

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME IV

NUMBER 4

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 325 N. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1913, at the post-office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$4.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in our possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor. Copyright, 1924, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

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**L**ORBER was the only person in the court-room who wasn't staring at the condemned man. Lorber had his eyes down and was almost fighting to make his way through the crowd. By some uncanny effort of will he had managed to stick out the trial. Now he wanted to get out—out and away.

But the crowd, moved by a contrary impulse, was swaying toward the railing that ran the length of the room. The sheriff had elamped a single handcuff on his prisoner's wrist, and with the other attached to his own was leading the man toward a side door. Lorber felt himself being pushed slowly backward. For a moment he had lowered his shoulder and was starting to lunge forward when a sudden sweep of the crowd spun him around and pinned him against the railing.

Inevitably he lifted his head. He felt exactly as if some peremptory hand had raised it for him. He tried to close his eyes, but something that was like a physical force kept them open. A chain rattled and he was face to face with the condemned man.

To the other spectators the movement that Wethers, the prisoner, now made, was nothing more than a nerv-

ous gesture—a fretful attempt to wipe the perspiration from his forehead. To Lorber, it was one sight he had hoped never to see. There was no chance for Lorber to miss it. He was standing close enough to count the minute powder burns in Wethers' face. He saw the gesture in detail. He saw the prisoner swing his left hand upward with the palm out and the two first fingers distended in the shape of a V. Through the opening, as the hand of the condemned man rested for half a second on his face, his one good eye peered out pale and unblinking at Lorber.

A short guttural sound escaped from Lorber's throat. His body sagged. In another moment the sheriff had jerked the condemned man through the door.

**T**HOUGH the trial had been a Roman holiday for the people of Hanover, its result was foretold before it started. The evidence against Wethers was unqualifiedly damning. Two neighbors had actually seen him kill the old man. But by the time these two men, running at full speed, had rushed into the Nightingale backyard, Wethers was lost in the woods. Twenty minutes later the whole town

was beating through the countryside. But they didn't find Wethers—that day or the next. How he covered his trail so quickly was never fully explained. People weren't very much interested in that after he was given up.

Somehow, though, with the shouts of searchers ahead of him and behind him, he had worked his way through interlocking tree tops to Village Creek. He forded Village Creek for half a mile, then ran a scant fifty yards and walked into Nick Lorber's cabin.

Wethers had many claims on Lorber. The strongest of these was their former association in Mulvaney's gang of rum-runners. This was hardly a sentimental association. Not friendship, but the tradition of a grisly finish for squealers, was what held the Mulvaney gang to loyalty and what kept alive, after twenty years, a grim sense of obligation toward each other in these two survivors. One such finish Lorber had seen with his own eyes. He saw Mulvaney himself tip this man the sign. Over a stein of beer Mulvaney had thrown up his left hand and enclosed his left eye between his two first fingers. Three days later the offender was found dead on the beach. But it wasn't so much that he was dead that made this corpse unforgettable. It was what had been done to him before he was killed.

Lorber was bending over the body when Wethers came up the beach. It was his first meeting with Wethers, and the malignant satisfaction that showed in the latter's hard blue eyes scarred Lorber's memory even more than the sight of the dead man. In fact, everything about Wethers suggested a ruthlessness that was both terrible and incomprehensible to Lorber. Wethers' head was massive. His face was heavily scarred, and blue with powder burns. A deeply sunken socket marked the place where his right eye had been.

Wethers never quite understood the reason for Lorber's subsequent tractability, though he made use of it in many ways. But he did observe that Lorber was close-mouthed and scrupulously observant of the Mulvaney discipline.

Of course the rum-running days were gone. Both Wethers and Lorber had degenerated into semi-respectability. But Wethers, to Lorber, was still a terrible and incomprehensible figure. And Lorber, to Wethers, was just as tractable as ever.

So Wethers didn't hesitate a second in claiming Lorber's cabin as sanctuary. He found Lorber frying two strips of bacon in the fireplace.

"They're after me, Nick," he said. "You'll have to hide me."

Lorber inserted a calloused index finger into the sizzling grease and turned the bacon over.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, looking up.

"I've killed Old Man Nightingale," answered Wethers.

Lorber made no reply. Wethers didn't seem to notice this. He appeared to be looking for something. His eyes were making a swift survey of the room. Finally he walked to the door of a large closet, dropped on his knees inside and ran his hands up and down the floor. In a moment he had lifted what appeared to be a trap door, but he replaced it almost immediately. He walked back into the room and sat down on the iron bed.

