

## THE TWENTY-DOLLAR DUMMIES

A TRUE STORY OF AN EARLY DAY ARIZONA HOLD-UP.

As Related to the Writer by One of the Victims.

By CON P. CRONIN

It was one of those soft, drowsy nights in middle June, in the early nineties, all the joints were full, and the Plantation, "Honest John" Shanssey's saloon and gambling house in Yuma, had a big play. The bar was right off the street, about twenty feet long, and immediately in the rear and separated by a slight frame partition, was the gambling room. Along the west wall were two windows, wide open, the weather being warm. The faro layouts were side by side, and next to them was a Klondyke game. Across the room was the roulette wheel, and a regulation crap table. All the games were well patronized, as were also the three card tables down through the middle of the room. Four of us were playing solo at the last table, I was dealing, when suddenly sounded a sharp cry,—“Hands up you — — —!” followed by an earthquake stillness. Harry Carpenter, opposite me, apparently did not hear until “You too, Harry!” brought him up. One man with a blue polka dot handkerchief covering his face from the eyes down stood right in the doorway from the bar, with the Kid, the early shift bar-tender, in front of him, reaching for the ceiling. The second man, masked in a similar manner, and with a new meal sack in his left hand, gun in his right, made for the nearest faro table, where “One Eye George” Lanham was dealing. He cleaned that quickly, pushing the layout into George's lap, with the injunction to keep them up. The second faro table was as quickly cleaned, the number one man in the meantime having lined all the players up and down the center of the room. The clean-up man was stepping toward the Klondyke table when things happened, happened so quickly that of the fifty or sixty men present no two told the same story in the days that followed. The Klondyke dealer's name I have forgotten; anyway he was an old timer, well past seventy, a real gentleman of the old school, refined and scholarly and a student and constant reader of the old testament. He was a mystery to everyone who knew him, had drifted into Yuma a few years before, banked his own game, associated with no one, never drank, opened his game at four in the afternoon and no matter how heavy the play closed his game on the dot of two A. M.

regularly. This was all that was ever known of him excepting that he was never without a G. A. R. button.

It looked to me like one of those eighteenth century deringers, one that you poured the powder into and packed down before you put the ball in. Anyway, the clean-up man was not more than five or six feet away, headed directly for him and his game, when from somewhere he pulled this old-fashioned gun of his and fired and seemingly all in one movement did a back turn out of the open window behind. It sure sounded like a cannon,—and like the echo the hold-up man got into action. I forgot to relate that the only man in the house not in the attitude of higher elevation was old Harry Leonard, sleeping off an early jag, back of the Sibley stove that hadn't been removed for the summer. The clean-up man was surely a novice with a gun as Harry was sitting at almost right angles from where the dealer went through the window. Harry was fat, hog fat, at the time, which added to the spice of comedy I have noticed always accompanied any kind of vigorous action in the early days. The bullet from the hold-up man's gun struck Harry about two inches below the shoulder blades and plowed a furrow right under the skin right across his back. Harry hit the floor bellowing like a bull, and I always thought it was his action and voice that stampeded the pair. Anyway, they quit right there, their job only half done, leaving a thousand dollars or more on the wheel, which always had a good play and carried a good bank roll. They backed out the way they came in and although the entire play didn't take three minutes 'twas a wonder that some one of the boys did not get them as all the old timers packed guns in those days and came piling in both the front and back ways by the time the bunch that was held up commenced milling. They made a clean get-away.

Well, it wasn't long until all the peace officers of the town and the sheriff's office were on the job, and about a half hundred volunteer deputies besides. The round up brought in about the sorriest assortment of bums and 'boes that the old jail ever saw. There was not one of the twenty-five or thirty gathered in that had the nerve to hold up a bucket of suds, let alone a gambling house full of he-men! The hold up occurred as I remember it now, about eleven o'clock in the evening and the word went out to bring in every stranger overtaken, whether he could account for himself or not. Along towards two in the morning a couple of the boys picked up two men that answered the descriptin as to "the tall man and the short man," near the coal bins, just as a local freight was going east. They were just

ready to swing under when stuck up and pretended much surprise at their rough usage. Hogan and McCann, hard rock miners from Fortuna, who had been in town for a week, had blown their wad, and were, they explained, on their way back to the fifteen hundred foot level for another stake.

