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JULY 1ST

ADVENTURE

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SPY CARGO

A Novelette

by

ARED WHITE

CHAPTER I

A MESSAGE IN CODE

IT was a whim of chance or a quirk of intuition that uncovered at Bordeaux the first tangible sign of Herr Swarzwald's shadowy trail in France.

Sergeant Wallen, American Intelligence Police, had loitered about the vicinity of the Hotel Metropole for several days, checking passports and cards of identification. Being a man of easy suspicion, Wallen had checked perhaps a hundred civilians of varying nationality, all without result. His instructions from Captain Jackson Trent, head of a counter-espionage organization that just now was covering Paris and the base ports, were rather intangible. With three others, the sergeant was to keep a watchful eye on Bordeaux and interrogate any one suspected of spy-running.

Sight of an undistinguished little man in civilian clothes passing near the hotel roused in the sergeant another of his numerous suspicions. The fellow apparently was a Dane, plainly dressed and walking down rue Condé in no especial hurry, his face placidly expressionless. Wallen followed the man several blocks into a less frequented street, then accosted him.

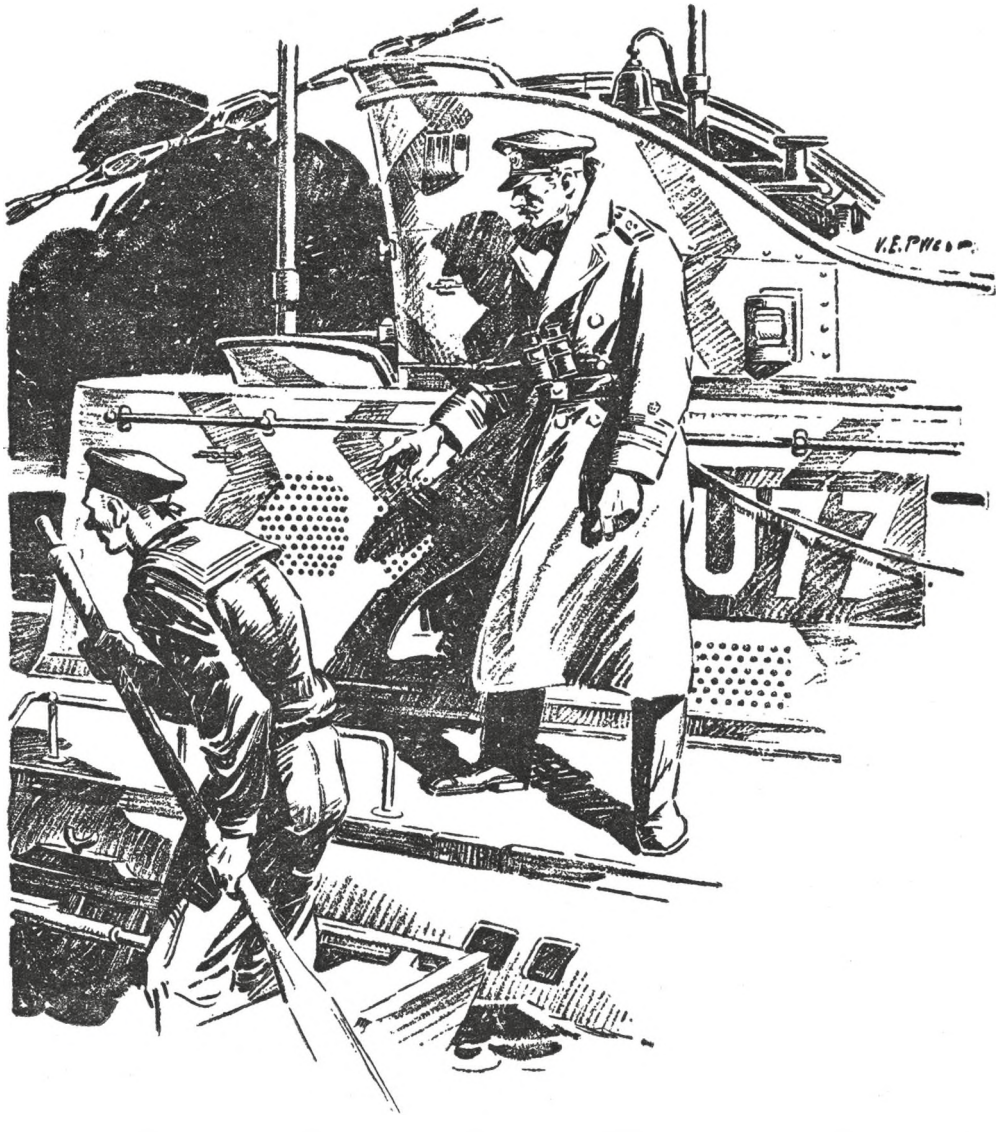
"Allied Military Intelligence Police," Wallen said quietly in French. "I want a look at your passports and card of identification."

"Yes, *monsieur*," the Dane replied with stolid unconcern.

Passports and other papers checked. The man was a Danish neutral employed by a French firm as a fisherman in the Bay of Biscay. Moreover his presence in Bordeaux was duly registered with the French police. But Sergeant Wallen was not satisfied.

"I'm taking you up to base section headquarters to answer some questions," he announced.

The Dane protested mildly. He was a humble oyster fisherman, he said, who



must get back to his boats on the Bay of Biscay before dark. There was no business the police could have with him, since he had never violated a law in his life. But those objections, or rather the manner behind them, only increased Wallen's determination. He caught the Dane by the arm, hailed a taxicab and thrust his suspect in ahead of him.

But what Sergeant Wallen accepted as full confirmation of his suspicions developed well before they reached base section headquarters. Without warning of his intentions, the little Dane suddenly thrust open the cab door and leaped into the street, a maneuver executed with such swiftness that Wallen was caught off guard. The sergeant was on the pavement in full pursuit a moment later, calling to the fugitive to halt. But the Dane paid no attention, protecting himself from the sergeant's automatic by dodging back and forth among pedestrians as he raced.

With his eyes fixed upon his man, Wallen ran a straight course, bowling over Frenchmen in his course right and left. A bedlam of protest rose behind as a

throng of men joined in the race, their quick sympathies aroused against the large man with pistol in hand.

"Assassin! Madman!" the cry went up.

A Frenchman struck at Wallen viciously with his cane. Wild cries rose for the gendarmes. Wallen saw his man dodge into a narrow alleyway. There was no instant for hesitation as he bolted into that hole behind his quarry. In another moment he knew the Dane would be gone. He used that precious moment not in indecision but in taking careful aim. There was the crack of Wallen's pistol, a shrill outcry of pain from the victim as he spun crazily around and collapsed.

Sergeant Wallen picked the limp figure up and without pausing hurried on through the alleyway to the next street. Behind, a rabble was now pressing him closely. Twice he turned to glare at them when there were threats of attack. Luckily a taxicab was close at hand as he emerged from the alleyway and into this vehicle he hurried with the limp body of the Dane.

"Move on—and ask no questions!" Wallen commanded when the French chauffeur hesitated in the face of a sea of excited faces that rushed up to the cab jabbering warnings and maledictions. "Drive to headquarters American base section No. 2."

The Frenchman, goaded by Wallen's sharp command and reassured by the official destination, set his car in motion and sped away. Wallen's face became grimly lined as he felt the Dane's pulse. The man was dead.

Hurriedly Wallen searched through the dead man's pockets. They yielded nothing but a perfunctory letter addressed to the captain of an oyster fishing concern in the Bay of Biscay, vouching for the skill and integrity of the bearer as an oyster culturist. With sudden misgivings Wallen extended the search, inside the dead man's mouth, through the heels and soles of his shoes. There was nothing.

On reaching base headquarters, Wallen took the body inside and reported to the D.C.I. major what had happened. Another and thorough search was made of the dead man. Nothing. Wallen was now shaken by apprehension. The French civil police, he knew, would be on the job shortly. Had he made a horrible mistake, shot down an innocent neutral whose flight had been forced by panic rather than guilt? The D.C.I. major became panicky as well.

"Looks like you'd let yourself in for some trouble, Sergeant," he grumbled. "That's a serious matter, shooting a neutral down on the public streets, especially when you had no real right of arrest."

"There wasn't any time to reason things out, sir," Wallen replied. "Either I shot him or he got away. I didn't like the way he acted—and he must have something on him, unless he ditched it—and he didn't have time for that."

"Nothing but this letter, which means nothing," said the major. "Seems to me you I.P. birds are getting a bit too reckless. What were your instructions in Bordeaux from Captain Trent?"

"Let me look at that letter, Major," Wallen requested, ignoring the major's question. "I haven't changed my mind. There's cipher hid in this letter someplace or that Dane swallowed a cipher pellet. I want to put some heat on this letter—and if that don't work we can give it a bath in a few chemicals. Then if nothing happens, I request that the medicos do a post-mortem. If we don't find anything—then maybe I'm just plain out of my senses."

But a few moments later the major was on his feet with an exclamation of amazement. The tense lines of Wallen's face relaxed, color flowed back in his face. The innocent appearing letter of credentials, when heat was applied to its

folds, disclosed a motley array of yellowish symbols which slowly took form and sequence. A message of some fifty groups of symbols identified itself out of an invisible pigment in which it had been penned.

"Cipher!" exclaimed the D.C.I. major. "A spy-runner as sure as death! And maybe this is the trail of Herr Swarzwald that we've all had our eyes peeled for!"

The base section chief-of-staff stalked into the room, stirred by a report from the prefect of police that an American had shot a man down in cold blood on the streets of Bordeaux. The colonel took the unmasked message from the major's tense hand and his brows knotted. Briefly the D.C.I. major narrated what had happened.

"Looks like we'd uncovered something," the colonel muttered. "A courier better take this by plane to Tours immediately."

A few hours later the counter-espionage experts of the high staffs at Tours and Chaumont were in animated conference while cryptographers and mathematicians set their letter-frequency and complicated computation tables at work on the secret message.

What was the message? While the experts pried for the answer to that riddle, higher officers had their heads together checking over probabilities. The trail of Herr Swarzwald beyond doubt. That was accepted by all. A fortnight before had come from a French undercover agent in Berlin the tip of Swarzwald's departure for France with a corps of Imperial agents.

"Swarzwald's Flying Dutchmen" the Teuton spy-team was called by the British. Naval agents working out of Von Tirpitz' headquarters, they were a shadowy aggregation of secret agents who had infested London early in the war and pried many disastrous naval secrets from the British fleet. And the Swarzwald presence in France could have but one evident purpose—to appraise the rising power of American man-power as the soldiers came through the base ports *en route* from America to the fighting front. Perhaps, moreover, to find some way of stemming that olive-drab tide on the high seas.

Colonel Rand, counter-espionage chief at American headquarters, shook his head dolefully when his staff accepted this deduction as final.

"That makes it my affair," he complained, staring straight ahead of him. "And here I'm caught with Elton over in Austria and my own spy-circus out of the game for repairs! We haven't anyone else fast enough to deal with this Flying Dutchman."

"You can call Captain Trent back on the job, sir," Rand's executive officer spoke up. "But hadn't we better wait until the cryptographic section breaks down that cipher message? That may give us some better insight into what we're up against, Colonel."

A few minutes later the cryptographers gave their report. The intercepted message was code—probably German naval code. Therefore there was no such thing as breaking down the message short of several weeks of work and then only in event of securing several thousand words of code text to work on.

"There's nothing else to do, now, Colonel," Rand's executive officer advised. "It's clearly up to Trent's crew."

"But Trent has had three months of hell in Germany and lost half his men," Colonel Rand argued. "I told him to break some of his new men in on the base ports and take things easy for a few weeks."

"It was one of Trent's men who picked up this Swarzwald code, sir," the executive officer persisted. "He's got four of his best men left, as well as Miss Sanders, who's worth a dozen men on a job like this. Anyhow, sir, we're flat up against it unless we put Trent back in the harness."

Rand walked slowly back and forth

across his office indulging his favorite thought-provoking habit of massaging a long, blunt nose with a stubby index finger. Finally he made his decision.

"All right, I'll put Trent's show back on the road," he agreed. "Order my sedan and I'll jump down to Paris immediately!"

CHAPTER II

TRENT PLANS A JUNKET

TO all outward appearances the house on rue Valbonne was the usual type of billet for American officers on duty in Paris. French neighbors knew that five American officers lived there, a captain and four lieutenants, who came and went in a small American military sedan, attended by a military chauffeur and a corporal orderly.

The corporal invariably rode the front seat with the driver, ready to leap out and open the car door for the officers the moment their vehicle drew up at the curb in front of the American's billet. Then, having performed that obsequious duty, the corporal would gather supplies, bundles or musette bags and carry them in by way of the servants' door.

And doubtless many a French shrug followed that corporal. For he was a man of mature age, splendid physique and a face whose lines suggested fighting mettle rather than an *embusque* berth as military flunky to a lot of staff officers in Paris.

But what the French neighbors did not see was the changed role of that corporal once he entered the billet. When the door closed upon him he would stride directly to the best room in the house and seat himself at a desk while the officers assembled in respectful attitudes in front of him to report the day's events.

These two days just past the corporal, and the captain as well, had not been in evidence when the sedan rolled in at evening. Neighbors probably did not note that fact, or if they did, thought nothing of it. In fact the corporal was drunk, deliberately drunk in billet, while the captain remained on hand to look after him, serve champagne or hot rum and otherwise minister to the wants of this unusual master of a strange house.