"Yes," he said, "I killed old man Nightingale, the dirty, thieving—" Here he went off into a somewhat familiar aspersions on the old man's antecedents.

When night came, Lorber cooked supper for the two, then walked to town. When he returned three hours later, instead of cutting directly through the woods he took a turn around by the oyster-canning plant. It happened to be one of those peculiarly beautiful nights that are charac-

teristic of the Southern coasts. A full yellow moon was up and a soft mist was hanging over the marshes.

It was not the seduction of the night, however, that protracted Lorber's return. He had seen such nights before, and if he ever thought of them at all, he thought of them as being bad for his sciatica.

Lorber's whole condition was traceable to the bulletin in front of the *Hanover Tribune* office, which announced that Billy Nightingale had offered a reward of \$1,000 for the slayer of his uncle. For the first time in his memory Lorber was struggling between two decisions. The slow-moving machinery of his mind pushed him alternately one way, then the other. . . . Two days later he knocked at the sheriff's door and told that official where Wethers could be found.

**A**FTER the sheriff had pulled Wethers through the door, the crowd in the court-room quickly dissolved. Lorber leaned for a moment or two longer against the rail, then began to move unsteadily toward the door that led into the street. He remembered that his hat had fallen off and retraced his steps. In stooping for it he lost his balance and fell. A lingering bailiff stared at him curiously, ventured a tentative suggestion of assistance if Lorber were sick. Lorber shook his head and got to his feet. Once in the street he started toward home.

It was dark by the time he struck the shell road. A mist was again hanging over the marshes, but the moon had been blotted out by heavy cloud banks. He was walking so rapidly that by the time he had reached his cabin he was breathing hard and there was a catch in his side. He lighted his hanging lamp and built a fire. He was shivering. Several hours later, the fire having died down, he tried all the windows and the door, put out

the lamp and lay down on the bed without removing his clothes. The mist over the marshes was rising and flooding the countryside. Lorber felt the air growing thick and damp. He pulled a blanket over himself. After a while he slept. Fitful images disturbed him, however. Shadows whirled across the screen of his inner consciousness.

Then suddenly he started up and was staring, wide awake. Across the room, outlined against the window, was a shape that grew more definite as he looked. He saw a man's head. He tried to turn away but couldn't. He felt his muscles gathering. He screamed and cleared the room in a leap. A chair fell clattering to the floor. In Lorber's hands was an overcoat he had flung across the back of the chair the previous morning. The connection between the stiff overcoat and the shape against the window was obvious. But Lorber slept no more that night.

He went to town at sun-up and engaged a room at the Reid House. By special request he was assigned to one that opened directly upon the lobby and lounging room. This being through, he went over to the sheriff's office in the county jail, and with a feeble effort at being casual—with even a certain faltering attempt at jocularity—he sought to ascertain news of the condemned man, Wethers.

The sheriff had gone over to St. Mary's. Bill Krauss, his chief deputy, was holding the county keys and containing himself with difficulty. Krauss considered that the importance of his position as custodian over an unmistakable murderer demanded that he wrap himself about with a certain solemn silence. He would have been disposed to treat Lorber coldly, anyhow, for Lorber was now being generally shunned in Hanover.

But opposed to these tendencies was the stronger, more human feeling of a naturally garrulous man who has in

his possession what he considers a lot of interesting information. So even the maladroit interrogations of Lorber were sufficient to draw him out.

As they were talking, a short, thin-faced man with a three days' growth of beard on his face entered the room. Lorber recognized him as Dr. Floden. The deputy led Dr. Floden out into the jail. Returning presently, Krauss resumed his seat and jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Been to see Wethers every day," he said.

"Yeah!" said Lorber.

"Yeah," echoed Krauss. Then, after a pause: "Queer feller, that Floden."

Lorber shrugged.

"He ain't so queer."

The deputy's reference to the emaciated "doctor" was representative of a widespread sentiment regarding Floden. The whole town thought him queer. Years ago he had been disbarred from the legitimate practise of his profession and now existed solely, so far as anybody knew, upon what negroes paid him for home remedies he made up for their use.

