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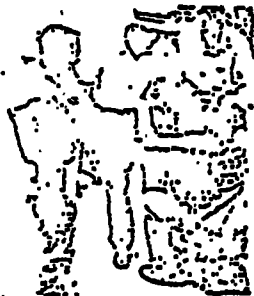
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# SAGA

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEN



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national advertising manager

March, 1970

Vol. 39 No. 6

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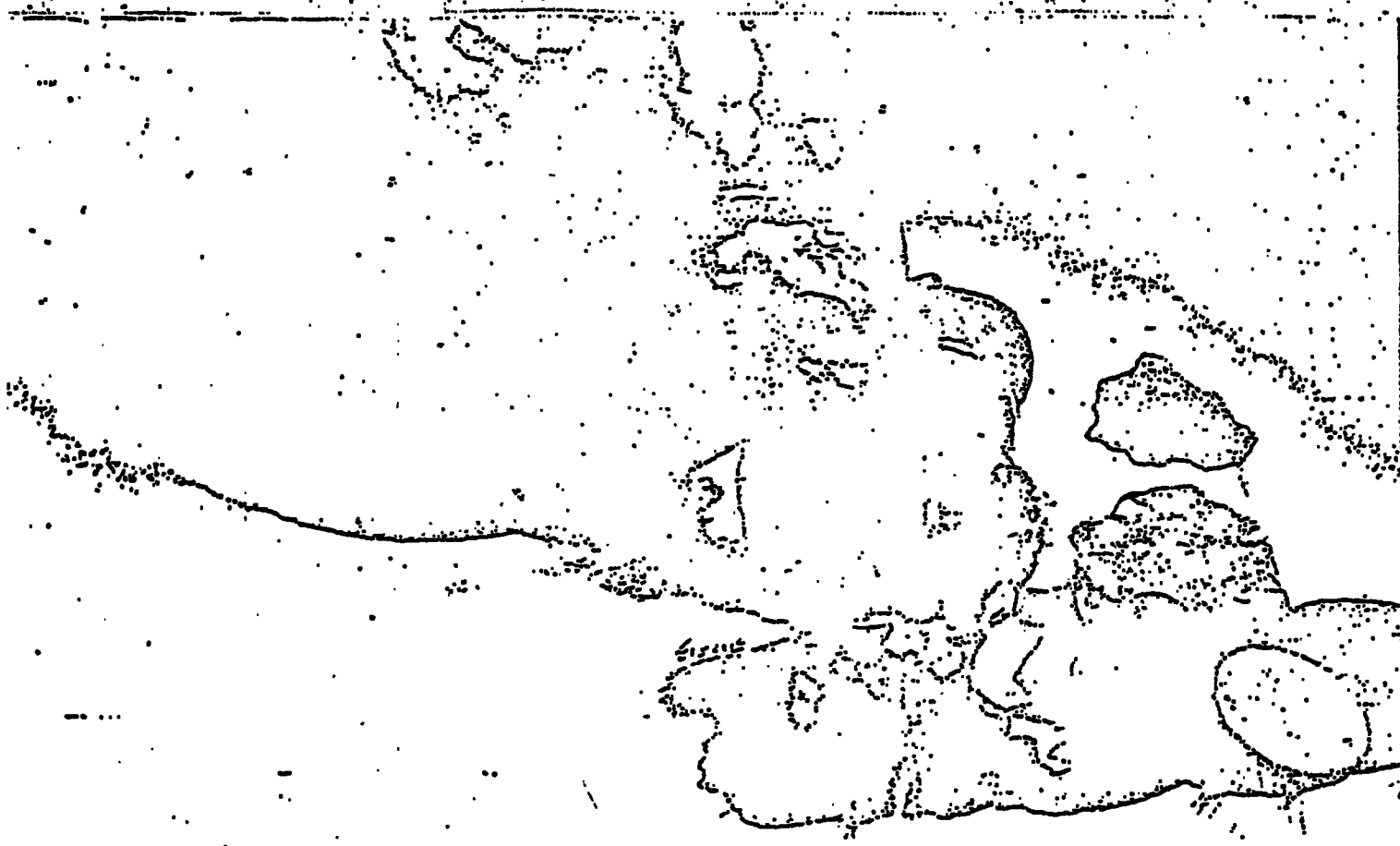
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For those treasure hunters who also fancy themselves amateur cryptanalysts, here are the clues and documentation you need to crack the SECRET CODE TO VIRGINIA

