

CLASSICS TO GO
THE BOY MINERS
OR THE ENCHANTED ISLAND
A TALE OF THE YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY



EDWARD SYLVESTER ELLIS

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Edward Sylvester Ellis

CHAPTER I.

"THERE THEY COME!"

Young Edwin Inwood leaped down from the small tree in which he had been perched for the last half hour, and ran swiftly toward the brook where his elder brother, George, and a large negro named Jim Tubbs, were waiting, ever and anon raising their heads, and looking towards the boy who was acting as sentinel, several hundred yards away, as if they were expecting some such an alarm as this.

"Quick! they'll soon be here!" he added in his terrible excitement.

"How many are there?" inquired George, catching up his shovel at the same time with his rifle.

"I shouldn't wonder if there were twenty. I'm sure I saw a dozen, any way."

"More likely dar's a tousand!" angrily exclaimed Jim, gathering his implements together, preparatory to making a move. "Dis yer's a nonsince—jest as we gits in among de gold, dem Injins has to 'gin dar tricks."

"Hurry, Jim," admonished the young man, beginning to grow nervous. "It won't do to be caught here."

"Dey hain't cotched dis pusson yit, an' if dey undertooks it, somebody'll git hurt. I can swing dat pick kind o' loose when I makes up my mind to do so. I's ready—now whar does ye pitch to?"

"Into the cane, of course."

George Inwood, loaded down with his gun and implements, hurried up the channel of the brook, for several hundred feet, and then, making a sudden plunge to the

right, disappeared as abruptly as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. The next moment, his brother Edwin, a lad some fifteen years of age—whisked after him, and then Jim came lumbering along, somewhat after the manner of an ox, when goaded off his usual plodding walk.

“Dis yer’s graceful!” he muttered, not deigning to look behind him to see whether the envious aborigines were visible, “I never did like to trot, s’pecially when an Ingin was drivin’ me, an’ only does it to please de boys.”

“Come, Jim, move faster!” called the voice of George Inwood from some subterranean point.

“Yas, yas, I’s dar!”——

Further exclamation was cut short, for at this instant the indignant African was seized by the ankle with such force, that he fell prostrate upon his back, and, despite his struggles and threats of dire punishment, was quickly drawn out of sight and hearing.

This was scarcely done, when a dozen Mohave Indians swarmed over the ridge of rocks and trees which bounded the northern part of the stream, and scattered here and there in quest of the gold hunters, whom they had been watching from a distance nearly all the afternoon. Each of them was armed with a gun, several displayed tomahawks and knives at their girdles, while the majority had large, beautifully woven and ornamented blankets thrown over their shoulders.

Running hither and thither, their sharp black eyes darting in every direction, they could not be long without discovering traces of the interlopers. A sort of halloo, something like the yelp of a large dog, when a cow flings him over the fence, told that one of the dusky scamps were on the trail. Immediately the whole pack darted up the channel, and the next moment, had halted before the

mouth of a cave, the entrance being of sufficient width to admit the passage of an ordinary sized man; but just now a large boulder prevented their ingress.

Certain that the gold hunters were immured here, and were within their power, the Mohaves indulged in a hop, skip, and dance around the cave, flinging their arms aloft, and shouting continually in their wild, outlandish tongue. When their clamor had somewhat subsided, a gruff voice from within the cave was heard.

“Hullo! dar I say! Hullo! I say! Can’t yese keep yer clacks still a minnit when a gemman wishes to speak?”

The singular source and sound of the human voice had the desired effect, and instant silence fell upon all.

“Am dar any ob yous dat spoke English? If dar am, please to signify it by sayin’ so, an’ if dar ain’t, also signify dat by obsarvin’ de same sign.”

Jim waited several minutes for a reply, but, receiving none, he became more indignant, and was about to burst out in a tirade against them, when George Inwood ventured to suggest that, as in all probability they could not speak the English language, as a matter of course, they were deprived of the ability of saying so.