Lorber, though, had known Floden familiarly. He had known him in such a way that he could not possibly regard the man as sinister, no matter how much strange apparatus he tinkered with. Nor was he disturbed at the news of daily conferences between Floden and Wethers, even though Floden, in the old days, had had some sort of connection with Mulvaney. Floden, Lorber learned, had requested Wethers' body and was going to bury it on private ground, in the woods back of Floden's house. Well, that was all right. Lorber was not interested in Wethers, anyhow. What he wanted was general information such as: How old was the present jail? Had many prisoners ever escaped from custody? Did the sheriff put on extra guards when he had a murderer?

LORBER slept soundly, his first night in the Reid House. A friendly ribbon of light filled the space where door and sill failed to meet; voices from the lobby droned a reassuring diapason in his ears until far into the night. He finally drifted off into a warm and comfortable void.

On the second night alien sounds filtered into his room. He listened for the voices from the lobby; instead he heard the far-away ring of horses' hoofs, the screech of a locomotive, the sudden baying of a dog and an insistent chorus of vague, unidentified rattles and creaks. He dug his head into his pillow and fought to empty his mind. He placed his hand over his ear, but heard a voice like roaring waters and removed it.

Presently he arose, put on his clothes and turned on the electric light.

A calendar showed that five days must pass before the execution. Lorber wondered how he would stand them—what he would do. A few days later the night clerk wondered what he wouldn't do next. The night clerk might have been heard complaining that "the guy" (meaning Lorber) was driving him "nutty". For Lorber, with his door slightly ajar, paced restlessly up and down, and just as restlessly turned over the leaves in the Gideon's Bible. Periodically he came out into the lobby, and at odd times he walked over to the sheriff's office in the jail.

But the five days did pass and the morning of the execution did finally arrive. Standing at his window, drawn with loss of sleep, Lorber saw the crowds gathering. Wagons and Fords were coming in from as far away as St. Mary's. Not more than twenty-five persons, officials and all, would be allowed in the jail yard when Wethers was hanged, but at least two thousand would come into town and stay until 11 o'clock had struck.

Lorber thought he would walk out into the country and time his return so as to reach town after the hanging was over. He accordingly struck out along Gloucester street and turned off into the Darien road. After a while he reached the Seaslope Inn. It seemed to him that at least two hours must have passed. He asked a pedestrian for the time, and was informed that it was only half past 9.

He could not bring himself to go any farther. He turned about and started back toward Hanover. When he came in sight of the jail, he saw a crowd of men and boys and a few women packed against two sides of the enclosure. Lorber shouldered his way among those who were closest to the brick wall and took a stand near the sheriff's gate, now closed and barred. Nobody was doing anything or saying anything. They were just waiting. Most of them were looking fixedly at the row of spikes that ran along the top of the brick wall.

The minute hand of the courthouse clock, plainly observable by every one in the crowd, was gradually completing the circle. Some one standing near Lorber pulled out his watch. It showed exactly 11.

A prisoner on the top floor of the jail, with his face pressed against the bars, suddenly called out to somebody in the crowd:

"Ho, Bill! Hey there, Bill!"

Bill made no reply. Nobody answered. Four or five men raised their eyes nervously.

"Hey there, Bill!" called the voice again. "I see you. Hee, hee! I see—"

The court-house clock began to strike. When the final stroke was rung, Lorber thought his heart would stop with it. For a moment all nature seemed to suspend. Then, one of the negro boys in the sycamore made a sharp whistling sound with an in-drawn breath. The crowd swayed.

Twenty minutes later Lorber saw the death wagon pull out of the side gate. Jake Poole, the undertaker, casually chewing tobacco and spitting on the singletree, was driving. Dr. Floden was by his side.

LORBER spent two days more in town—then returned to his cabin on Village Creek. During these two days he slept soundly, ate unsparingly and expanded with a sort of animal delight. His expansiveness took the form of friendly overtures to approved members of the community.

Dr. Floden, he learned, had by special permission taken the man's body to his house and embalmed it himself. Jake Poole came around later and helped him transport the coffin to the burial plot, and these two men, with a negro grave-digger, completed the fact of burial. The location of the grave, as described to Lorber, was about two hundred yards from the Darien road, and an equal distance in the rear of Dr. Floden's house. A snarl of underbrush and small trees, he was told, hid it from the sight of anyone traveling along the road. Nevertheless, Lorber took the shell road when he started back to his cabin.

Arriving about dusk, Lorber threw some brushwood into the fireplace and started a fire. Darkness came down rapidly about the cabin. Lorber lit one of his lamps, lifted a frying pan from the wall and prepared his supper of scrambled eggs and bacon.

