likes the open air to sleep in."

"You went up on the hummock where he was asleep and woke him up," prodded the Chief.

SHE nodded dubiously. "And Steve sent me home and that's all I know about it."

"You told me different," declared the Chief.

"Look-a-here, Myra," said her father pompously. "You speak right out. I always thought there was something queer about Steve Cobb."

Mrs. Sears opened her mouth. "Because he's just about fed us for months," she sneered. "Steve's all right and you ought to be ashamed to make insinuations, Ben Sears."

"Steve went down to his house and you sneaked along after him. You heard voices and what sounded like a rumpus, eh?" demanded Eben.

"I was so scared I didn't know what I heard," said Myra, who sensed danger to her hero.

"Then what made you tell me them things?" demanded Eben angrily.

"Don't you talk like that to my daughter!" exclaimed Ben Sears. "Who do you think you are, anyway, you and your tin badge? Go back to your souvenir store and don't come bargin' into the homes of respectable citizens. This is a free country."

"Pipe down," said Noonan harshly. "I'll do the questioning. Now, young woman—"

"Don't you say a word without advice of counsel," shouted her father. "I guess I know my rights."

"Shucks," said Mrs. Sears dryly. "You tell the officers anything you know, Myra. You ain't done anything and neither has Steve Cobb."

"Well," said Myra, "I went over to find out what happened and Steve said there was nobody there and nothing had happened."

"Did you look into the house?" demanded Noonan.

She shook her head. "It was dark. He wouldn't let me come in because it was late so it wasn't proper."

"I demand to know the purpose of this inquiry," this from the head of the family.

"I don't mind telling you," said Noonan. "A murder has been committed."

"Ooooh," moaned Myra who fell off her chair in a faint. Her father and mother picked her up and carried her into the bedroom.

"She'll be all right," said Noonan who followed them to the bedroom door. "Leave her lay there. I want some words with you, Mr. Sears."

Mrs. Sears closed the bedroom door and went back to the supper table. The detective reseated himself. Sears folded his arms and struck an attitude.

In the dark of the bedroom, Myra lifted her head from her pillow, planted her feet on the floor and in a second she was through the window and departing from her house at high speed.

A glance told her that Steve's hut was dark. It was too early for him to have gone off with his blanket, so she thought she knew where he was to be found. She went swiftly down to the village. At the farther end of Main Street was the library reading-room, a one-story, three-room house where Steve often spent an evening, glancing over the Boston and New York newspapers.

Looking through the open window, she saw him. He was wearing white duck pants, a sweater and sneakers and he was reading a newspaper. There was nobody else in the reading-room and the librarian was in the other room with her back turned.

"Psst, Steve," she called. He looked up.

"Hello, Princess," he said with his cheerful grin.

"Quick, come out. Something awful has happened."

Steve rose, crossed the room, went out through the door and met her in the street.

"STEVE, do you know anything about a murder?" she demanded tensely.

"Which one? The papers are full of them."

"Down here. That awful Eben Cobb is up there at my house with a State cop and they're asking me all about the night I thought I saw a burglar in your place. When they said there was a murder I fainted, and they put me in my room and I went right out through the window."

"I take it that it was a fake faint," remarked Steve.

"Sure. I had to warn you, didn't I?"

"You precious kid. Do they want to see me?"

"Yes, but I came to warn you to flee for your life."

"I wouldn't think of it, Myra."

She grasped his hand. "Steve, you wouldn't murder anybody, would you?"

"I'm not crazy about the idea," he said.

"Don't worry, Myra. A man named Hutton has disappeared and he was asking for me around the village. I had it all out with Eben, but he must have notified the State police."

"Steve," she said in a frightened tone, "I saw lights in your house and I heard noises and voices. There was somebody there."

"Well, you tell the truth, dear, no matter what happens."

"I said I thought I did," she replied.

"That's all I'm going to tell 'em."

He took her hand. "Well, let's go beard the lions, Princess. You and I have clean consciences and right is on our side. You didn't hear voices. You were terribly excited and you thought you did."

"I didn't hear anything," said Myra staunchly. "Oh, Steve, what happened?"

"Nothing of any consequence," he said lightly. "Nothing that bothers me in the slightest degree."

He took the child's hand which was shaking.

"Snap out of it, Myra," he pleaded.

"You act guilty."

"I'm so 'fraid for you, Steve. That Mr. Noonan has awful sharp eyes. Did you—did you—"

"My conscience is as clear as a glass of water, dear. You go home, sneak back into your room and I'll light my lamp. When they see the light in my house they'll call on me."

"Well, I s'pose it's all right if you say so."

However, when the pair turned into the lane leading toward the residences of both Steve and Myra, they encountered the officers coming down the narrow road.

"That's him," cried Eben excitedly.

"She went and warned him, just as I said."

"That makes her accessory after the fact."

## CHAPTER XV.

### AN ARREST AND A RESCUE.

"EBEN," said Steve sternly, "another crack like that and I'll pull your whiskers out by the roots. Go home, Myra, and let me talk to these people. Scamper, now."