“But dey orter to know ’nough to say *no*—any fool know *dat*,” persisted the African.

“But how can they understand what *you* say?”

“Clar—didn’t tink ob dat. What am we to do?”

“Defend ourselves—that is all that is left us.”

“I’ll go take a look at dem,” said Jim, beginning to creep along the passage toward the mouth of the cave.

“I insist that you be more careful in your dealings with them. You ought to know what a treacherous and

untrustworthy set of people they are.”

Jim promised caution, as he always did in such matters, and Inwood kept close to him to see that he fulfilled his pledge. Reaching the mouth of the cave, the African gave a sneeze to proclaim his presence, emitted with such explosive vigor, that the Mohaves gathered around, startled as though the ground beneath them had suddenly reddened with heat. They recoiled a few steps, and then waited with some anxiety for the next demonstration.

Jim Tubbs had a voice, composed half-in-half of those tones which are heard when a huge saw is being filed, and that which is made by the rumbling of the distant thunder. The judicious mixture made from these, it may safely be said, was terrific and rather trying to a sensitive man's nerves; and, as he was in rather an indignant mood on the present occasion, when he called to the Mohaves, it was more forcibly than politely.

“What does yer want?”

When a person has reason to believe that the one whom he is addressing has difficulty in understanding his words, he seems to think the trouble can be overcome by increasing the loudness of his tone. Jim repeated his question each time with greater force, until the last demand partook more of the nature of a screech than anything else.

By this time, the aborigines had obtained a good view of the black face, cautiously presenting itself at the opening made by the partial withdrawing of the stone, and one of them, laying down his gun and knife, as an earnest of his pacific intention, deliberately advanced to the entrance of the cave, and reached out his hand.

“Take it, Jim,” whispered Inwood, “he means that as an offering of good will.”

"I hope yer am well," remarked Jim, as he thrust his immense digits through the opening. "I is purty well, an' so am all ob us—gorry nation! what am yer at?"

The Mohave had suddenly seized the hand of the negro in both his own with tremendous force, and was now pulling with such astonishing power as slowly to drag the unsuspecting African forward.

"I tell ye let go!" shouted the latter, "it won't do! Wal, if ye wants to pull wid dis chile, why pull, an' see who am de best feller!"

Inwood, in his apprehension for the safety of the negro, seized his leg, and endeavored with his utmost strength to stay his forcible departure, observing which, the gentleman in dispute turned his head:

"Nebber mind, George, nebber mind if dem darkeys

[Transcriber's Note: Several lines of text are missing from the original here due to a printer's error]

Jim was six feet three inches in height, and along his limbs was deposited an enormous quantity of muscle almost as hard as the bone itself; he was not quick, but he was a man of prodigious strength, and when he chose to exert it, there were few living men who could withstand it. If there could ever be a suitable occasion to exert it, that occasion was the present.

And Jim did call it into play. Closing his great fingers around the hand of the Mohave, he held it as firmly as if it were thrust into the jaws of a Numidian lion, and then bracing his feet against the sides of the cavern, he said:

"Now, my 'spectable friend, you pull an' I'll pull."

At the first contraction of that muscular arm, the Mohave was drawn a foot forward; and, in dreadful alarm, he uttered a cry which brought several of his companions to his relief,

and they, seizing him by his lower limbs, pulled as determinedly in the opposite direction.

“If yer gets dis feller back agin, I tinks he’ll be about a foot taller,” muttered Jim, as he gave another hitch with the hapless aborigine, which jerked not only him forward, but those who were clinging fast to his extremities. They, in turn, united in a “long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether,” with no effect, except to give the subject under debate a terrific strain.

“Yeave ho! here ye go!”

And with amazing power, Jim Tubbs drew the Mohave clear into the cave, beyond all reach from his companions.

CHAPTER II.

"Now you keep still, or I'll come de gold tuch ober you!" admonished Jim, as he hurried the captured Mohave to the rear portion of the cave, and delivered him in charge of George Inwood and his brother.