He remembered that he had failed to lock the door and rose to do so. While he was shooting the night latch he looked out toward the marshes and saw the mist rising steadily and creeping toward him through the woods.

Lorber shivered, closed the door and returned to the fire. As he munched the remainder of his supper he considered returning to town. The Reid House in retrospect glowed with warmth. He decided that tomorrow

or the next day he would move into Hanover permanently.

Presently he dropped a fork from his wooden plate and leaned forward to pick it up. To do this he had to shift his body slightly. But before he could actually retrieve the fork from the floor a moving whiteness at the window—something that his eye had suddenly caught—caused his body to grow rigid. He thought at first that it was the mist. Then what was just a whitish blur took shape as the cheeks, mouth, nose and one good eye of a face pressed against the window pane. . . .

Lorber tried to speak, but the sound died in his throat. A flickering impulse of reasoning in Lorber insisted that his eyes were being tricked. This thing at the window was an illusion—but illusion or not, Lorber saw that the one good eye in the white face was now staring at him from between two forked fingers of a hand that had suddenly come into view. Lorber passed his own hand jerkily before his eyes. The effect was that of a sponge being passed over a slate. The face at the window had disappeared.

Lorber leapt to his feet, wrenched open the door and rushed outside. Stumbling and panting he made his way around to the side of the cabin. He walked back and forth uncertainly, then stopped for a moment to peer into the darkness. He strained his ears for the noise of retreating footsteps. He fancied he heard the faint, far-away crackling of dry leaves, but as he listened even more intently the only certain sound that came to his ears was the even murmur of the creek.

He returned to the cabin, closed the door, drew the rough burlap curtains across the windows on both sides of the room, and sat down in front of the fire. Though scarcely five minutes had passed, he was now wondering if the face at the window had actually been a human face. He strove to re-

create the scene. Over and over again he passed this image—this familiar face and eye resolving out of a misty blur—through his mind. After a while he began to think he must have had a bad dream.

He lay down on the bed and tried to sleep, but his thoughts were feverishly alive. . . . It must have been a dream, he told himself. It must have been a dream. And even if it were not a dream . . . it couldn't have been Wethers . . . for Wethers was dead. Wethers was dead and buried, with his neck broken.

Lorber returned to his place in front of the fireplace. For an interminable time he sat there, looking behind him occasionally, shuffling his feet, and periodically piling more wood upon the fire. An occasional rattle of wheels was borne to his ears, faintly, from the shell road. Some one shouted—some negro walking toward town. Abruptly Lorber arose, picked up a lantern from the floor, lit it and started out of the door.

He made off through the woods in the direction of the Darien road. He walked slowly at first, but gradually increased his pace until he was almost running. Once he tripped over a bush and fell sprawling. It was several minutes before he could keep a match going long enough to relight the extinguished lantern.

Crossing the Darien road he turned toward Hanover. He came to a small weather-beaten gray house surrounded by a picket fence. Here he stopped, apparently to get his bearings, but after a minute or two started off again toward the left. He seemed to be measuring his steps. The underbrush grew very thick after he had gone about two hundred yards. Pushing forward slowly, he finally came to a small clearing. There, by the sickly lantern light, he saw a mound marked with a small, white headstone. A few feet away, a pick and shovel still lay where the grave-digger had left them.



Lorber walked slowly around the grave, holding his lantern aloft. For at least five minutes he stood in this position. He then started back the way he had come, but stopped before he had gone five yards. He threw down his lantern, walked hurriedly back to where the pick and shovel lay, seized the shovel and dug it into the grave. He started working feverishly, for the sky was beginning to grow pale. Day was coming on. He leveled the mound. He dug down a foot—a foot and a half. A branch cracked behind him.

"I guess I'm the feller you're lookin' for," said a voice.

Lorber turned. A man was advancing toward him out of the mist. The man was Wethers.

THE sheriff, sleepy and irritated and clad in nothing but his trousers, stared uncomprehendingly at the agitated little man in front of him.

"What's that you say?" he asked.

"Wethers—he's loose," answered Dr. Floden.

"Wethers? What Wethers?"

"Bill Wethers."

"Bill Wethers!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Why, man, what's the matter with you?"

"The feller's crazy," suggested Bill Krauss, who also showed the effects of an untimely rising.

"I think he must be," said the sheriff. "Don't you know Bill Wethers is dead?"

"But he's not. That's just what I've been trying to tell you, sheriff," insisted Floden.