"Your name Stephen Cobb?"

"Sure. What's yours?" said Steve cheerfully.

"William Noonan, Massachusetts State officer. I've business with you."

"Come up to my humble home," requested Cobb. "You can come, too, Eben. Go to bed, Myra."

"Look here, Steve Cobb, I'm Chief of Police of this here town and don't you forget it. You can't threaten me with impunity, you can't," blustered Eben Cobb. "Myra, you go home and stay there. We got to ask you more questions and you better not pretend to faint next time."

Myra was weeping. Steve patted her shoulder kindly and pushed her along the lane ahead of him. Noonan fell into step by his side.

"Don't you be frightened, little girl," the officer said kindly. "We won't bother you any more."

Leading the way into his domicile, Steve lighted the lamp and invited his visitors to seat themselves.

Myra lingered a short distance away; but, hearing no disturbance within, finally trotted homeward.

"You're the fellow who was a champion weight lifter and hammer thrower and wrestler and boxer in college," said Noonan, who eyed Cobb's proportions admiringly. "You're the son of Ezra Cobb who owned the Cobb Company."

"I wasn't a champion in all those events," said Steve modestly, "but I was pretty good. And my father was Ezra Cobb."

"You could kill a man with a blow of your fist, I expect," said the officer thoughtfully.

"Oh, I'm mild and gentle as a lamb," replied Steve. "What's the cause of this visitation?"

"We're trying to find out who murdered Frank Hutton."

Steve lifted his eyebrows. "Eben told me that a man named Hutton had disappeared. Was he murdered?"

"He was."

Steve felt a gripe in his stomach, but his face did not betray his feeling.

"We have good reason to believe that Hutton called on you the night of his death."

"Indeed!"

"We know you had a fracas with somebody up here that night."

"You seem to be well-informed," said Steve dryly.

"Suppose you make a clean breast of it?" suggested the detective.

"You make me laugh," retorted Steve.

"Okay, feller. Hutton was sent to see you by Mr. Warburton, who is now owner of the Cobb Company, on some business matter. Hutton inquired of a man at the gas station where you lived. The Sears girl saw a light in your house. She went up on that hill back there and woke you up. You came down to investigate. The girl heard voices and a rumpus. She came to the door. The light was out and you told her that nobody had been here."

"Yes, I told her that. She was sure there was a burglar. She was excited. I sent her home to bed."

"Next day the Chief came up here. He found, in your ash barrel, broken glass and articles which had been smashed in this fight. He found a bullet imbedded in your frame."

"He told me all that."

"Yet you say there was nobody here."

"I don't own a revolver, Mr. Noonan. A shot would awaken the town. That bullet may have been in the doorframe for years."

"No, it was recent. I examined the hole. It was clean and new. Things look bad for you, Cobb."

"Look here," said Steve earnestly. "I have no money and no valuables. This hut speaks for itself. I didn't know this Hutton. I would have no reason to attack him. It would amuse me to find a burglar in this place. And, as Hutton seems to be a friend of Warburton's, it's most unlikely that he would rob my house."

"Hutton was killed by a terrific blow on the temple such as a man of your strength could deliver," said Noonan.

"But what would be my motive?"

"The motive will turn up."

"May I ask, if this man has disappeared, how you know he was killed at all and particularly how you know the manner in which he was killed?"

"Because we have the body," said Noonan quietly. Steve's eyes almost stuck out of his head and his mouth opened.

"I—I don't believe you," he muttered.

"No, of course you don't. And why? Because you threw him into the sea," shouted Noonan who whipped a revolver from his pocket and covered Steve Cobb with it. "And the revenue boat, Tecumseh, picked him up. Oh, we have the body and there ain't any doubt in the world we have the murderer."

"Here, Chief," he added, as he fished with his left hand a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. "Put these bracelets on him."

STEVE rose. Standing four feet from the table he blew out the lamp, plunging the room into darkness. He dropped flat as a bullet tore out of the gun and whined above him.

"Grab him," shouted Eben Cobb. Steve's big arm shot out, grasped the Chief by both knees, and pulled him over. Noonan came charging like a bull afraid to fire in the dark for fear of hitting his fellow officer. Steve crouched on his knees, caught the detective, as he came in, with a back breaking grip about the middle, dodged a blow with the butt of the gun and tore it from his hand, tossed it to a corner of the room and came back to sanity.

"All right, boys," he said. "I'll light the lamp. I just don't let any darn fool pull a gun on me. I surrender voluntarily. You haven't a damn thing on me and you know it."

"Now you're talking sense, confound you," mumbled Noonan. "Where's my gun?"

Steve was up and fumbling for matches. He had hurled Noonan in the direction of the couch. He had been shocked out of his self-control when informed that the body of Hutton had been picked up and,

for a second, had yielded to the natural impulse of the guilty man to make his get-away. But he'd have to fight this thing, tell the truth and hope he would persuade a jury that his homicide was justifiable.