The others came and went as usual. All wore the insignia of the sanitary corps and their presence in the Allied war metropolis, home of every conceivable type of technical service, was accounted for by orders assigning them to survey sanitary conditions in France as affecting the American Expeditionary Forces.

The four lieutenants had returned to the billet shortly before dusk when a second car drew up, a large military sedan from which a stubby colonel emerged. One of the lieutenants, who responded to the colonel's knock turned deathly pale at sight of the counter-espionage chief.

"I want to see Captain Jackson Trent at once," Rand announced bluntly.

"Sorry, sir, the captain—well maybe we can locate him if the colonel wishes to wait. Or we can get word to him and send him to your hotel, sir?"

"I thought Trent was taking it easy," Rand muttered. "Or maybe he's out taking part in the battle of Paris, eh?"

"I'm—well, I'm not sure, sir," the junior officer faltered. "But I'll see what I can learn."

There was a commotion from the second floor followed by a thick voice shouting down the stairway.

"Show the colonel up," the voice commanded, punctuated by a slight hiccough. "Can't keep a colonel waiting, y'know. Come right on up, Colonel!"

"Drunk, eh?" said Rand with a sharp look at the lieutenant. "All right, I'll go up and see what's going on."

The man upstairs was in dressing gown and slippers. His black hair was tousled, his gray eyes bloodshot, there was a most unmilitary stubble covering

his face. He drew himself up with an effort as the counter-espionage chief appeared in front of him.

"Glad to see you," he greeted the colonel easily. "Come on in and have a chair."

"Thanks, Trent," Rand said tartly. He appraised the officer carefully and added, "Pickled, eh?"

"Mildly, yes," Captain Trent confessed with placid unconcern. "I've been more or less plastered the past two days, but am tapering off just at present."

"This is a surprise to me, Trent," Rand said severely. "I never knew you were given to such—nonsense."

Captain Trent's face hardened. It was not the face of a man given to drink or to any other weakness. On the contrary there was character, determination, balance and a high order of intelligence in the shape and set of his gray eyes, the well-defined cheek bones, the deep-set though not obtrusive jaw, the strong chin and the straight, firm, but friendly mouth. Just now there was a note of resentment evident in Trent's manner, a resentment that was distinctly remarkable on the part of a junior officer in the presence of command eagles.

"An experiment, Colonel," he said brusquely. "Trying for a change of mental scenery."

Colonel Rand flushed. "I suppose it's your own business, Trent, when confined to your own billet when you're not on duty," he conceded. "But—er—as a friend I'd like to suggest it's bad business."

"That may be, Colonel Rand," Trent said, baring even white teeth in a caustic smile. "But I'd like to remind you that for three months just past I've been forced into a lot of bad business. Yes, for three months I've been Herr Schlissler—a slimy Prussian masquerader with a mission in Berlin. I've had to live by another man's standards, thinking what I considered his thoughts, not daring to give play to my own impulses!"

TRENT paused to light a cigarette, his fingers shaking as he lifted the match. A coldly cynical light sparkled in his eyes as he looked back up at the colonel.

"In the line of your orders, Colonel, I've been compelled to see some of my men shot down by the Imperial police in Berlin—and didn't dare shoot back. I've seen others of my men stood against the military stone wall—and didn't dare interfere. Well—I'm not blaming you, nor any one. That isn't it, Colonel. War is war and my mission to Berlin required discretion—at all costs. But it was a damned unnatural role to put me in—and having been in it I reserve the right to try to forget it by any means of my own choosing!"

Rand backed down with a friendly smile.

"After all, Trent, I presume it's your own business," he rejoined. "My only thought was a bit of advice to a younger man—from an older one."

Trent's resentment vanished as quickly as it had flared. The colonel having retreated, Trent smiled.

"Sorry, Colonel," he said quickly. "Fact is, I was acting on advice. Advice of a good old Army medico who told me a good jag might clear the air for me—and I believe it has. Anything we can do for you down here, sir?"

"Yes," Rand said at once. "I regret the necessity—but it appears mandatory, Trent, to interrupt your brief spell of light duty and put you back seriously to work again."

"Swarzwald case?"

"Exactly. We've found indications that this Prussian is now in France and hard on the job. An I.P. picked up a code message from a spy-runner at Bordeaux. Everyone agrees it was a Swarzwald henchman."

"I'm familiar with all that, sir. My man Wallen sent me a full report of the incident. From that I argued you'd be calling us back into active harness as

soon as your cryptographers doped out the message."

"How soon will you be able, Trent, to get things in shape to take over the whole mess?"

An amazing transformation had come over Trent since the unexpected arrival of the counter-espionage chief had interrupted his experiment in forgetfulness. His dark hair was disheveled, the whites of his eyes were still shot with red and under them were black circles, but otherwise he was now a man in the fullest possession of faculties, cool, collected, mentally alert.

"I'll never be more ready than I am now, Colonel," he said. "I had expected a few more days of light duty—but I'm really glad to know I'm going back to work at once, especially on a case of this sort."

"But how about your team?"

"We're well enough organized to operate here in France. I've got three men in Le Havre, two in Tours, three in Paris, two in Brest, two at St. Nazaire and five with me in Paris, in addition to our Miss Sanders, whom I sent down to Tours a couple of days ago."

"Tours? Why to Tours?"

"Because all the reports of new troops and transport movements are consolidated by our S.O.S. section there. A handy place for Swarzwald to get information, if he can manage to break through the watch at our headquarters there."

"But doesn't catching that spy-runner at Bordeaux suggest to you that Swarzwald's agents are getting their information first hand at the base ports as our troops come off the transports?"

Trent studied the floor a moment.

"It might—or the fellow whom Wallen shot may have been a runner from some interior point—such as Tours."

"Headed for the Spanish frontier, eh?"

"I haven't reached any conclusions, Colonel. Swarzwald could get his messages through Switzerland into Germany, or through the American lines in the Vosges, although the German wireless station at Madrid might be his best bet. Fact is, sir, I've not attempted to make too many deductions until I got definite orders from you—and learned what the cryptographers have to say."

Colonel Rand shook his head ruefully and handed to Trent the unbroken German message. Trent's face fell as he took the missive and studied its undeciphered symbols.

"Our experts all say it is code and they can't do a thing with it, Trent. Probably German naval code," Rand explained.

"Likely enough, sir. The mere fact that Swarzwald is one of Von Tirpitz' naval spies seems to tell us it is naval code. But I thought the French had a captured naval code book."

"The Imperial navy has changed its code since then, unfortunately. Everything has been done with this message that possibly can be done. But the thing is simply unbreakable."

"But there seems to be too much theory about this whole Swarzwald case, as matters now stand!" Trent protested. "We're left to guess where he is, what he looks like, who are his agents and how many there are of them; and what mischief the lot of them are up to. It seems to me we've simply got to unmask this message—and every other message we intercept so as to get a better picture of the job."

"Granted. But since that is impossible we've got to do the next best thing, Captain. Just what that next best thing may be, I'm leaving to you. You can have as many men as you want—and I'll give you *carte blanche*—so long as you keep me informed of developments."

Trent sat looking past the colonel for some moments, a man lost in deep thought. Finally his face brightened, the impulse of a sudden vitality gleamed in his eyes. He glanced at his watch and rose to his feet.

"If you'll stay for dinner, Colonel," he announced, "my men will give you a first-class meal. But if you'll excuse me, I'll have to be leaving. Got barely time to catch my train."

The colonel's brows lifted as Trent threw off the dressing gown and hurriedly drew on his corporal's uniform, then began putting his effects in a musette bag.

"Well, what is it you're up to now?" Rand demanded, a tone of resentment in his voice at Trent's cryptic behavior.

"Just remembered a hole card I've had up my sleeve for a long time, sir," Trent replied lightly. "It fits right into this game, and now's the time to play it!"

"Which means what?"

"That I want to decode the intercepted German message—as my first step in trapping Swarzwald."

"How? Didn't I tell you our experts pronounce that code unbreakable?"

"Yes, but they didn't try going to Hull for the answer, sir."

Rand stiffened. He searched Trent with cold eyes.

"Captain Trent, is it possible you are still drunk!" he demanded.

"Never more sober in my life, Colonel, as you must surely perceive."

"Then explain."

"But I'd rather not. Not until I can explain results rather than a project. But I'll be back from England in, say, three days—and with any kind of a break we'll know how to read that Boche message from Bordeaux. If not—well at least, I'll have my whole crew on the job in France by that time—which is as much as I could do if I stayed here in Paris. See you later, Colonel."

CHAPTER III

UNDER THE NORTH SEA

WHIRRING across Paris in a French taxicab, Trent gave hurried but carefully calculated instructions to Captain Ferris, who, in addition to his capacities as a resourceful operative, served as Trent's adjutant and principal assistant.

"Close the house on rue Valbonne as soon as you get back there, Ferris," Trent directed. "Set up in a similar place in Tours. Slip one of your men in as a technical assistant in G-4 at headquarters of the Services of Supply. Keep in touch with Miss Sanders. She's operating as a welfare worker among the enlisted men."

"Any special angles to look out for, Captain?"

"No. Just get settled and watch developments. Arrange to have all reports of our men from the base ports sent to Tours. We've got a sly fox to deal with in this Herr Swarzwald and he'll have an ugly pack behind him. It'll be a ticklish case at best, but if we can get the key to that naval code, it'll give us an edge on a mighty stiff game."

Ferris was silent for several moments. He was a somewhat older man than Trent; thickset, methodical, unemotional. Through dangerous months, in many a perilous adventure in enemy country, he had learned implicit confidence in the keen judgment, sound reasoning and cold courage that invariably lay behind Trent's audacious exploits. But he had found himself as deeply puzzled as Colonel Rand in this sudden Trent junket to England.

"Figure the British naval experts may have a code book handy?" Ferris inquired circumspectly.

"If I did, I'd simply call London on the long distance," Trent replied. "No, with a new German code in effect, I naturally argue that the Germans are the only ones who have a copy—and I'm hopeful they'll oblige me."

"Since when did the Imperial admiralty set up in England, Captain?"

"They've been set up in the North Sea for a long time, Ferris. I didn't dare tell the colonel what I'm up to. He's so

damnably conservative—that if I should fail, I'd never hear the last of it."

Captain Ferris's eyes brightened with sudden understanding.

"Going fishing for a submarine, eh?"

"If the British will give me a lift, I've got a chance, at least, of getting the new code. You can bet the submarines are tied up closely to this Swarzwald visit to France—and there ought to be a larger number than usual nosing about the North Sea, standing by for emergency orders."

"Have you forgotten, Trent, that the first thing any competent submarine commander does is destroy his code book in event of capture?"

"I wasn't planning on capture, Ferris. In fact, I know I'm playing a long chance. But it's the most important chance I can play right now. In fact, I'm glad to pass a few days on this adventure, so as to keep in the background while our gang makes its reconnoissance and gets set up at Tours."

The taxicab sped up to the depot. Trent slung his musette bag over his shoulders and grasped Ferris's hand heartily.

"Good luck, Ferris. See you in Tours within a week—and I hope you'll be set up ready to go by that time."

On arriving a few hours later at Le Havre, Trent transferred immediately to a channel boat. His corporal's uniform enabled him to travel without attracting attention in lands where enlisted men were everywhere, men by the millions coming and going in this mad adventure of war. But while his captain's rank in the service rated him comfortable quarters on the channel boat, his masquerade as a corporal allowed him bare standing room out on deck, jammed among the heavy shipment of men to England for specialist training.

Tonight the ordeal of standing was lengthened by a series of submarine alarms. The little channel boat was held in port two hours overtime and turned back twice into the harbor after getting under way. But submarine threats just now were music to Trent's ears. The more submarines the better it suited his present humor. The fear did not so much as enter his mind that a German torpedo might connect with the tiny craft upon which he stood, chilled by wind and drenched by fog, through endless black hours of the journey across.

Blackness was thinning into the first gray of dawn when the vessel crept into Southampton. Trent caught the early morning express to London; thence by an American motor furnished him by American headquarters at London he hurried to the flying field of Killingholme outside of Hull.

The British commandant was adamant to Trent's most eloquent pleas. Telephone conversations with London, hours of negotiations back and forth, brought no official approval to Trent's demands for a bomber to carry him out over the North Sea.

"We're playing for big game," the commandant finally confessed. "One submarine is nothing—but half a dozen is a take worth waiting for!"

"You force me to tell you why I want one submarine," Trent said finally when every other effort at cooperation had failed. "American counter-espionage has intercepted a message from Herr Swarzwald—and we've got to learn what trouble he's planning for all of us."

"Swarzwald!" the English officer repeated. "We had that scoundrel on our own hands two years ago in London. Lost two of our cruisers and a whole convoy of troop and supply ships before we made things so hot for him that he got out of England."

"So far as we know now, he's merely collecting information of the number of troops arriving from America," Trent explained. "But there may be something more serious behind his invasion of France. Anyhow, since we're lucky enough to have what every one thinks

is a Swarzwald code message, nothing is more important than to find what it means."

"Right-o, Captain. That puts things in a different light. I'll get London back on the line and explain matters. One little raid down in the North Sea will hardly matter—and the fishing ought to be good right now. We haven't had a plane over our worst submarine zones in the past fortnight."