# \$2 MILLION BLUE RIDGE BONANZA

By Al Master

*There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man's mind. He will curse the day he ever heard of it. He will see it every time he closes his eyes. He will never forget it until he is dead. There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind.*

—Conrad's Note

"Look here!" The man's hand was shaking as he held the piece of rock.

"What is it, Buckskin?" his friend asked.

"Well, I don't know for sure, but it looks like it might be gold."

"Gold?" His friend's mouth opened wide. "Where'd it come from?"

"Right here, in this little place." Buckskin picked up a dead branch and poked at a cleft in the rocks. "I was gettin' some firewood and saw somethin' shinin' here... say, there's another one!" The stick had turned over a piece of quartz; its underside was a shiny yellow. Buckskin picked it up a



out beating around the bush, I'll explain. I'm getting pretty old—84 to be exact—so it's high time I turned this thing over to somebody else." He pointed to a sheaf of papers on his desk. "And with this war going on in our front yards, you never know what might happen the next minute."

Ward started to interrupt but Morriss continued. "There are several reasons why I've selected you for the trust I'm about to give friendship for you and your family, the fact that you're fairly young and in circumstances that will allow leisure time, and the utmost confidence that you'll carry out my wishes. You must spend as much time as practicable on the papers I'm about to give you, and if possible, master their contents. Finally, if you're successful in finding the treasure, you'll keep half of my share as pay for your services, then distribute the other half to my relatives. The rest you will hold in trust for any claimants that might later appear and be able to prove their claims. If this amount is still unclaimed after 20 years, it will revert to you."

Ward was puzzled, but since there was nothing objectionable in any of it, he readily agreed. He nodded at the papers on Morriss's desk. "And all of this is in those?"

"Yes," answered Morriss, "but it's quite a story, so let's start at the beginning." He poured another drink, then proceeded:

"It was in January, 1820, when I was running the Washington Hotel, that I first met Thomas Jefferson Beale. He came to the hotel with two other men and stated his intention of remaining for the winter. The gentlemen with him, however, left in a few days for Richmond.

"Beale was over six feet tall, with jet black eyes and hair. He appeared to be unusually strong. His most distinguishing feature was a dark, swarthy complexion.

"He said he was from Virginia, the western part of the state, I thought. He never referred to his family or ancestors, nor did I question him concerning

them. I would have had I dreamed of the future interest that would surround his name.

"At the end of February, Beale left with the same friends who had come earlier. I then heard nothing from him until January 1822, when he again came to the hotel. His complexion seemed darker and swarther than ever.

"In the spring, he left again. But, before doing so, he handed me a box which, he said, contained important papers. He wanted me to care for them until they were called for. I kept them, having no idea of their true importance until his letter arrived. This letter I have carefully preserved." Morriss handed it to Ward.

The letter was dated "St. Louis, Mo., May 9, 1822." In it Beale said that after a 10-day stay there, he would be off to the western plains to hunt buffalo and grizzly bears. In regard to the box, Beale reminded Morriss that it should be carefully guarded. Also, Beale repeated

(Continued on page 90)

Map shows the Blue Ridge Mountain area where bonanza lies buried. The Hart brothers had to cross the Peaks of the Otter and proceed four miles to Goose Creek. (Arrows)



Code No. 1. Cracking it means discovering the exact location of the real treasure. There are two other codes, one of which is already been unraveled. It itemizes a fabulous amount of silver, gold, and jewels.

Although Code 2—listing the amount that Thomas Jefferson Beale buried in Bedford County, "about four miles from Bufords"—has been deciphered, no one has been able to crack Code 1 which is the key to \$13,000 in jewels, 5,100 pounds of silver and 2,921