"This won't do you any good, you know," growled Noonan. "Eh?"

For the room was suddenly filled with men. They were outlined as they plunged through the doorway, four or five of them. A flashlight covered Steve Cobb with golden rays, blinding him momentarily. It showed Noonan on his feet at the sofa, Eben Cobb still crouching on the floor.

"Grab the big fellow," cried somebody hoarsely. "Hands up, you others."

And Steve's fury burst again. He couldn't resist the law, but he found men in front of him upon whom he could vent the despair and rage and self-contempt with which he was filled. With a roar, he plunged at the holder of the flashlight which immediately went out. And for a minute or two there raged a battle royal in the dark in which fists and feet whirled and struck flesh; in which there were grunts and curses and heavy breathing. Noonan was in the fray, both arms swinging like flails, and Steve's huge fists were crashing against chests and faces. In the narrow precincts it was impossible for a fist to miss a target. Once Steve received a crushing blow on the shoulder from a blackjack.

"Crack."

There was a sharp report from a revolver and a groan. In the illumination afforded by the gun flash, Steve floored the man who had fired it. And then something heavy descended upon his head.

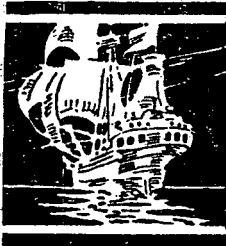
"Got him," said a triumphant voice. "Let's go. Pick him up and carry him."

Fighting ceased. Four men lifted the heavy weight which was Steve Cobb and bore him out of the house and down the lane.

They encountered no one.

At the foot of the lane stood an open touring car, a chauffeur behind the wheel. They dropped the body of Steve Cobb in the bottom of the tonneau and piled in."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



# Argonotes

## The Readers' Viewpoint



### ABOUT George Bruce's story of the U. S. Marines, in this issue:

As you will probably understand when you read it, "Tomorrow We Die" was written because I had to write it. The two characters who move through the story are still living, and they are still in the Marine Corps. *Strong* is now a captain, and just about the most decorated man in the Corps; and *Garrity* is a sergeant serving under *Strong*. *Garrity* had his commission revoked for taking a punch at an officer who suggested that *Captain Strong* should not wear more decorations than his colonel. This little interlude took place in Santo Domingo, after the war. But *Garrity* said: "Aw, it was too damned much trouble bein' an officer. It wasn't so bad during the war, but after that, when bein' an officer was just a business of bein' able to hold a teacup on one knee, a chicken sandwich on the other, a knife and fork and spoon, a block of ice cream, and a coffee cup—without even sittin' down on nothin'—that got me down. What the hell! I'd rather live in the barracks anyhow."—That's what he told me, and the funny thing is he was telling the truth.

GEORGE BRUCE.

### BEDFORD-JONES offers an explanation:

In his novelette, "Free-Lance Spy," Mr. Bedford-Jones had his hero, *Mr. Barnes*, save Abyssinia from the Italian schemes of conquest. How

is this to be reconciled with the fact that Italy seems to be going ahead to grab Abyssinia? I'd like to know how your know-it-all author can get around this.

H. E. TWINELLS.

Your query is natural. But if you read that story carefully you undoubtedly noted that *Barnes* was skeptical about the possibility of checking the Italian ambitions. He stated, "It'll take more than a treaty to stop Mussolini. If he isn't stopped, then I'm going to open a private war on him for double-crossing me." And as I write this, Mr. Twinells, a cable from *Barnes* informs me that he has fulfilled his threat. I'll have details later, and they will appear in *ARGOSY*, if *Barnes* consents. As I'm going to Italy this summer, I have to be somewhat careful on my own account as to just what goes into these stories. Hence I can't make any promises.

One further point. You must reflect that several months elapse between the receiving of information from *Barnes*, the writing of the stories, and their publication.

H. BEDFORD-JONES.

### HE waves ARGOSY's flag:

Sedalia, Mo.

First, in order to establish my right to criticize or flatter your magazine, let me tell you that I have spent more than \$100.00 in buying it, and

**W**HAT is your idea of the best story (of any length, from short story to serial) published in *ARGOSY* since January 1, 1935? For the twelve post cards or letters from readers which, in the opinion of the editors, give the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others, the magazine will reward the letter-writers with twelve full, yearly subscriptions. We don't want mere praise; we are interested in finding out exactly what stories you like best. Nor do we care about your literary style or skill. If there is some story that you liked so much that it stands out in your memory above all others, that is the story we want you to tell us about. It isn't necessary for you to read every story published in *ARGOSY*. You will have just as good a chance to win one of those twelve subscriptions if you read six of the stories published as you would if you read them all. But we must know *why* you liked the story you choose as best.

Letters selected by the editors will be published from week to week, but not all letters published will receive subscriptions.

Make your comments as long or as short as you wish, for mere length will not be considered. Put down all your reasons, however. Then address your letter to The Editor, *ARGOSY* Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City, so that it will reach us not later than August 1st, 1935.