Another half hour and London had given authority for the adventure. But the day was spent and when the next day dawned word came of a heavy mist over the North Sea in the particular zone that the British commandant had selected for Trent's venture.

Trent put in the day studying his maps, touching up his observer's technique in handling the bomber's triggers. So far as the fine points of such precarious gunnery were concerned he knew he must leave everything to the skilled pilot who had been assigned to the job ahead. And the commandant assured that his best man, a naval lieutenant, senior grade, would be at the controls.

The following day was even thicker at Killingholme. But in mid-forenoon glorious news was flashed in from the North Sea of a dazzling spring sun that had routed the mists and afforded perfect visibility.

A BRITISH bomber was all ready for the take-off. Its pilot, a young officer with pink cheeks and smiling blue eyes who somehow suggested to Trent a place in the rooter's section of a Cambridge soccer game, climbed aboard and motioned Trent to his place in the observer's cockpit.

"With any luck, old dear," the pilot shouted in a thin, high-pitched voice, "we ought to have our shark and be back in time for tiffin."

Under the fuselage, held in place by stout racks, were the submarine bombs, their triggers connected to the observer's cockpit by copper wires. The bomber took the air sluggishly, circled over Hull to a height of a thousand feet, then set off to the coastline. There was bright sunshine once they got well clear of the earth and as they came to the wide smooth reaches of the sea, Trent caught the sparkle of sunlight dancing on the ripple below.

The pilot set the craft's course to the north along the coast, flying an indirect course, now well out over the water, again close to land. Trent kept his eyes strained below, watching for the telltale streamer that might betray the course of an underseas prowler. Two hours of search was without result. Suddenly the pilot nosed down to five hundred feet.

"Here's the place for sharks if there be any," he shouted through the cockpit phone. "Fine shallow water along these parts, with a nice shelf of rock running out from land."

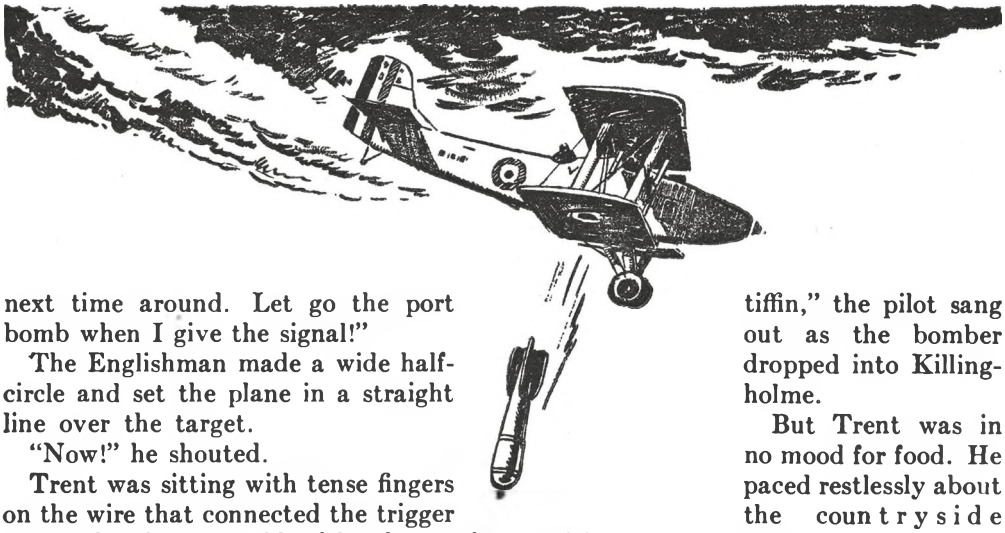
A few minutes later the pilot's trained eyes picked up the sign of prey.

"Aye, there! Look sharp below to starboard!" he shouted.

Trent, searching across the placid stretch of grayish-green water, made out a small whitish rift on the surface that, on close inspection, had the appearance of a small mass of floating bubbles. Although it was a sight he had never observed before Trent needed no exposition from the pilot to tell him its significance.

With a wide circle the bomber dropped lower. When they were at a height of three hundred feet, a long rakish form shaped itself in shadowy outline. The object had the semblance of a large fish lying against the bottom in murky shallow water, its lines plain one instant, lost the next.

"Get set, Captain!" came the thin little voice in the phone, cool and devoid of excitement as the pilot made his calculations. "We're going to drop something



next time around. Let go the port bomb when I give the signal!"

The Englishman made a wide half-circle and set the plane in a straight line over the target.

"Now!" he shouted.

Trent was sitting with tense fingers on the wire that connected the trigger under the fuselage. He felt the craft lurch heavily as the port bomb let go. The plane leaped upward and ahead as the pilot maneuvered. A few tense moments and there rose out of the sea a mighty tower of white water as if some phantom came from the depths. The bomber shook like a leaf under the violent detonation that followed.

Instead of turning about for a second shot, the pilot made a wide circle, dropped low and studied the water.

"Target!" he called back. "We cracked her first pot. But we'll take no chances."

As the sea cleared, Trent caught dark splotches at the surface, splotches that seemed to grow slowly the while he watched them. Oil from the victim below. That port bomb had done its business. But a moment later the Englishman leveled out for a second shot.

"Get ready for the *coup de grâce!*" he called back, followed quickly by the signal to drop the starboard bomb.

There was another ghostly mountain of white followed by a racking explosion. The pilot turned abruptly away and set his course back down the coast, thence for Killingholme, passing signals en route to a squadron of British destroyers.

"Cheer-o, old dear. Back in time for tiffin," the pilot sang out as the bomber dropped into Killingholme.

But Trent was in no mood for food. He paced restlessly about the countryside awaiting the final and vital outcome of his adventure. Those destroyers would require several hours to reach the scene of the bombing. Then divers must be put below.

Twice before the German naval code had been captured. Irreparable damage had been inflicted upon the German fleet before the loss had been discovered at Cuxhaven and a new code put out. With the code book in their hands now, the British would be able to cover for many days, using German code to report the submarine still in service.

Trent smiled grimly as he walked. Ninety men sent to their death in the quest of a tiny document. Probably, if they had not been drowned at once, they were gasping now for air, breathing their last, one at a time. But he remembered that was only a part of the madness that swept the world. Death, violence. And that code book might save ten thousand lives, or twice that number, men of his own kind.

There was no report that afternoon, nor during the night. The next morning passed without final word. The destroyers were at the scene, they had located the submarine lying stark on the bottom, smashed into worthlessness. Divers were working cautiously but effectively.

Then, late in the afternoon, came the message. The divers had reached the inside of the boat. The crew was dead. They had forced the commander's cabin. He had destroyed the code, his last act. A small heap of black ashes on the floor of the cabin mutely told the story.

Trent merely smiled, a mirthless, sardonic smile. He was not thinking of his own disappointment but of the grim mettle of that submarine commander who had fed into the burning of that precious code book the priceless oxygen he had needed for gasping lungs. There were just such men always to reckon with in this relentless game of Trent's.

"Thanks, anyhow, for your co-operation," he told the commander of the air station. "I'll be pushing off back to France at once. Maybe my outfit will have a few leads to work on by the time I get there. I'll drop you a wire when we land Herr Swarzwald."

CHAPTER IV

IMPERIAL MASQUERADERS

ON reaching Paris the next afternoon, Captain Trent took a taxicab to American headquarters on rue St. Anne. His team, he told himself, had been allowed time to get oriented at Tours and the base ports. And if his British exploit had ended in dismal failure, it had enabled him to play in the background while the possibilities of a trail at Tours and along the coast had been thoroughly explored by his agents.

Therefore he had lost nothing, he argued, and luckily had no need to explain to the often unreasonable and always impatient Colonel Rand. It was, after all, upon the eyes and ears of his counter-espionage team that he must depend. His role was to direct their movements, give them their general plan, and then meet personally the quick emergencies that arose endlessly in this complicated game of spy and counter-spy.

When he reported in at the rue St. Anne headquarters the adjutant spoke up immediately.

"Tours has been pounding the wires for you since early this morning, Trent," he announced. "Your man Ferris insists he must speak with you as soon as possible."

"That's interesting," Trent mused. "Can I have the wire immediately?"

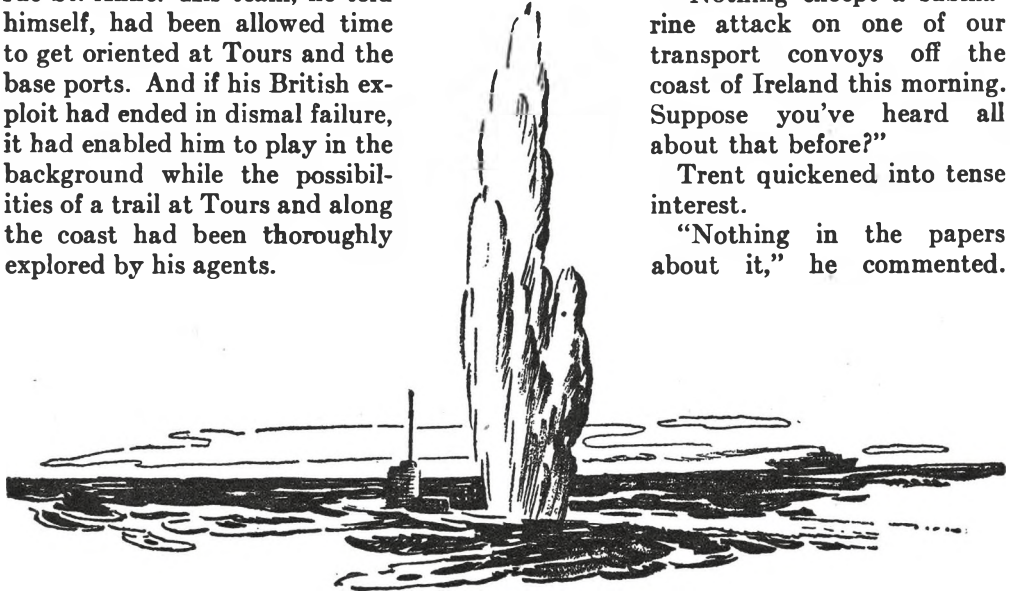
"No, Ferris calls in every half hour. Said to hold you if you showed up. I think he's gone out of Tours to St. Pierre des Corps and will call on the official wire from Central Records there." The adjutant consulted his wrist watch. "His next call is due in twelve minutes."

"Thanks," Trent said, helping himself to a chair. "Any news?"

"Nothing except a submarine attack on one of our transport convoys off the coast of Ireland this morning. Suppose you've heard all about that before?"

Trent quickened into tense interest.

"Nothing in the papers about it," he commented.



"Were the casualties very serious?"

"No. One transport was hit, but limped into port. But it's got everyone on edge. Our heaviest troop shipments have just commenced—300,000 men a month, they're planning on. Provided the German subs don't have too much luck."

Trent lighted a cigarette and waited. His failure on the North Sea now oppressed him more deeply than ever. What might it not be worth to bare the secret of that Swarzwald code? The feeling racked him that some doubly sinister Prussian staff cabal was afoot, a diabolical project that a letter in his own pocket would unmask if he could but learn the secret of its symbols. The attack on the American convoy might be the veriest beginning, the first of a series of attacks that might send thousands of American fighting men to the bottom of the Atlantic.

His thoughts were interrupted by the adjutant. Tours was calling again. Trent recognized the voice of Captain Ferris.

"When'll you be down here, Captain?" Ferris demanded.

"Figuring on the morning express, Ferris, unless there's some special hurry."

"I think you'd better get down right away," Ferris said quickly, a tension in his voice that was unusual with the stolid Ferris. "Looks like we got something dangerous in a hole—and we're not sure whether to go ahead or not."

"Anything gone wrong?"

"Lieutenant Hargreaves disappeared yesterday, sir. We sent him to make a little reconnoissance—and that's the last we've heard of him. He should have reported in last night. Miss Sanders just tried her luck—and is mighty suspicious. Wants to talk to you before going any further."

"All right, Ferris," Trent said decisively. "I'll get an army plane at Orlay and be with you in a couple of hours."

Ferris's voice rose in instant protest.

"As things stand, better not take that chance, sir. Might be observed when you made your landing. If you'll catch the night express, I'll have a driver meet you with a flivver. He'll bring you to the billet if the way looks clear. I'll manage to have Miss Sanders here and we can size things up ready for morning."

"Check. I'll catch the next train. Be in Tours about midnight," Trent decided.

In the two hours that elapsed before there was a train, Trent sauntered about Paris, his inner tension covered by his habit of outward serenity. He ate at the Café de Paris, since there was nothing unusual in the appearance of a corporal with funds and appetite matched to that select restaurant. But he did little more than pick at his food.

What was up to put Ferris in such a bustle? Trent had known that if there was something wrong at Tours, the ferreting propensities of his agents plus that uncanny intuition of Miss Sanders would get wind of it in due time. But he knew, too, that the Swarzwald masquerade would be deep and the ramifications of the Prussian spy tentacles tangled and elusive. Hargreaves gone. That sounded odd. Hargreaves was the most cautious of operatives and had emerged from the mess in Berlin without so much as a close squeak—even though Hargreaves had once invaded Wilhelmstrasse.

