

# Still Working the "Buried Treasure" T

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The old man assured him that it was the only one of its kind in existence and that he had made it according to the formula in the Seventh Book of Moses.

Turner was greatly impressed and his interest in the old man's mysterious activities mounted. Eventually the old "doctor" took Turner with him on one of his trips to the hills. It was on a Sunday afternoon when Turner was not at work.

The ancient "doctor of science" led Turner by a circuitous route to a spot dense with underbrush and trees, on a mild slope a little below the crest of a hogback or ridge that ran from the top of Cedar Bluff. The spot designated was two or three hundred yards in the rear of the bluff. There was an old road along this ridge. It had once been used for hauling logs.

The old man set up his instrument at the spot pointed out and showed his interested companion, Turner, how the hand of the dial moved around. This was convincing beyond a doubt that there was gold underneath where they stood.

The old "doctor of science" then made a proposition. The instrument indicated that the treasure was a considerable distance under the surface and that a good deal of digging would be necessary. They would form a company of twelve men, who would perform the excavating. Each man must pay either twenty-five or fifty dollars to the old "doctor" to repay him for his expenses in locating the treasure and recovering it. Turner was enthusiastic to proceed and agreed to invest fifty dollars.

Vague rumors as to the treasure hunt had already been in circulation in the town and the old man did not have any difficulty in enlisting eleven other likely recruits who had the money required or had it coming. He took each of the men, one at a time, to the spot where his instrument performed its magic and all were signed up in short order.

All were pledged to airtight secrecy as to the location of the treasure and the financial arrangements made. The men were sawmill hands, timber workers and railroad section men. All made good wages. All gave up their jobs for the search for the elusive yellow metal, "the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

Most of the crew of twelve were practical level-headed men with families to support, who, ordinarily, would not have risked their jobs, time and money on something that well might turn out to be the merest will-o'-the-wisp but the search for lost or buried treasure is a lure that often takes strong hold on men's imagination. Moreover, in this case the old man hinted it was a chest of gold that had been buried deep in the ground in Civil War days by bushwhacker bandits.

Before beginning the digging the old man commanded the men to build him a little house in the limbs of a tree that stood at the edge of the small lake which lay at the foot of Cedar Bluff. The tree-house was about a quarter of a mile south of the bluff. The Spanish moss which he had brought in his wagon from somewhere down South, and which he had used as bedding, was hung on limbs around the elevated shanty. The treehouse, he explained, was to propitiate the "spirits."

Each man furnished his own digging tools and before they began

work the old "doctor of science" laid down the following rules: The location of the excavation must be kept secret; the men must come to the work alone and must not allow any outsider to come with them; there must be no swearing, loud-talking or tobacco-chewing while at work, lest it anger the spirits and cause them to move the treasure deeper in the ground.

All of the men were husky tobacco chewers and it is tribute to their hope and Argonaut-spirit that they were able to refrain from manufacturing "ambeer" for several weeks. A few of them could "cuss" a plenty on sufficient provocation, too, but during the treasure hunt they were as pious as the most orthodox person in the country. Perhaps they did not take so much stock in the "spirits" but the old doctor was Santa Claus and they would respect his ideas.

When the work began about half of the men had paid the old man the amount stipulated. Some of the remainder would not have any money for two weeks and the others who had not paid, the ones who worked for the railroad, would not get their money for nearly four weeks.

The excavators started a hole about twelve feet square. Half of the crew worked with pick and shovel in the excavation while the others stood on heavy boards laid across the opening and drew out the dirt with buckets. It was a clumsy method and a slow job. The old man remained with the crew practically all of the time and he fed them enough theology, philosophy, wisdom, folk-lore and spirit-lore to satisfy them the rest of their lives. And maybe his advice to have no "truck" with rascals and swindlers was worth the fees they were paying him even if there had been no hope of buried treasure. Turner acted, in a manner, as foreman of the crew.

Ten days of work produced a hole ten feet deep and the old doctor tried out his magic treasurer-finder again. The treasure would be found, he announced, at twenty-two feet. The men worked feverishly for a few days and made progress. The men who at the beginning had a pay-day two weeks off received their money and paid up.

Then when the treasure was still a few feet away an accident happened. Bill Jordan let fall a bucket filled with dirt—he was nervous because he was used to chewing tobacco when he worked. It hit Tom Sides on the head. Tom forgot and swore. It was a hard job for him to keep from swearing at the best. "Now you have done it!" shouted the old doctor. "That will make the spirits move the treasure eight feet deeper."

He made a test with his instrument. "Yes," he announced, "it is now ten feet down from here."

The men were a little dispirited by the unfriendly act of the spirits and worked rather slowly for a few days. Then the old man ordered a lay-off for two or three days. Some of the men talked of quitting when away from the job and out of the old man's hearing, but they did not.

There was no more swearing and the work proceeded slowly but surely. It was close to dark late one afternoon when a depth of twenty-nine feet was reached. The old man announced that the treasure was only one foot lower. All of the men had paid the old man by this time.

The old "doctor of science" seemed not at all excited because of the alleged closeness of the precious object of their quest. When it became

too dark to work he told them to come back early the next morning and they would finish the job. The members of the crew were on edge with eagerness and anticipation and some of them offered to procure lanterns so the job could be finished that night but the old man would not agree to it. He said the spirits would be displeased.