"What do you mean by the gold trick?" inquired the latter, as he caught up his gun, and placed himself in an attitude to command the movements of the captured Indian.

"Why I mean dat—hullo!"

Jim turned and darted up the passage, in which he had detected a suspicious noise. He was not a moment too soon. The red men, furious at the abduction of one of their number before their eyes, had united to force away the stone, and, at the instant the negro returned, one of them had shoved his body half through the opening.

"Out ob dar!" shouted Jim, as, with uplifted pick, he made straight at the intruder. The latter, fully panic-stricken, turned about and whisked out of the cave much more rapidly than he entered, his moccasins twinkling in the air, as if the same means had been employed to extract him, that had been used to draw his venturesome companion in.

The ludicrous appearance of the Mohave, as he scrambled out among his friends, exceedingly pleased the ponderous African, who laughed loudly and heartily.

"Didn't fancy de way I swung dat pick round! I was kinder loose wid it, an' if I'd let it drap on him, it would've made him dance."

It looked very much as if our friends, in capturing the Mohave, had, to use a common expression, secured an "elephant." What to do with him, was the all-important

question, now that he was in their power. Being without any warlike implements, he was comparatively harmless, and, as there was no escape for him, except through the passage by which he had entered, it was hardly to be supposed that, so long as he was unmolested, he would indulge in any performances likely to bring down the wrath of his captors upon him.

Withdrawing to the opposite side of the cave, (which was not more than a dozen feet in diameter) he stood silent and sullen, while Edwin Inwood, with his loaded and cocked rifle, watched him with the vigilance of a cat. George Inwood, feeling that nothing was to be apprehended from the present shape of affairs within their subterranean home, passed up the narrow entrance to where Jim was, in order to learn how matters stood there.

At the moment of reaching his sable friend, the discharge of a gun was heard, and Jim hastily retreated on his hands and knees a few feet.

“Are you hit?” inquired Inwood in some alarm.

“Yes, but dey didn’t hurt me; *dey hit me on de head!*”

“Can they not force back the stone?”

“Not if we can git close up behind it.”

The negro spoke the truth; for, when immediately in the rear of the immense boulder, they could hold it against the combined efforts of any number of men on the outside, and, at the same time, keep themselves invisible, while, by remaining in their present position, they ran every risk of being struck. Consequently, no time was lost in creeping into the proper place, where, for the time being, they felt themselves masters of the situation.

Having successfully staved off all danger for the present, the question naturally arose, how was this matter to end?

The gold hunters were walled up in a cave, with plenty of arms and ammunition, little food and no water. The Mohaves, if they chose so to do, could keep them there until they perished from thirst or starvation.

Edwin Inwood soon grew tired of standing in his constrained position, and he cautiously set down his gun, within immediate reach, and then sinking down upon one knee, resumed the work which had been so peremptorily checked by the entrance of the captured Mohave. A large stone, weighing over a dozen pounds, was held firmly in position, while he employed both hands in drilling a hole into the center. This, as all know, is quite a tedious operation, and, although he had the usual tools of the blaster of rocks, he made slow progress. Still, he was animated by that great spur to exertion, necessity, and he applied himself to his task without intermission.

While his brother and the gigantic African were parleying and debating upon their situation, he succeeded in reaching the depth desired, and then carefully removing the debris, he thoroughly cleaned the cavity, as does the skillful dentist when preparing our molar for the golden filling. Into this hollow, the lower portion of which he had managed to give a globular shape, he poured several handfuls of Dupont's best, a piece of fuse all the while standing upright, while the jetty particles arranged themselves around it. Dust and sand were then carefully dropped in, until they reached the surface of the stone, when it assumed the appearance of a solid, honest fragment of rock, with the odd-looking fuse sprouting from its side.

"There!" exclaimed the boy, with a sigh, "it is done, and I think it will answer very well."

As he looked up, he saw the Mohave still standing silent and sullen, but with his dark eyes fixed upon the young artisan with a curious expression, as though a dim idea of