He cursed the matter of caste that relegated a corporal to the smelly third-class coaches. There was neither warmth, cleanliness nor repose in the crowded box on wheels that jolted him to Tours. A military chauffeur with an open flivver waited for him at the depot at the American SOS headquarters city. He recognized the man as one of his new agents, a first lieutenant when in proper uniform, named Holy when traveling under his payroll name.

"Haven't noticed any snoopers, sir," Holy reported as he escorted Trent to the vehicle. "My instructions are to take you to the billet, unless you have some reason for not going there."

"Any cause for thinking our billet is under observation, Holy?" Trent inquired.

"Not sure, sir. In fact we're not quite sure of anything, waiting until you got here. But you can go in by the servants' entrance and I can drive the car on back to SOS headquarters, where I'm putting up with the enlisted detachment."

The new billet in Tours was an ancient stone house of solemn pretentiousness on the rue de Clocheville. There were no lights visible, the residents seemingly asleep when Trent jumped out of the military flivver, his musette bag rolled under his arm, and went to the servants' entrance. The door was unlocked. He closed it carefully behind him, lighted a match to catch his bearings and groped out through a hallway, closing doors behind him. A door suddenly opened on a room flooded with light. Captain Ferris stepped forward eagerly.

"Glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "We've been praying for you ever since yesterday. Any luck in the North Sea?"

"Plenty of luck—but all bad," Trent rejoined with a tart smile. "What's up here?"

"Sanders picked up a tip—leave that to her—and it seems to be a hot one! But the next move is up to you, Captain. We've just been standing by—since Hargreaves disappeared."

"All right, what are the details?"

"Sanders got assigned to the welfare hut, which is in charge of a cadaverous, close-mouthed old codger named Hardison, who used to be a preacher. Then something happened—just one of those lucky things. This ex-preacher is from Detroit. In came a transient welfare worker from Detroit—said he wanted to surprise his cousin. But Sanders saw the play. Hardison wasn't fast enough—didn't recognize his own cousin and was clumsy in covering up when the cat came out of the bag. Well, he smoothed it over with the cousin all right. Said he'd been sick, lost forty pounds. The cousin went away satisfied—but Sanders was in the hut—and it got her started."

"What next?"

"Hardison reported sick next morning. That evening Sanders went to call on him. Little French billet on Boulevard Beranger. He was in bed, said he was catching the flu. A fat landlady was looking after him, giving him hot packs and rum. No doctor. The landlady handed Sanders a small bottle and asked her if she would run out and get it filled at a drugstore on Avenue de Grammont. The bottle was plain, but the Frenchwoman said the druggist would recognize the bottle and fill it accordingly. Well, Sanders always was cautious about putting her feet in a trap—and came on back here to consult with me. I sent Hargreaves to the fellow's billet. My mistake, I reckon."

"You sent Hargreaves alone?"

"No, I sent Holy along to cover from behind. Hargreaves delivered a note from Miss Sanders saying she had stumbled and broken the bottle. Holy reports that Hargreaves was in the billet only a few minutes. When he came out he went to the drugstore—but he never came out. Holy waited nearly all night and then came back to report to me."

TRENT sat looking intently at Ferris, his mind working swiftly over the development. By one of those whims of circumstances against which the best spies cannot reckon, Swarzwald's trail had uncovered itself in a second vital spot. In Tours, where Trent had expected to find it. The disappearance of Hargreaves, unless accounted for later, was conclusive indication.

"Where is Sanders?" Trent demanded.

"Since Hargreaves went into thin air, I've been playing close, Captain. I've compelled Miss Sanders to remain here in the billet."

"Got much else to report?"

"Nothing of special consequence. Wal-

len didn't find anything down on the Bay of Biscay except a small oyster fishermen's colony—mostly Scandinavians."

"All right. Send Sanders in. I want her report first hand. In the meantime I wish you'd get together all available records on Swarzwald and his principal lieutenants. I suppose you have them handy."

"Yes, sir. Got most of it from the Deuxième Bureau at Paris, including some good fingerprints. I'll send Sanders in now."

The stellar woman agent of Trent's counter-espionage team appeared in a few moments. Miss Sanders, wearing the drab bluish uniform of an over-seas welfare organization, fitted perfectly in that role. Her attractive, finely shaped features and thoughtful blue eyes, and the vitality and poise that were a part of her, suggested the type who would want a part in the war. The Army nurse corps and welfare organizations boasted many such workers.

"Ah, I see you are a brunette tonight, Sanders!" Trent exclaimed, leaping to his feet and extending both hands in greeting. "Last time I saw you, in Berlin, you were a dashing blond Gretchen."

"If I change my hues, Captain," she said lightly, "at least it is necessity and not vanity."

"Blond or brunette, or whatever you happen to be, Sanders," Trent rejoined, "I always think every time I see you that you are more beautiful than the last time."

"Must I hear that nonsense of yours every time I see you, Trent?" she asked dryly, helping herself to a chair.

"But I always mean it, Sanders. I'm still hoping that one day you'll fall in love with me."

"Are you about through with your nonsense?"

"No, I mean it," he said with a mild laugh and added circumspectly, "I haven't told you this before—but I have a deep reason, a professional as well as a personal reason."

"Which is?"

"Well, I've always been afraid, indispensable as you've gotten to be in this work, that one day you might fall for some Hungarian prince or Prussian potentate. Naturally, I argue, if you'll only fall in love with me, I'll have that worry behind me—when I'm on some important case."

Sanders looked up at him with a direct gaze that was level and very businesslike.

"Now that you've said all that," she said in a voice as level as her eyes, "perhaps we can settle down to business."

"All right," he agreed. "I just wanted to make sure that you're not getting romantic—at least not until this war's over. Ferris has told me of your pick-up. You've got a great mental antenna, Sanders. Now tell me what happened at that French billet."

Sanders handed Trent a small brown vial, a bottle of French manufacture and the kind usually containing salines.

"When my suspect gave me this, and asked me to take it to a *pharmacien* for filling, I felt there was something sinister about it. That's why I brought it to Captain Ferris and asked instructions."

"Any special reasons for that suspicion?"

"Yes. I read danger in the fellow's smile, in the play of his voice, in everything about me."

"Well, judging from Hargreaves disappearance—unless he shows up again with a sound explanation of his absence—you weren't far off on fighting shy of that little errand, Sanders."

Trent had been inspecting the bottle minutely. He whistled softly to himself, reached to a desk for a paper knife, scraped the side of the bottle and sniffed suspiciously. Then he looked up at Sanders and the lines of his mouth tightened.

"That sixth sense of yours served you mighty well, Sanders," he said grimly.

"We've seen the last of poor Hargreaves. The sides of this bottle are coated in minium—which confirms everything. That Swarzwald agent you visited sent you over to that drugstore—for what? To have the record of your fingerprints checked against Swarzwald's records of allied agents. A neat trap, eh? But it left the Swarzwald trail as clear as day. You've done another great piece of work, Sanders."

"Except, Captain," she responded with a touch of bitterness, "I shouldn't have been stupid enough to overlook that minium on the bottle. We could have saved Hargreaves—if we hadn't all been blind."

Trent shrugged and gave a taut smile.

"There are always slips and casualties in this game, Sanders. But it all balances up in our favor this time, thanks to you."

He turned and shouted for Ferris, who came in at once. Tersely he outlined the confirmation of the chemical-coated French vial and affirmed the certainty that Swarzwald's tentacles were planted in the little French drug store on Avenue de Grammont and in the French billet occupied by the masquerader who wore the shoes of Hardison.

"If you intend closing in on those places at once, Trent, I'll have to call on the local military police," Ferris exclaimed. "Except for five of us our men are scattered to the four winds just at this moment."

Trent lighted a cigarette and smoked reflectively.

"No, we're not closing in," he said in a low, decisive voice. "We might land a few agents—we might even get Swarzwald in the net. But until we know a lot more about just what forces are at work in France, we're going to play fast-and-loose. I want every one to keep away from that French billet. Sanders, you will carry on at the welfare hut as usual—and watch your step. Ferris, put Ellis and Holy on that drug store with instructions to follow any likely looking prospects leaving that place. The first thing to do is find Swarzwald's courier routes and tap some of his spy-runners. I'll remain here under cover until something more happens. That's all at present."

CHAPTER V

FIVE MEN MISSING

UNDER the soft spring sun of the next morning Tours lay spread out in a semblance of serene indolence. There was in the city's ancient streets little suggestion of the conflagration of war that raged far away across France to the east and north. Even soldiers were few, unless you went to the spacious casern that housed a busy hive of bustling Americans in uniform.

Here was the headquarters of the American services of supply. If Chaumont, in the foot-hills of the distant Vosges behind the fighting lines, was the brain center of the armed forces, Tours was its paunch. Here was centered responsibility for feeding the overseas forces, sheltering them, providing them with ammunition, fuel, medicines; of arranging to receive them as they arrived by transport from the United States and providing them with every need wherever they might be sent over the scattered map of France, Belgium, Italy and the British Isles.

The only war that raged here was the undercover war of the secret agents. Imperial spies came, in various masquerades, for carefully guarded information and were endlessly at war with Allied agents who sought to ferret them out for firing squads and guillotine.

Not even the conflict at the front lines was more relentless than this war of spy and counter-spy. It was a war to the end in which those who played at the sinister game might find death at the end of a misplaced word or glance.

It was, above all else, a game of sharp

wits, of quick resourcefulness in an emergency, of guarded patience and rare skill in following vague trails. Possession of those qualities in a remarkable degree accounted for the success of Captain Jackson Trent's past operations against the Imperial secret service. Added to his faculty of quick decisive action in an emergency was his endless patience in lying back until the fruits of his efforts were ripe.

Just at present Trent was remaining patiently out of sight. But he was engaged in an important bit of routine while his agents observed the world outside for him. From the neck of the telltale vial that Miss Sanders had brought in from the suspected French billet, he had transferred fingerprints. From the Deuxième Bureau records of known Swarzwald agents he compared the whorls and markings of those prints, one by one.

At the end of two long hours of work he stiffened in his chair, his pulse rose slightly. Bending close over his task he traced and retraced again those intricate whorls until all doubt was effaced. It was the fingerprint of August Fenstermacher, chief lieutenant of Herr Swarzwald.

So Fenstermacher was at the billet of the masquerader Hardison? Trent's eyes shone. That meant Swarzwald would not be far away. Hardison's masquerade as a welfare worker was not difficult to account for. The Imperial secret service had sent one of its American agents into the welfare service with instructions to get detailed to duty at Tours. That agent had passed by adopting the identity of a Detroit preacher. A whim of circumstance and the sharp wits of Sanders had stripped the mask.

Ferris came in shortly before noon, his face grimly drawn.

"They've found Hargreaves' body," he reported. "Lying in the park with a saber thrust through the heart. There was a note penned hastily in French saying he'd fought a duel with a Frenchman on a point of honor."

Trent nodded soberly.

"I suppose the gendarmes accepted that explanation without particular question," he said.

"Of course. Such killings are not especially unusual these days. But they've reported it to our casern, and our own military police will not be dumb enough to believe it."

"Then you'd better help them, Ferris. Let it drop that Hargreaves had a vendetta on and ask our people to forget it for the time being."

"But Swarzwald will not be fooled! He trapped Hargreaves and he'll know we know it."

"Certainly. In fact he means it as a warning, a declaration of war. Killing Hargreaves means he intends to destroy every Allied agent that comes across his trail. But that detestable Boche doesn't suspect how much we know—and he'll not abandon the present set-up of his star men unless we show our hand further. I just verified Fenstermacher's fingerprints—and you know what that means."

"Yes, sir. But isn't that all we need to close in on the mess, Trent? If we grabbed three big ones in one net—wouldn't that be better than taking any chances?"

"It might be, at that, Ferris. But I intend to play for big game—the whole outfit of them. And we've got a lot of work to do and a lot of chances to take before we're ready for that. By the way, any developments at the pharmacy?"

"We're in fine shape there, Captain. Scraped up eight good men working with Holy. They're teamed in relays to follow every customer who looks in any way suspicious. So far they've followed forty leads—every one duds. But Holy had been out over an hour without reporting back when I came away."

"Which might mean anything. Any

reason to believe your men have tipped their hand to the enemy?"

"I think not. But I suppose the first we'll know of that is when our men begin disappearing in thin air. So far they're reporting back in fine shape—all except Holy. I forgot to report that I went inside that drug store this morning. Bought some cough syrup and came out. Two French clerks at the counters, no one else in sight. I guessed that those two clerks don't know what's going on behind the scenes. Swarzwald has his spy-station mighty well camouflaged, I'd say."

"Good. Well, better get back out on the job, Ferris. And I wish you'd tell Sanders I want to see her as soon as convenient for her to leave the welfare hut."

As his principal assistant left, Trent puffed thoughtfully at a cigarette for several minutes, then dismissed the whole Swarzwald riddle from his mind and took up a book. An hour might pass before he would be called upon to act, or a day or even a week. Even then he knew he must proceed circumspectly, first searching out the intricate ramifications of the German spy invasion. To strike precipitously, even though he trapped Fenstermacher and a dozen other agents, would be to strike blindly, might be no more effective than treating a malignancy with liniment or salve.

LATE in the afternoon Miss Sanders reported in from her post at the welfare hut. Her face was flushed and there was a hint of excitement in her eyes as she took a chair.