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The trial of Hogan and McCann was the feature of the fall term of court. The evidence disclosed that the men had been pals and had worked at Fortuna Mine for nearly a year, that they had been saving up for months for a trip outside and had come to Yuma about a week before the hold-up well fixed in cash. Both had drunk heavily and had played the wheel and faro bank steadily until the evening before the incident at the Plantation, and the wheel man at the Place testified that when Hogan lost his last bet he remarked to his side-kick, "There's only one way to win from these guys!" Archie Priest, the outside guard at the county jail testified under oath that he had listened at the bull pen, where the men spent their evenings on account of the intense heat of the long summer, and had heard McCann remark to Hogan one evening, "'Twas a lucky thing we cached those guns, or they'd a hung it on us!" The prisoners accounted for their time between nine o'clock on the evening of the hold-up and the moment of their arrest by stating that they were both soused and had crawled into the coal bins at the freight yards to sleep it off and were preparing to beat it out to camp when arrested. The district attorney admitted that their smutty appearance would indicate personal contact with the coal bins but argued that the coal bins was their hide out after the hold-up. The prisoners were lucky in having one of the best criminal lawyers in the territory at that time to defend them, old Sam Purdy. Sam took the stand as a witness for the defense and testified that he would not believe Archie Priest under oath. "Honest John" Shanssey testified that his losses were between twenty-four and twenty-five hundred dollars, stating the approximate sums in gold and silver. When he stated his total losses Sam Purdy flashed a look at his clients that I afterwards interpreted to mean "are you fellows holding out on me?" A dozen witnesses who were present at the hold-up testified that the prisoners answered the general appearance of the robbers but old Sam Purdy was at his best, put everything he had on the ball and after being out about ten hours the jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

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If Bob Hathaway had remained sober and kept out of the pen the identity of the hold-up men would always have remained a mystery. Bob was also a deep-sea miner and a side-kick of McCann and Hogan at Fortuna. On his way to Yuma to attend the trial of his pals he tanked up too much at Blaisdell, got on the train going east instead of west and when he woke up at Tucson was so peeved that he tried to clean up on the train crew, working over one of the brakemen so thoroughly that he was laid up for several weeks. An unsympathetic judge gave Bob one year in the pen at Yuma, at about the same time that McCann and Hogan were being released from durance. So Bob finally landed in Yuma but not as an aid and ally to his friends and pals.

Bob had been "in" about four months, was a trusty and the boys were circulating a petition for his pardon when McCann and Hogan quit their jobs at the mine and stopped over a day at Yuma on their way to the coast and found no difficulty in effecting a visit with Bob. Things were free and easy, even in the pen, those days. They left town on number nine that night not, however, without visiting the Plantation and setting them up for about a dozen bar flies present.

A kind-hearted governor turned Bob loose about six weeks after the visit of his former pals, after his promise to abstain from red eye and to make it back to the mines on the first train out. After six months in the territorial penitentiary, however, Bob just had to have some little relaxation. Along towards nine o'clock in the evening he wound up at the Plantation and insisted that "Honest John" Shanssey relate to him the particulars of the hold-up.

"And how much did these guys get?" says Bob casually.

"A little over twenty-four hundred dollars," says John.

"You're a dam liar, John!" says Bob. "Ye lost about eight hundred dollars, 'cause ye carried four twenty dollar dummies!"\*

"I knew it! I knew it all the time!" roared "Honest John."  
 "I knew it was those two — — ———! George Lanham and myself were the only two men in the world that knew we carried dummies, until McCann and Hogan got 'em!"

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\*—"Dummies. \$20. Cylinder stack representing in size and shape, with milled edges, a stack of twenty dollar gold pieces. With a real \$20. gold piece on top cannot be detected from a real stack of twenties." (From an old Will & Fink Sporting Goods Catalog.)