The sheriff walked across the room and drew a cup of water from the lavatory faucet. He dashed this into his face, dried the water with a towel and returned to Floden.

"Now tell me that again."

"It's like this," Floden began. "A few days after Bill was sentenced I

came around to see him. I had been experimenting—with some rats and kittens—and I believed I could restore life to a human body if I got it soon enough after death. I told Bill this. He laughed at me—but said he didn't care what became of his confounded old body. So I made arrangements, as you know, to have the body turned over to me for burial."

"You mean to tell me—?"

"Just a minute, just a minute. . . . I fixed up a dummy just so that the weight of the coffin would be right. On the day Bill was hanged I rushed the body around to my house—I had the devil of a time getting rid of Jake Poole, but he finally left. I shoved Bill on to the operating table and examined him. Luckily his neck wasn't broken at all. He had been strangled to death by the rope—otherwise I would have had to brace the vertebrae. I then clapped my electric pulmotor to him, and in twenty minutes he was breathing again."

"What?" shouted the sheriff. "What's that thing?"

"A pulmotor. But wait just a minute; let me tell you the rest. On the day before he was hanged Bill said that there was only one reason he would want to come back to life. He wanted to get Nick Lorber. That scared me. My only reason for wanting to make the experiment was to see whether it could be done. I told Bill that unless he would agree to clear out of Hanover in case I was successful, that I would drop the whole thing. He promised, but he looked a little queer. Well—"

Floden, who had been talking rapidly, stopped a moment to catch his breath. The sheriff was staring at him in fascination. Bill Krauss had grown white.

"Well," Floden resumed, "I hid him in my back room. He was a bit weak at first. But he was strong enough to pull a chair up to a win-

dow and watch Jake Poole, the two niggers and me—carrying his coffin back to the grave. He thought that was a great joke. He didn't leave that room for two days. I brought his food to him. . . . But last night, I came back from town and found that he was gone. I was afraid to say anything about it at first. But all during the night I kept remembering what he had said about getting Lorber. Finally about five o'clock I got up and walked over to Lorber's cabin. He was missing, too. . . . So I came here."

The sheriff grabbed him roughly by the arm.

"You ain't crazy or playin' any fool joke on me, are you?"

"So help me God, no."

"Bill," he shouted, "go over and get Chew and Dupont and you-all join me right away at Floden's house."

Krauss started out of the door, but paused long enough to throw a dazed glance back at Floden.

The sheriff hurriedly pulled on a coat. The two left the jail and started up the road on the run. For several minutes preceding the arrival of his deputies, the sheriff and Floden reconnoitred the premises of Floden's house hoping to find some sort of fresh trail that would suggest the direction in which a search should be started. The two men had worked outward until they were about fifty yards behind the house.

By the time Bill Krauss came up with Chew and Dupont the sky had become pink.

"I suppose we had better go over and look at Lorber's place," said the sheriff.

Just then Doctor Floden seized his arm.

"Look there," he said, with a sharp intake of breath.

"Where—what?"

"There. Straight ahead."

AT THE spot in the woods indicated by Floden's pointed finger the underbrush was being periodically shaken.

"That's where the grave is," said Floden tensely.

The sheriff motioned to the deputies and all five men started forward. Bill Krauss's face was chalk-white. When the party was within twenty yards of their objective, Krauss suddenly stumbled, and let out a hysterical oath. The next moment, the bushes ahead were parted and the upper part of a man's body appeared.

"There he is," yelled Floden.

The man snarled and jumped backward.

"Stop where you are," shouted the sheriff, leaping forward. "Stop, damn you, or I'll shoot."

There was a crash in the bushes and the sound of heavy feet beating upon the dry, October leaves. The sheriff fired twice, threw himself through the bushes, and fired three more rounds. Chew and Dupont were immediately behind him.

Just outside of the little clearing they found the man lying face downward. The sheriff turned him over. It was Wethers—and he was dead. An open jack knife stuck out of his breast pocket.

They dragged the body out into the clearing and Doctor Floden made a perfunctory examination of his heart. The sheriff, noticing the grave for the first time, walked over and looked downward.

"My God!" he shouted. "Look here!"

The others rushed over. They saw a man lying on his back with his hands behind him and his feet partially covered with dirt.

"It's Lorber!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Say, Nick—what's the matter here?"

But Lorber, though his lips moved, and his eyes rolled, made no answer. His tongue had been cut out.