"I've just had a message from Hardison," she announced. "Madame's thin and anaemic husband came over to say that Hardison is worse and would I please drop in this evening to write some letters for him."

Trent sat bolt upright and blinked thoughtfully at her.

"Just how did you stall him off?" he demanded.

"I didn't," Sanders averred. "I told him I'd be over this evening."

"Interesting," he said, with a mildly caustic inflection. "But perhaps you'll lose some of your enthusiasm for any such rash adventure as that when I tell you Hargreaves has been found—dead."

Sanders started, but quickly recovered her self-possession and smiled resolutely.

"But I've developed a new suspicion—one that's worth a risk, Trent," she said with decision. "Something tells me—"

"Before you tell me that," Trent interrupted, "let me ask a question. When you called on Hardison, who handed you that minium-coated vial?"

"Hardison himself. It was on a stand at the head of his bed."

"Good. Then it may interest you to know that Hardison is Fenstermacher, Swarzwald's chief henchman. I've developed the fingerprint on the neck of that bottle."

There was a response of high excitement in Sanders' eyes.

"Then that makes it certain I'm on the right track," she exclaimed eagerly. "It came to me last night—this suspicion—and now I know it for a fact. Madame Bouvray—well, I don't understand why I didn't see through her right at the moment."

"What are you talking about, Sanders? Who's Madame Bouvray?"

"The wife of Monsieur Bouvray, the one who called at the hut today, the Frenchwoman at whose billet Hardison lives. A very fat woman with a large head and small hard eyes and a peculiar way of rolling her fat hands together and trying to act meek. But—it all came to me last night, when I was thinking over that whole scene. That woman isn't a woman—but a German masquerader in petticoats. I'm willing to bet my life on it."

"And lose—trying to prove you're right," Trent rejoined. "Sanders, in some

respects you're the most valuable agent we've got—and the hardest to keep out of the morgue!"

"But if I can get that person's fingerprints tonight, who knows what—"

The fall of the knocker at the front door of Trent's billet interrupted. Trent, in his corporal's uniform, responded. It was his liaison agent from Tours headquarters with a telegram. The Captain tore it open as he closed the door and his eyes gleamed. The message was from Poitiers and was signed by Holy. It read:

> Sorry I didn't get a chance to say good-by before leaving back to Bordeaux. Thanks for all your hospitality. Hope you can visit me before too long.

Trent barely had time to read it through a second time before the door burst open and Captain Ferris came in. The captain's set jaw and level eyes were eloquent of disaster.

"It's all off at the drug store, Trent!" Ferris reported grimly. "The last four men Ellis sent out haven't come back. Thin air! That means Swarzwald has smelled the trap and the jig's up on our little game down there on Avenue de Grammont!"

Trent nodded, the while his mind made a rapid estimate of the situation.

"I'm afraid so," he assented. "Did you pull off your remaining men?"

"Yes'r. Figured Swarzwald holds the whip hand on that deal—and no use risking any more men there."

"Correct!" Trent reflected for several moments and his face hardened, "That's five men of ours gone, including Hargreaves. Leaves us a pretty big score of our own to settle with Swarzwald."

"And I'm for striking now, Trent! I can put a circle of steel around that billet of theirs in thirty minutes!"

Trent slowly shook his head.

"That billet is our last point of contact, Ferris. I'm not going to permit a single one of our men to go near the place. The drug store is out, but Swarzwald will set up his runner-station somewhere else in Tours. So we're keeping clear for the time being and not forgetting that our job is Swarzwald's whole crew."

"But if we got a few prisoners, we might make one of them talk!"

"Patience, Ferris. Here, read this message from Holy, which may net us a spy-runner before many hours. Or we may merely lose Holy. But the thing right now is to let the situation cool off—and wait developments. That reminds me, have you had any word from our men at the base ports?"

"Nothing but routine, Captain."

"All right, then let's stir up some dinner here in the billet and plan what we're going to do with Sanders. She's hell-bent on becoming our casualty No. 6. I think, under the circumstances, we better hold her here in the billet until this mess is settled."

CHAPTER VI

THE SPY-RUNNERS

FROM the French train schedules Trent learned that the southern express on which Holy had departed early that morning was due at Bordeaux at 7 P. M. Trent did not permit himself too much optimism, but he reasoned that the departure of a spy-runner for Bordeaux might mean a German courier route to Hendaye on the Spanish frontier, thence a relay to Madrid, where the Germans maintained a large radio sending station. And he knew Holy was a most determined and resourceful shadow who could be counted upon to hold the trail.

Only a direct order silenced Sanders' insistence that she visit the Fenstermacher billet.

"It's worth taking the risk," she pleaded. "Why, the very fact that they've destroyed five of our men would

throw them off guard against my visit. They'd credit us with better judgment than to send a woman at such a time!"

"And that's the reason you're not going, Sanders," Trent said. "We've got better judgment! No, you're too valuable for such risks."

"But that woman might be—well, might be Swarzwald!" she exclaimed. "Don't laugh at me—I've had that suspicion for some time, Trent. If I could only put this over—we might know just where we stand!"

Trent regarded Sanders thoughtfully. Extravagant as her suspicion might sound, he considered it seriously. Sanders was a rare combination of qualities, with the intuitions of a woman, the brains of a man and the courage of a doughboy. But in the quality of her courage Trent thought she was always a bit indiscreet, foolhardy. That was the way with women of her sort. And at a dinner or among casual friends at a tea, Sanders, with her large, mild blue eyes and her flawless smooth skin, her whole appearance of the essentially feminine, might have been taken for a woman who would scream at a mouse.

But Trent did not permit himself to weigh the risks Sanders proposed now.

"You've done your part. Sanders," he told her with finality. "Your work has put us on a live trail—and it's up to the rest of us to mop up. From now on this isn't a woman's work—and I've got to remember that when we're through with Swarzwald there'll be another case. Where'd we ever get another woman to take your place?"

"Why can't you ever forget that I'm a woman!" she said indignantly.

"That's one of the hardest things I have to do, Sanders," he said with a wide smile. "It'd be much easier if you weren't so darned good-looking."

"Or if you weren't so easy to impress," she added icily.

Trent glanced surreptitiously at his watch from time to time. He tried to conceal any evidence of his restlessness. But as nine o'clock passed he argued that some word should be coming in from Holy. By now Holy had been a full two hours in Bordeaux and should have his bearings—unless, perchance, his body was floating at this moment down the Garonne.

Ferris proposed a game of blackjack, which the three played with indifferent interest. Ten o'clock passed. Trent, outwardly intent on the game, inwardly only vaguely conscious of the cards, lost steadily. Holy, he knew, was his last hope of an unbroken thread in the net he spread for Swarzwald. If the German agents landed Holy, it meant a new start in the morning.

Impulsively Trent took down the receiver of his telephone and called headquarters at Tours.

"Arrange for a plane to take me to Bordeaux," he instructed his liaison agent at headquarters. "If I have to go there tonight, I'll have to go in a hurry—and there aren't any more trains until tomorrow."

As if some premonition of moving events had prompted his action, Trent had little more than hung up than the telephone rang back.

"Important message coming by courier," the liaison agent announced. "It's from Bordeaux—in cipher and marked 'rush' in three different places. Addressed to you personally, sir."

A few minutes later the message arrived. Trent tore it open with undisguised eagerness. It had been addressed to him in cipher over the official telegraph. And he instantly identified the simple transposition cipher used by his men in France. Setting down the key, he quickly reduced the message to English:

> Am holding two prisoners in room 217 Hotel Metropole Bordeaux. One from Tours carried code or cipher message. Have complete upper hand here but urge you send proper escort. Have not com-

municated with base section officials here. Will sit tight until I receive your instructions—B-27.

"Good old Holy!" Trent exclaimed. "Here, Ferris, tell our man to have that plane warmed up for a fast start while I change clothes and get some passports fixed up!"

"But, Captain, you don't mean you're going yourself!" Ferris protested. "We've got three men in Bordeaux, headed by Sergeant Wallen. Can't we wire them to help Holy handle two prisoners?"

"Put in that phone call, Ferris!" Trent rejoined crisply. "Then get some good Spanish passports fixed up for me. After that, instruct Wallen to wait for me with an auto at the American aviation field near Camp De Souge. If Swarzwald's courier went to Bordeaux, it must mean that their courier route runs into Spain. This may be a great piece of luck, Ferris!"

As he started for the door, dressed in civilian clothes, Trent paused to give final instructions to Ferris.

"Sit tight—and let things cool in Tours until you hear from me," he directed. "Have the gendarmes, with a couple of our military police, raid that drug store tomorrow—just to make Swarzwald think we've bungled things there. And see that Sanders stays in this billet out of sight—unless she wants to go to Paris for a vacation. That's all."

THIRTY minutes later Trent was roaring through the air behind a skilled pilot, the nose of the observation plane pointed toward Bordeaux. The hour was approaching three o'clock when the ship circled the aviation field out of Bordeaux and signaled for landing lights. A few minutes later they set down. Trent climbed from the observer's cockpit to find Sergeant Wallen waiting for him.

"Drive to our artillery camp at De Souge," Trent directed Wallen. "If there are any prying eyes around here they'll think nothing of it when we drive to De Souge. From there I want you to run me into Bordeaux as fast as possible."

The artillery camp was a run of only a few minutes. Snapping off headlights, Wallen drove out of De Souge toward Bordeaux, and reached that destination forty minutes later. Wallen had nothing definite to report of his junkets down the Bay of Biscay.

"Didn't find anything but some oyster fishermen, Cap'n," Wallen reported. "But I feel it in my bones there's something wrong down there, even if I can't put my fingers on anything."

Passing into Bordeaux they were halted twice by gendarmes who checked their *cartes d'identite*. Trent instructed Wallen to park the auto, a small French car upon which there were no military markings, at the curb two blocks north of the Hotel Metropole on Rue Condé. The two proceeded afoot to the hotel.

"No matter what happens, sergeant," Trent told Sergeant Wallen, "keep close behind me and adapt yourself to whatever course I follow. I'll have to make up my mind in a hurry the minute I get a look at things inside Holy's room."

They engaged rooms at the Metropole, to allay any suspicions of the *maître d'hôtel*, then made a cautious reconnoissance of Holy's room. Lights were visible through the glazed transom but there were no sounds. Trent tried the door. It was locked. He rapped lightly. Holy's voice inquired who was there.

"*Le maître d'hôtel*," Trent responded.

Holy recognized his chief's voice and opened the door promptly. Trent glared at him and bowed stiffly. Holy's eyes, at the instant of seeing Trent, sparkled with recognition, but he instantly picked up the Captain's idea.

"I wish to know what is going on in here that the lights are kept burning all night," Trent said with cold politeness, stepping into the room with Wallen close behind.

"I have engaged this room and that is

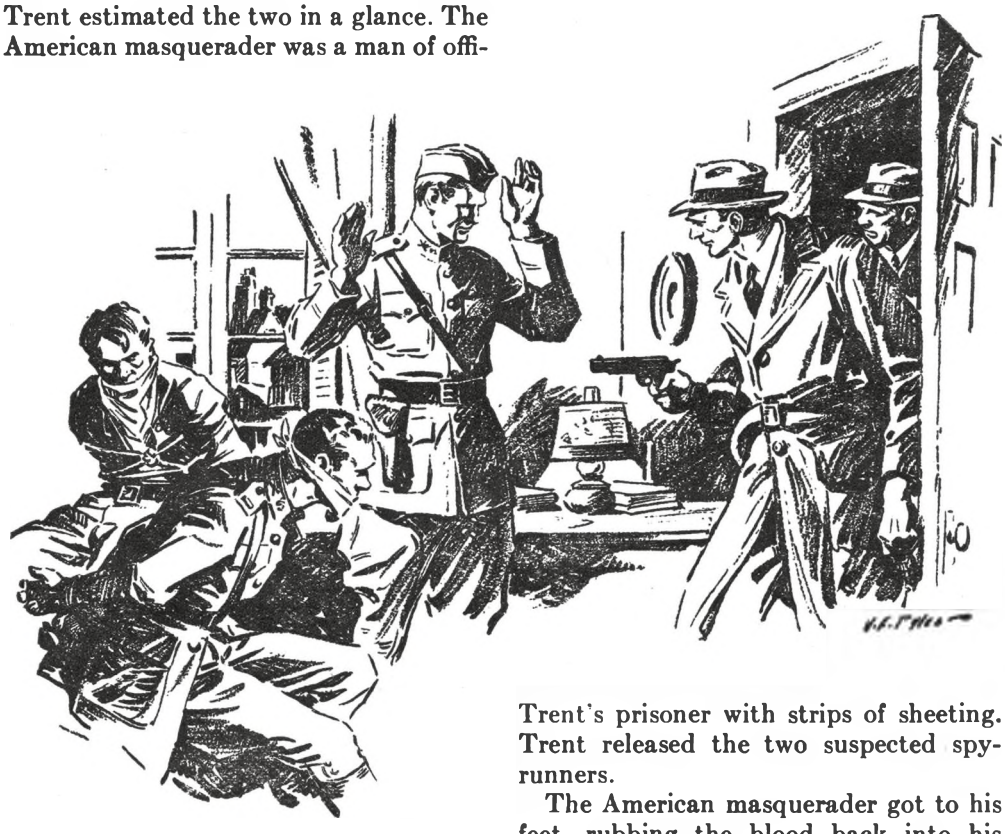
entirely my affair," Holy rejoined coldly.