Now that they were supposed to be so close to the treasure Sam and some of the others were afraid that the old man would dig it up and make away with it while they were gone so he decided to watch the place that night. Sid Chapman and Charley Casey, other workmen, agreed to stay with him. Sam and Sid slipped back after they had started home and Casey went on home to get something for them to eat.

There was about half a moon that night and there was some light. Turner and his companions sat down in the deep shade of the dense foliage so they could not be seen in case the old man showed up.

The night was warm and balmy and the self-appointed watchmen dozed a little. About eleven o'clock they were brought to a wide-awake

state and a sitting-up position by the sound of footsteps. They recognized Tom Sides, one of the diggers, and two other men who did not belong to the crew. Tom was known to be tricky. The men with him were more so. They walked to the ladder leading to the bottom of the excavation.

"Wait!" whispered Sam to his companions who had started to get up. "If they go down we'll pull up the ladder so they can't get out."

Sides took the lead, carrying a flashlight and he was almost out of sight down the ladder when his descent suddenly stopped. He began to scramble back up the ladder, at the same time letting loose a whoop of terror. The trio watching him from the bushes saw the cause of the whoop.

From out of the black void of the pit ascended a weird and fearsome figure—the white, ghostly figure of a human form having a death mask of a face, from the eyes and mouth of which streamed a brilliant white light. An unearthly, blood-curdling shriek ascended from the pit.

Sides and the two men with him leaped from the premises and plunged along the old road to the

bluff like wild buffaloes. Turner and his companions followed—they were scared, seeing the running footsteps of them Sides and the pair who beat it still faster. In their hurry they had forgotten, evidently, about the bluff or they did not realize in which direction they were running.

The three men behind heard the scream as they went over the cliff and heard the splash of the water as the three men landed in the lake. The water was thirty feet deep at the base of the bluff at that time, though the lake has since been emptied by a drainage ditch.

News of the episodes of the night reached all members of the digging crew early the next morning and only a few of the men showed up at the excavation—Turner and his two companions of the night before and one other man. They could see the bottom of the excavation had not been disturbed since they left it the evening before. The old man was not there. They repaired to his

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## A Negro Author Enters a Very New and Different Field

### Writes Clever and Unusual Book



RANDOLPH EDMONDS

By THE BOOKER

Recently the Meador Publishing Company (27 Beach Street, Boston, Massachusetts) published a highly imaginative volume entitled "Shades and Shadows," by Randolph Edmonds a young Morgan College professor. It is a book which blazes a path in an entirely different field, for Negro writers.

First, the book deals with a unique type of subject matter. Instead of the usual laments and wails about the race question, Mr. Edmonds deals with purely hypothetical situations which have as their underlying bases much broader themes than the interracial conflict in this country. The themes are of universal breadth and interest, and may be generally termed as mercy, justice, avarice, while one or two of the stories have to do with an ingenious, if morbid bit of treatment of a quite modernly laid situation.

The longest story of the volume is, "The Devil's Price."

John Walton, a farmer living in the imaginary monarchy of Blufustu, is oppressed with debt. But he is happily blessed with the love of a dutiful and inspiring wife. One day he is approached by the devil himself who bargains with him for power in return for his (Walton's) life.

Walton accepts the toga, and arouses the peasants of the kingdom, who enable him to overthrow the existing regime and win a dictatorship for himself. But when Walton has secured absolute rulership for himself, he becomes mercilessly cruel and begins a reign of terror that dwarfs the bloody French Revolution.

Walton is poisoned by a disapproving and perhaps less bloody associate

of his, and while he is undergoing the agonizing pains from the deadly poison, he sees all of the folly of the bargain with the devil. The latter, now standing by, demands his "pound of flesh." Walton also sees the spirit of his devoted wife, whom he had assassinated in a fit of drunken revelry. The story here ends in an unexpected manner.

The next story, "Hewers of Wood," presents a very modern analogy to the situation of the Negro as a group and not as an individual.

On an island of unknown location, a group of Negroes exist amidst the woes of slavery. Their lot is unaccounted for, inasmuch as the author begins the sketch with the chattel slavery without explaining the causes.

It appears that the slavery has always existed ("just as God has") and the Negroes have always prayed for deliverance from it (just as they do now) but without any success. One very "heretical" and daring chap refuses to serve any longer this strange and distant God who for no reason at all has ushered him into a life of servitude without first securing his permission and without lessening in any degree his onerous burdens.

As a matter of fact, it turns out that the multitude of Negroes who have worshipped so religiously this omniscient and all-just "god" have not been worshipping the true "god" at all but have been worshipping the devil.

Humorously, the "heretic" repudiates the deity who has doomed him to slavery "forever and ever," especially since this sounds to him like a very long time. Finally, the angel that is the emissary of the real God appears, sets everybody straight by liberating the whole wretched mass, and presumably they lived happily ever afterwards. That part is for the imaginative reader.

It must be mentioned here that in order to fully enjoy these unusual stories it is necessary for the reader

to call into play his own imagination. The title story appears to be the one most nearly the true expression of the author's opinion on the future trend of writing. Taking the part of times of Mr. Wentworth, the diabolical and scheming stepfather, Mr. Edmonds there sets forth his controversial views on the prospective popularity of imaginative stories in the not too distant future.

He vicariously ventures the opinion that the reading public is weary of the realistic type of story, and now

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