Two glowering figures sat stiffly bound and gagged against the wall in a corner of the room. One of them wore the uniform of an American signal corps lieutenant, the other rough civilian clothes. Trent estimated the two in a glance. The American masquerader was a man of officer caliber, his features of German mold. The other had the high cheekbones, wide flat forehead and chubby features of a Scandinavian of the peasant type.

Two plans had been in Trent's mind as he flew from Tours. One of them was to try at breaking down one of Holy's prisoners. But his chief appraisal of the two men warned him that the Scandinavian would hold a stubborn silence, and that the other was of the Imperial secret service and would tell nothing under any duress. He put his second plan into instant effect. Whipping out a French automatic he covered Holy and rasped an order to Sergeant Wallen.

"Take his weapons," he commanded, "and tie him up!"

Holy muttered an oath but raised his hands with reluctant deliberation. Wallen disarmed him, and quickly secured



Trent's prisoner with strips of sheeting. Trent released the two suspected spy-runners.

The American masquerader got to his feet, rubbing the blood back into his wrists, and faced Trent with a tranquil smile. But deep in the fellow's small black eyes Trent caught the glint of suspicion.

"Tours got word that you were being followed to Bordeaux," Trent said, speaking rapidly in a low voice. "It's a lucky thing we got the word here—although I've had the devil of a time finding you."

The other nodded and his smile was drawn as he pretended to accept his rescue without display of the suspicion of an Allied trap that filled his mind.

"Do you speak English, *monsieur?*" he asked in broken French.

"I speak many languages—in my business," Trent replied.

"I am Lieutenant Waldo," the other announced. "Just arrived from the United States—and was arrested here tonight by that madman. I've been unable to make heads or tails of what he wants with me. Perhaps you can tell me what it is all about?"

"This is no time for equivocation," Trent retorted, speaking now in German. "The gendarmes have invaded the drug store on Avenue de Grammont. Herr Swarzwald is in an extremity and so is Herr Fenstermacher. Even Madame Bouvray's billet may fall under suspicion."

The masquerader, stung by Trent's blunt indiscretion, cast a quick glance of warning at Holy. Trent shrugged indifference.

"It is not intended that any of these swine will live to repeat anything they hear," he said contemptuously. "I will attend to this one before we leave. Has he taken from you—the message you brought to Bordeaux?"

Waldo's face cleared of suspicions. He stepped over to the prostrate Holy, bent over him and took from Holy's purse a small wax-encased oblong.

"That message must go on through immediately!" Trent commanded.

"Those were my orders," the masquerader retorted with a show of irritation, and added in a voice of self-excuse, "but that agent got the best of us just after I'd given Johanssen the message here. Popped into our room and covered us. We didn't have a chance."

"That's something else!" Trent snapped. "But it's time now to be acting. The message must go out of Madrid before the day is over."

The other's face twisted in perplexity.

"That's impossible," he protested.

"What's impossible about it! Spain isn't very far from here."

"But—my instructions! The Spanish frontier at Hendaye is alive with French agents. Any way you look at it, we'll have to hold Johanssen in Bordeaux until tonight. Better a day late—than to risk those Allies."

Trent nodded discreetly. He saw that he was in over his depth. And undue prying might arouse the fellow's quick suspicions. Hendaye clearly was not on the route of Swarzwald's spy-runners. Then why had an important message been sent to Bordeaux from the Swarzwald lair? Since palpably the message was meant for Madrid, what was the route used in reaching that destination?

"I imagine we'll have to make the best of it," Trent assented grudgingly, his decision one of waiting until the next moves shaped themselves. He added tentatively, "Under the circumstances I think we'd better hole in right here until time to move."

"Yes—until dusk comes," the masquerader assented. "Then Johanssen can make it down the Bay of Biscay by nine o'clock."

CHAPTER VII

ON THE ROUTE TO MADRID

TRENT turned to the helpless Holy, threw him upon the bed and covered him with a blanket. Waldo thought the prisoner should be done away with immediately. He tore a long strip of sheeting, fashioned it with a few deft twists into a garrote and faced Trent with a malignant smirk.

"Dead men don't have to be watched," he sneered.

Trent shrugged disgustedly and shook his head.

"I have no taste for spending the day with a corpse," he muttered. "I'll attend to him just before we pull stakes."

The German agent's quick suspicions flared again. Trent read the fellow's mind but bided his time. He knew that during the day of imprisonment in this

room Waldo would be constantly on the alert, a hundred doubts and questions filling his brain. Those suspicions Trent knew he must allay fully before the crisis that would come with evening.

Trent already had shaped his course. He meant to go with the spy-runner, Johanssen. Not only would that enable him to learn the Swarzwald courier route into Spain, but might yield at least one more cipher message, perhaps many, if he played his cards right. And there was no saying what other developments might come out of such a venture.

Johanssen sat stolidly apart, never speaking once through the endless hours that followed. He was plainly a man without nerves or emotions, though his gray-green eyes indicated a crafty sort of caution in his make-up, and his wooden demeanor and wide straight mouth told of stubborn courage. The relation between Waldo and Johanssen was not hard to guess. Trent needed no verification from Holy to accept his conclusion that Waldo was the agent from Tours, Johanssen the mercenary runner who carried messages from Bordeaux to their next destination outside of Madrid.

By means of a subtle indirection Trent set out to establish his own masquerade soundly in the German's mind. In that ruse, his recent mission to Berlin helped him, and the knowledge of Swarzwald's set-up at Tours. But it was not until Trent let drop the hint that he was an agent of the German army staff that Waldo's face cleared. The effect of this on Waldo puzzled Trent. It seemed to have dissipated Waldo's last doubts, as if by magic.

"Ah, but we knew your men were due in France," Waldo said with sudden gusto. "So, it is fortunate for us you were in Bordeaux last night."

Trent dropped the subject, deciding to let well enough alone. There were a hundred questions he wanted to put, the way seemed open for invaluable information. But against that was the risk of a slip that might upset the German's confidence again. Besides, at the last moment before leaving the hotel, Trent meant to announce that he was an important courier bearing an important message by word of mouth to Madrid. That would be strain enough on Waldo's credence and discretion.

Wallen went out twice for food and to check the little French touring car. He reported that it had not been disturbed by gendarmes. By evening Trent had established his authority over Waldo's weaker will. He asserted this advantage by giving the final instructions.

"The Hotel Metropole will no longer be tenable, Lieutenant," he instructed Waldo. "Therefore you must arrange a new rendezvous here in Bordeaux for your runners. I must proceed on toward Madrid—but my man Wallen will help you in any way possible. Very soon I will be back in Bordeaux from Spain."

The masquerader nodded assent. But his eyes were fixed upon Holy in a significant leer. He picked up the improvised garrote.

"No, the knife is more effective," Trent intervened. With a sly smile he added, "And a note written by a jealous husband will turn the minds of the gendarmes to *cherchez la femme*. Is that not the way Herr Swarzwald does things at Tours?"

Trent tore a sheet from his notebook, scrawled a note, drew his long-bladed pocket knife and nodded for the others to get started. As soon as they were out the door he slashed Holy free, dropped the note of instructions he had scribbled for his assistant, and hurried after the others. By prearrangement the four split forces at once, Trent leaving by a rear entrance with Johanssen while Wallen and the German agent passed through the hotel bureau and out into rue Condé.

One of Wallen's men was waiting at the car. Trent gave him terse orders to drive south out of Bordeaux. Once they

were moving he turned to the silent Johanssen.

"It is up to you to give directions," he said. "I do not pretend to know this country, neither does my driver."

Johanssen ruminated for some time before he replied in broken German.

"We turn south and then west," he muttered. "Ninety kilometers from here we come to the Bay of Biscay, then another forty kilometers we come to where the fishing is good."

From time to time Johanssen yielded blunt information on the tangled route down the coast. A heavy darkness had settled, broken only by a vague starlight. Trent made no effort to loosen the spy-runner's dull tongue. The destination Johanssen had given was a riddle which must solve itself, the captain decided. Perhaps the Scandinavian was merely cautious and laying out the route piecemeal as they progressed towards the Spanish frontier.

In the brief note Trent had left for Holy, that officer was instructed to secure a military automobile and drive to Hendaye on the Spanish border where he was to wait further directions. There had been no opportunity for instructions to Wallen. The sergeant would be left wholly to his own resources and judgment in handling the German agent. Doubtless, Trent argued, Waldo would want to return promptly to Tours and he guessed that Wallen would not interfere or do anything to excite Waldo's suspicion.

An hour of jolting down the coast and Johanssen showed signs of animation, leaning forward to stare closely at what was visible of the road ahead of him.

"We stop here," Johanssen grunted, and lumbered out of the car.

Without explanation the spy-runner walked off into the darkness. Trent followed closely without question, although wholly unable to fathom the strange maneuver. After a short walk he caught the play of starlight on water and saw that Johanssen was taking him to the shores of the Bay of Biscay.

They passed several huts set back on the rugged shore. There were lights inside and Trent heard someone singing in Norwegian to the accompaniment of a squeaky fiddle. He transferred his automatic to his outer coat pocket and released the safety. But Johanssen did not pause at this fisherman's nest. Shortly they came to the beach and out on a long roughly built fisherman's pier which bridged the light breakers. At the end of this Johanssen entered a bulky, wide launch and began tampering with the motors.

It was a sheer eighty miles to the Spanish coast, Trent estimated, therefore impossible to make the journey in this craft overnight. As the boat chugged out into the Bay of Biscay he wondered if Johanssen was merely crossing an estuary, to clutter the trail behind. But he saw that their course was straight out into the Bay. Then he divined the purpose of it all—and in a few more moments the stark black outlines of a long trim craft idling on the surface of the Bay bared the secret of Swarzwald's courier-route.

Johanssen gave a series of signals with a flashlight. There was a response of dim bluish lights then a low, tense voice called out in German:

"What boat is that?"

"The fishing smack *Vonnerbohn*," Johanssen cried back.

"From where?"

"Pier No. 12 Bordeaux, and bound for Madrid."

"All right, come alongside—and have a care," ordered the voice from the conning tower of the submarine.

Trent's hand closed involuntarily on the butt of his automatic, then relaxed, and a taut smile played across his mouth. There was no such thing as turning back, no such thing as resistance.

FOR A submarine at the end of the spy-runners' trail in the Bay of Biscay Trent was wholly unprepared. But his pulse leaped to the challenge. The launch swung alongside, a seaman with a pike brought it against the deck. Trent caught the black outlines of a gun mounted in front of the conning tower, saw half a dozen sailors lounging out on deck in the brisk air.

A voice crackled from the conning tower:

"Why do you bring another in your boat!"

"A courier bound for Madrid," Johanssen stammered.

"All right, put him aboard for identification," the voice commanded.

Trent stepped forward into the stem of the launch. There was no show of hesitation. He saw Johanssen deliver his code pellet to a sailor. Then at a sharp order from above, the spy-runner chugged away in his clumsy boat. Trent was ushered up the four rungs of a steel ladder to the deck and on into the conning tower. The sailor who escorted him disappeared into the interior of the submarine. Trent followed closely.

He felt the throb of engines, the movement of the craft as it got under way, riding the surface. There was a dim glow of lights below and the scurrying of feet. The seaman brought up at a small door and knocked.

"Bring him in here," a voice ordered, the same voice that had spoken from the conning tower.

Trent stepped into a small cabin. Seated at the far end of the hole was a young officer of commander's grade. The submarine commander's large gray eyes were cold and level but without suspicion.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"An emissary with an important mission," Trent replied with easy authority.

"You expect me to deliver you at Madrid?"

Trent's mind worked swiftly in this emergency. His one necessity now that Swarzwald's line of communication had been bared was to get ashore as quickly as possible. His knowledge of the French-Spanish frontier country stood him in good stead.

"At San Sebastian you may set me ashore," he replied evenly.

The commander's brows knotted.

"San Sebastian?" he repeated. "But Bilbo is the usual place and San Sebastian is not discreet for you."

"My Spanish passports will put me by, I think," Trent rejoined, smiling cold assurance. "A message that should have gone last night was delayed and should be telegraphed to Madrid as quickly as possible."

"Where do you come from?" the commander demanded.

"From Tours—but not from Herr Swarzwald—who just now is in some hot water."

The officer's eyes kindled with some inner amusement at mention of Swarzwald.

"You have seen the Herr Swarzwald?" he asked in a more cordial voice.

"As you may know, *Herr Kapitan,*" Trent replied, "Herr Swarzwald has a billet in Tours with a Madame Bouvray —a rather beefy lady who so far is not suspected by the French."

The commander chuckled aloud, then his mirth grew into a hearty outburst.

"Swarzwald has played the fool," he asserted boisterously. *"Ja,* if he had remained with the fighting line he would be a *Korvettenkapitan* of the Imperial Navy by now. But look at him in the secret service, dodging about in—in—"

The commander succumbed to a fresh burst of merriment and did not complete his sentence.

"I will examine the message you carry," he announced. "Those are my instructions."

Trent shook his head and smiled blandly. A thought had flashed into his

mind as the other spoke and been translated into action on the instant.

"There are some messages that can not be trusted even to code, on French soil," he said with convincing circumspection. "Therefore I carry what is necessary in my memory. But any message going from San Sebastian over the Spanish telegraph must follow the naval code. I must trouble you, therefore, Herr Kapitan, for the use of your code book."

"Of course," the commander assented promptly. He took from a small collapsible table a thin volume bound in celluloid and handed it to Trent. "While you are at work I will go out for some fresh air. It is glorious to sail the surface such a night as this. We will be off San Sebastian an hour after midnight."

CHAPTER VIII

VIA SAN SEBASTIAN

FROM his pocketbook Trent brought out a copy of that message Wallen had taken from the body of the luckless spy-runner at Bordeaux six days before. But he did not waste precious moments breaking the document down into German and piecing it into sequence. Instead he took the symbols and jotted down their code meaning. There would be time enough to work out the Swarzwald riddle in detail once he was ashore, Trent argued.

This done he undertook a hasty transfer of more common code terms to his notebook. Doubtless the submarine commander would remain out in the open for some time, perhaps until San Sebastian was close by. Trent's flawless German, his knowledge of Swarzwald's mischief, his manner of presenting himself, had stripped the *Herr Kapitan* of possible suspicions. And the *Herr Kapitan's* easy acceptance of his nocturnal visitor from the shores of the Bay of Biscay told Trent that such passengers must be frequent, this the regular line of transportation for important secret service agents of the Imperial government.

A smile played across his lips as he worked. Threescore lives, or more, had been blown to eternity in the quest for that precious naval code. Another submarine commander had touched a match to its inflammable covers as he faced certain death, giving priceless oxygen into the flames, oxygen for which his own lungs were gasping. Now the code was handed over obligingly by an officer of the Imperial Navy, without question or equivocation.

Three full hours followed without interruption. Trent was unconscious of the strumming of engines, of the rise and fall of the underseas boat as it rode the choppy surface of the Bay of Biscay on the voyage to San Sebastian. Row after row of symbols he set down, writing quickly but with care for accuracy, and after each symbol its meaning in German.

A seaman interrupted. The *Herr Kapitan* directed him to say that they were nearing the shore of Spain. In another thirty minutes the passenger would be put ashore in a collapsible boat from the submarine.

Trent brought his labors to an end and secured his notebook in a pocket under the lining of his coat. He sat back to wait, his eye searching over the tiny hole that was the *Herr Kapitan's* cabin. His eye fell upon the commander's unofficial log and he searched hurriedly through its leaves. Five major ships, Allied craft, had been sent to the bottom by the commander's tubes. Then the notation:

> On special service carrying secret agents between France and Spain. Mostly swine. But our hopes are now high for duties of the line.

Duties of the line! Trent knew that meant fresh cruises in quest of Allied ships. He searched avidly through the book for something more, for details that

might bare reasons for the *Herr Kapitan's* high hopes. But the diary told nothing more than that, except the number U-77, the commander's name. Herr Donnerwitz.

He turned to four other books that were piled on a shelf in a corner of the cabin. One was a book of Schiller's poems, another a translation of Chaucer; the remaining two were by minor German poets. As he thumbed through their pages, several sheets of scrip fell out, covered with small German script. Reading for possible cryptogram, Trent shook a puzzled head. They were plainly uncomplete poems, and in the *Herr Kapitan's* handwriting. Sentiments Herr Donnerwitz had jotted down in remote seas as the submarine rode the surface.

The slowing down of engines warned him that it was time to go above. Another seaman appeared with a summons. He worked his way up into the conning tower where the commander sat in the open manhole.

There was a narrow visibility under the soft starlight, but no suggestion of the rugged masses of a shoreline. The young commander was staring off in the distance, his head bared, his uniform open at the neck.

"It seems only a moment since we set off for San Sebastian, yet here we are," he said in a low, musing voice. "But I have found the thoughts I want and in a few minutes I will put them down in ink. That is the only solace of this abominable duty, my friend. It affords me time for some poems—and perhaps one day I will have ready the volume of them which I mean to present to my wife." He laughed softly to himself, as if to disparage some inner vanity. "But I'm afraid she will always be my only friendly critic—if, indeed, the volume does not finally convince her I am wasting my time in such ambitions."

The muffled stroke of a gong sounded from the engine room below. It had the effect of bringing the commander out of his gentle reverie back to the grim reality of commanding a submarine. He got to his feet, gave orders to men on the deck below in a guarded voice and led the way down. A small boat was launched, manned by two seamen with oars.

"My men will put you ashore at the Spanish bank of the Bidasson River," Donnerwitz announced. "But if you expect us to pick you up, you must be at Guijol by nine o'clock of tomorrow night —or each second night thereafter."

"Thank you, but I will be returning overland by way of Hendaye immediately," Trent replied.

"*Himmel!*" Then you may see Herr Oberstleutnant Banholz?" the German spoke up quickly.

"That is possible," Trent replied.

"Then you may say to him for me that my crew is in an abominable humor! His promise of an American transport convoy for our gunners is growing very stale!"

"If there are delays, perhaps there will be some good reason for it, *Herr Kapitan,*" Trent said crisply and added with a polite cordiality, "but I wish to thank you for your extreme helpfulness to me."

Donnerwitz turned on his heel and climbed back up to his post in the conning tower. Trent stepped into the small craft and the sailors dipped their oars. In a few minutes the submarine was swallowed up in the darkness. The little boat, bobbing on a choppy sea, came to the shore in what Trent judged to be half an hour. They landed him on a frail pier for small boats that ran out from the sandy beach.

TRENT oriented himself by the lay of the gray sands on the wide beach at San Sebastian and strode rapidly inland towards the village. His pulse responded to the joyous surge of his momentous adventure. He knew that he had in the making a disastrous net for the Imperial

secret service. But he quickly centered his thoughts upon the problem immediately before him—that of getting out of Spain and back to the scene of conflict with the forces of Herr Swarzwald.

San Sebastian was still awake, and gay parties were at their height in the villas and châteaux that lay back of the beach. The streets were gaily lighted. There was in the Spanish beach city nothing of that somber mood that pervaded all France.

Trent lighted a cigarette and walked with the leisurely detachment of one who is going nowhere in particular. There were few people on the streets although he knew that the place was alive with secret agents, Allied as well as German.

Hailing a horsecab, he drove to the international bridge. His passports showed him to be Monsieur Henri Beautemps, manufacturer of silks, living at Bordeaux, and in Spain on a brief business journey. Trent knew that his masquerade was flimsy but he expected no trouble from the Spanish immigration officers. Leastwise, even if suspicious, they would merely pass him along to the French authorities at the other end of the bridge.

The Spanish, however, accepted him without question. But his greeting to France was prompt arrest.

"You will pardon us, monsieur," the French officer announced, "but we must hold you for the investigation. Two hours ago we arrest an American who came here in an automobile to wait for someone and who refuses to identify himself. His conduct—it is very suspicious."

"I've no doubt I'm the man he came for," Trent confessed blandly. "At least I hope so. You have a long distance telephone service to Paris?"

"Yes, but its use is forbidden," the officer said obdurately, "unless first you are able to identify yourself."

"Then you will be good enough yourself to call up Lieutenant d'Auteuil, executive officer of the Deauxième Bureau at Paris," Trent said crisply. "I'd strongly advise you to do this immediately if you wish to avoid embarrassments for yourself, *monsieur*. D'Auteuil will give you instructions when he has heard my voice."

Trent paced the floor of the French bureau with impatience during the hour that was required to connect with D'Auteuil. Inwardly he cursed the French for this delay when every instant was precious. Except for the intervention of the Deuxième Bureau he knew that days might elapse before he could get free of Hendaye, days in which transports might be torpedoed, dangerous information dispatched from Tours to Wilhelmstrasse via Madrid.

By a miracle of good fortune D'Auteuil himself responded at last. D'Auteuil promptly recognized the American agent's voice and ordered his release instantly, along with Holy. The French brought Holy, with many apologies, from the guardhouse and released his car. A few minutes later the two were speeding north from Hendaye on the route to Bordeaux.

"Give the old boat the gun!" Trent directed. "I've got a lot of work ahead of me—and it can't wait. Anything to report from Wallen?"

"Yes'r, he and Heinie picked out a new rendezvous," Holy reported "Took over a bakery on Boulevard de Talence, which is pretty well out of town on the route to Arcachon. The Dutchman is sending a spy down from Tours to take charge."

"And their spy-runners from the Bay of Biscay are to report there for messages from Tours after this?"

"Yes'r. Fact is, our friend Waldo worked out a smooth one. Said Swarzwald should have thought of it himself. Messages are to be landed at the bakery and concealed in plums—so that all those Swede spy-runners have to do is come in and buy a franc's worth of plum cake."

"Waldo returned yet to Tours?"

"Was leaving on the midnight express. He put it up to Wallen to keep an eye over the bakery until an agent can arrive from Tours."

Trent made no comment at the moment. An idea that had flashed into his mind during that hour he was a prisoner at Hendaye was crystallizing into definite form. Presently he laughed softly to himself.

"It begins to look to me," he said, "as if Herr Swarzwald and his flying circus are about to come to a very sad end somewhere in France, Holy."

CHAPTER IX

TRENT LAYS HIS NETS

THE sky was flushed in red when they turned off, twenty kilometers south of Bordeaux, towards the American aviation field near De Souge. Trent asked the aviation commander for a desk where he could work alone and sent Holy to breakfast. Although he had not eaten since noon of the day before, Trent put aside a gnawing appetite in his fever to break down that message Wallen had intercepted the week before.

Half an hour of labor brought the message from symbols to German and from German to English. The muscles of Trent's jaw tightened as he read the unmasked cryptogram:

> M-5 Madrid—Swarzwald securely entrenched in Tours with perfect access to American information. I find his reports of American troop arrivals accurate. We will be prepared by May 15 to furnish accurate routings of American transports into Brest, St. Nazaire and Bordeaux, including hour of arrival off coast. Recommend concentration of five submarines off Bay of Biscay ready to move out upon information we will furnish by usual route—M-17.

Trent needed no reference to Allied secret service records to guess the identity of M-17. Had not the submarine commander unmasked that secret by his parting remarks? So Swarzwald, having established his spies at the center of such information, had been reinforced by Colonel Banholz, of the Imperial staff. And having verified the rising tide of American manpower, the Imperial staff now meant to stem that tide by sinking American transports off the coast of France.

Trent stalked to the officers' mess and summoned Holy from an unfinished breakfast.

"Get word to Wallen that he's to call his men off this case immediately!" he ordered. "Then you come back here and keep out of sight. But the first thing, get Ferris on long distance at Tours and tell him I want a large leather suitcase purchased—the largest hand-grip he can find. Also he's to have an ordnance expert, American preferred, at the billet when I arrive. I'm leaving immediately for Tours—and tell him to have someone meet me at the aviation field. See you soon, Holy."

Three hours later Trent put down at Tours. In that flight he had traced out and tested in all its details a plan for dealing the Imperial secret service a staggering blow. But that plan depended upon a dangerous risk which might cost another life and—might upset everything. And Trent decided that there was but one man who must take that risk—himself.

A French cab was waiting for him at the air field. He drove at once to his billet to find Ferris waiting with breathless eagerness.

"Sure glad to see you, sir!" Ferris exclaimed. "Wallen's man who drove you down the Bay of Biscay didn't know what had become of you. Said you left him up in the air—and he had to take the word of an oyster fisherman named Johanssen that you would not ride back to Bordeaux. They wanted to move

some men down there to look for you—but I thought we better wait."

"I'm glad of that," Trent replied. "Have you got a good ordnance man here? And that suitcase?"

"Yes'r. Waiting upstairs. But we got some mighty startling developments of our own, Trent. We've located—"

"Let that wait, Ferris. I want to talk to your ordnance expert first. If you'll excuse me, I think I'll make that conference confidential."

A bespectacled captain of the ordnance corps was waiting. Trent asked him many questions. His answers developed the fact that the captain knew his business, not only in all types of explosive shells, but that he had ingenuity enough to devise a special piece of ordnance of the type described by Trent. The ordnance captain was on his way out ten minutes later, carrying the large new leather suitcase which Trent had ordered from the Gironde.

Ferris came upstairs as the ordnance officer left. Miss Sanders was with him.

"We've identified Swarzwald, sir, Ferris reported. "Or rather Sanders has."

Trent's eyes centered on Sanders, who was regarding him with an air of amused triumph.

"Well, what is it, Sanders?" he demanded.

"Merely that I made an interesting little call on Madame Bouvray in your absence, Trent," she replied lightly.

"After I ordered you not to?"

"Yes—I'm afraid that's it."

"Evidently, then, my orders have no weight with you whatsoever, young lady!"

"Not when they're dictated by the silly belief that I'm not capable of taking a man's chances in this game!" she retorted. "If I must work with men, I insist upon being treated as one."

"But—did you stop to consider that you might have upset everything by going there while I was away!"

"Results speak best for themselves, Trent," she said. "After all, it was I who had the good fortune to discover Madame Bouvray—and I was curious to know whether my later suspicions were correct concerning that lady."

"Here's the whole story, Trent," Ferris spoke up quickly, holding out two small slips of paper. "That first is the fingerprint Sanders got on her minium-covered purse that Madame Bouvray held for a moment. The second is the Deuxième Bureau record of Swarzwald's fingerprints. I've found they are identical."

Trent's eyes gleamed as he examined the two documents. Sanders' suspicions had been justified, and moreover she had stripped Swarzwald definitely of his masquerade. Trent looked up with a reminiscent chuckle.

"I know now," he remarked, "just what a certain German submarine commander was laughing about when we discussed Swarzwald, one-time line officer of the Imperial Navy." He turned to Sanders with simulated severity. "Very well, young woman, I've got to confess your services were valuable—but we'll discuss the matter of strict obedience to orders somewhat later on. Now tell me what happened at Madame Bouvray's."

"I reasoned it would be safe for me to go—especially after they'd done away with five of our agents and knew we were on the qui vive," she reported. "You said it yourself, Captain—they'd not think the Americans brash enough to send a woman—under the circumstances. Fenstermacher was still in bed—and I said I thought I ought to take his temperature, as I'd had nursing experience. I had a thermometer in my bag and when I took it out—handed my bag to Madame Bouvray. They gave me a letter to deliver as I left—to a Monsieur Dupre, a tailor, on the Boulevard Beranger."

"The letter had minium on it?"

"Doubtless, but when I left the billet, I messed up my fingerprints so it was worthless, and had the message delivered by a French commercial messenger."

"But is there any chance that they had you shadowed to this billet, Sanders?" Trent demanded.

"Not the least. I went to the welfare hut and remained until dark—then arranged a summons to Paris—a report that a sister was ill in the hospital there. Then I came here very discreetly and have not been out in the air since."

Trent sat down at a desk in thoughful silence, an inscrutable smile stamped on his lips. Finally he reached for pencil and paper and drafted a brief message, then took out the notebook from the lining pocket of his coat and painstakingly reduced the message to German code symbols. Ferris and Miss Sanders exchanged puzzled glances and sat down to wait. There was disappointment in their faces at Trent's evident lack of enthusiasm over the development at Madame Bouvray's.

When Trent finally looked up from his work, Ferris spoke decisively.

"It's my opinion, sir," he said, "that we're ready to clean up on Swarzwald's nest! I've brought in twelve men from Paris today, Trent, and seven from headquarters. That gives us a total of twenty-two available to crack the Bouvray billet."

"Last thing I'm thinking of, Ferris," Trent replied. "In fact, instead of bringing more men into Tours, I intend to send every last one out of the city before morning."

Ferris gasped at his chief's irrational utterance.

"But, sir," he protested, "if we land the brains of the mess—Swarzwald, Fenstermacher and that bony agent who poses as Monsieur Bouvray, *madame's* husband, that ought to accomplish our mission!"

"Ordinarily, Ferris. But we stand a chance of landing the whole nest of them—in one neat bag. That includes a Colonel Banholz, of the Imperial staff, who is working with Swarzwald on a peculiarly diabolical scheme of sinking American transports."

"But—I understood you to say you were going to withdraw from Tours."

"Yes. Sanders leaves at midnight with three of our men for Paris. Travel by auto. Nothing to do there but take in the sights. The others are to pull out by train for Paris. You can even bring our men in from the base ports—excepting Bordeaux. All go on an inactive basis—until our next case."

Trent paused to light a cigarette, and smiled whimsically.

"All contingent upon just one thing," he mused. "That is—that I'm still alive at dinner tonight. In that connection, Ferris, I want you to arrange liaison with the gendarmes." He studied his watch a moment. "I want the French to arrest me as I pass into the Place du Palais de Justice from the Avenue de Grammont in about two hours from the present moment. I will be in my corporal's uniform."

"Yes'r. But you do not explain—"

"I'm leaving in a few minutes to call on Madame Bouvray, at the billet on Boulevard Beranger. I'm convinced they will pass me out without trouble. But they may give me something to deliver that will record my fingerprints and that's why the French must arrest me promptly."

Trent rose, got his corporal's uniform from a hanger and asked to be excused.

"But about our men, Trent?" Ferris persisted.

"Orders stand as given," Trent said curtly. "All go back to Paris excepting you and me. When the French release me this evening I'll report back here to the billet." He paused and looked at Ferris with a cryptic smile. "You and I are leaving in the morning for Count Didette's estate over near Bourges—to hunt wild boar for a day or so."

CHAPTER X

ON THE BAY OF BISCAY

THE Swarzwald billet on Boulevard Beranger was one of a huddle of antique stone houses, once occupied by tradesmen, now the habitat of leather workers and iron puddlers. It had a single entrance at the top of a half dozen steps leading direct from the sidewalk. But Trent guessed, as he went to the door and lifted the ancient brass knocker, that the place had been duly prepared with subterranean exits through which the German masqueraders had a ready means of quick escape.

A cadaverous man opened the door, the one who posed as Madame Bouvray's husband, Trent guessed.

"*Monsieur?*" the fellow inquired, searching the man in American corporal's uniform with beady eyes that glowed ferret-like in his yellow face.

"I wish to see Mr. Hardison," Trent said in English.

The other shook his head and raised a protesting hand.

"But Monsieur Hardison is very ill and must not receive visitors today," he said.

Trent forced his way abruptly inside.

"Then I will speak with Madame Bouvray!" he said sharply. "Come, my time is valuable, *monsieur!*"

"But I have told you—"

"At once!" Trent cut out. "I am lately arrived from Spain, Monsieur, and must confer with Herr Swarzwald on a subject of importance!"

Trent's decisiveness forced the other ahead of him, down a long narrow hallway to a living room in which a bed had been fitted up. Fenstermacher, the bogus welfare worker, was propped up in bed reading, a beefy figure in skirts was dozing in a large chair near by.

Trent pushed his way into the room at the other's elbow. The fat person woke with a start but at seeing the American uniform, stood up with a composed smile that was meant to register servile friendliness.

"You are Herr Swarzwald," Trent said brusquely. "I have a message for you that must receive your instant attention."

A frenzied gleam shone in Swarzwald's fat face, a splotch of vivid red suffused his cheeks. He instantly caught the futility of further masquerade and his face hardened. Swiftly his eyes searched the face in front of him, the face of a man whose mettle Swarzwald could not fail to read. And Trent, standing placidly at ease, coolly contained, was looking behind the exterior of Swarzwald's flabby visage.

Under a deft make-up that had been applied to soften the mould of a blunt thick mouth and the cast of ruthlessness that spread from forehead to jowls, Trent saw the cold assassin who had destroyed Hargreaves—and four others of his good men. Out of the corner of his eyes he caught the stealthy movement of Fenstermacher's hand to the butt of a weapon concealed under a pillow.

"You do not identify yourself, *monsieur!*" Fenstermacher said in a dry, sharp voice.

"Important couriers from M-5 at Madrid have no time to waste upon such details!" Trent shot back and added pointedly, "Sometimes it is not even possible to wait for the U-77 when there is such urgency as the present. Here is an order for you."

Trent delivered the code message he had prepared at his billet a few minutes before. Fenstermacher took it hesitatingly, his mind still busy revolving the plausibility of this visitor who lacked the formula of official identification yet spoke with authority of the German spy-master at Madrid and the secret line of communication by submarine.

"I will not wait while you read the message," Trent said with crisp author-

ity. "But I give you this verbal message. The instruction you just received in code must be obeyed to the letter without delay or equivocation. Therefore you will have to communicate at once with Herr Oberstleutnant Banholz. You will excuse me—as I must leave Tours—since I am afraid the French may have picked up my trail."

"*Ja,* but one moment," Swarzwald interposed, as Trent turned toward the door. "We are held in this billet at present like so many rats—and must have some medicine for one of us who is very ill." He picked up from the stand at the head of Fenstermacher's bed a small, colored vial and handed it to Trent. "You will please deliver this to Monsieur Dupre at Boulevard Beranger No. 23, who will know where to get a special medicine from a French pharmacist."

"Glad to accommodate," Trent said, and strode from the room.

The crisp free air of outdoors had never felt more welcome to Trent than when he emerged from the rendezvous and set out at a brisk walk for the Place du Palais de Justice. He knew by what a slender thread his life had hung inside the Swarzwald lair, where the slightest wrong play of voice or manner meant disaster to the deft net he wove for the Imperial shadows.

Nor did he permit himself to walk now with the light step that might betray to suspicious eyes the joy that was hammering in his veins. He knew that while he risked everything on the turn of a card, just now the whims of fortune were favoring his play.

Twice he paused as he strode along Avenue de Grammont to look in windows. Behind he caught the cautious Swarzwald shadows at his trail. As he emerged into the Place du Palais de Justice a *sous-officier* of gendarmes accosted him.

"I will make a pretense of resistance, *monsieur,*" Trent said in a low voice and added with a smile, "But please don't handle me too roughly as I wish very much to be arrested."

There was a brief show of struggle. The *sous-officier's* men closed in on Trent one striking him a resonant blow in the face, another stripping the collar from his uniform before he yielded. At the prefecture of police he was lodged in a cell and held until night when, in accordance with Ferris' arrangements, he was released. He changed into civilian clothes and took a taxicab to his billet.

"All right, Ferris," Trent announced. "Get our things together and let's go. What kind of transportation have you ready?"

"An old French sedan," Ferris reported. "But I can get anything else you want if that isn't satisfactory."

"Perfect, Ferris. Have all our men cleared Tours yet? And our one woman?"

"Yes'r. All but one, Trent. I held one man here in case there was any last minute errands."

TRENT sat down at a desk and wrote a brief letter of instructions on official stationery of the American Second Section, signing it "By order of Colonel Rand" in order to give it the fullest official force.

"Have your man deliver this to the ordnance officer at Tours headquarters," he directed. "Then we're pulling out for our little junket to Count Didette's."

Ferris was visibly nettled by his chief's strange maneuvers. He replied in glum monosyllables to Trent's lively chatter, no word of which had any bearing on the Swarzwald complication.

"I can't get it through my head, Trent," Ferris fretted, "why we're running out on the case at this stage of the game! I know you've got your own way of working, but I can't make heads or tails of this one."

"Well, if we stayed in Tours with our men we might get a few German agents," Trent explained, a mischievous note in

his voice. "But if we all pull stakes we may land the whole lot of them. Is that clear, Ferris?"

"Clear as mud," Ferris muttered.

Count Didette's château was in darkness when they arrived there shortly after ten o'clock. But the count, roused from his sleep, was effervescent in his greeting when he heard Trent was his nocturnal visitor.

"Just wanted to get away from the whole war mess for a few hours, Count," Trent announced. "And we'd like to get a try at one of your wild boars in the morning, if that isn't imposing upon you."

"Ah, but this is the joyous occasion!" Count Didette exulted. "It is most lonesome here these days—and as for the wild boar, we shall have one for you before *petite dejeuner* in the morning."

Ferris sat in dull silence through the night while Trent and their French host chattered at high pitch and drank wine. Didette, a cavalry file of the old French aristocracy, had been retired to his great estate after German gas ruined his lungs at Verdun. Often Trent had planned a vacation visit to the count's place, but Ferris could not reconcile himself to such a visit at such a time.

Nor did his perplexity lighten when Trent spent the next day hunting boar, drinking and enjoying himself immensely without ever a word, or seemingly a thought, of the German mischief at Tours. To all appearances Trent meant to have an indefinite vacation. But with evening he excused himself, thanked Didette for his hospitality and with a promise to return later for a fortnight, got under way.

"Where now?" Ferris asked.

"Vicinity of Bordeaux, Captain," Trent replied. "Going to visit the aviation camp near De Souge, then drop into Bordeaux for a few minutes. After that we'll drop down the Bay of Biscay for a ride. We've got to keep this old bus rolling to make our schedule. But we'll take turns at the wheel."

"Swarzwald?"

"Among others."

A hard drive, with a few hours' pause for sleep, put them into the American aviation field late the next afternoon. Trent stopped there only long enough to secure from the commandant a large leather suitcase. Ferris looked at it from under knotted brows as Trent brought it outside. Sergeant Wallen was waiting. Trent turned the suitcase over to the sergeant with minute instructions. Wallen nodded solemnly, saluted and drove away in his flivver in the direction of Bordeaux.

"Now we're driving down toward Arcachon, Ferris," Trent said. "From down there we're proceeding afoot for some distance. I don't mind telling you now that tonight you should see a great migration of German agents for Spain by way of the Bay of Biscay—Herr Swarzwald—Oberstleutnant B a n h o l z—and their whole crew."

Ferris' face was livid as he turned sharply to face Trent.

"Damn it, Trent, what do you mean!" he demanded.

"Easy, Captain," Trent rejoined with a smile. "You know my aversion to talking too much—and something may go wrong yet. But I delivered to Herr Swarzwald, in the Imperial naval code, a proper order from German high agent M-5, in charge at Madrid, to report at Madrid immediately with all agents, including Banholz. I'm expecting him to obey that command to the letter."

"You mean—you're expecting the lot of them down here tonight?" Ferris gasped, as if not quite willing to believe his own ears.

"Tonight! Orders were for all to be aboard the submarine U-77 by quarter of ten o'clock. So I'm expecting the expedition to be rushing out of Bordeaux in relays beginning as soon as it's dark."

"But—but—you don't mean two of us can be expected to deal with—"

"No," Trent interrupted placidly, "we're merely going down the Bay to observe the flight from a discreet distance. I don't want to interfere in any way with their exit from France, Ferris."

For some time Ferris sat bolt upright in stunned silence. Then he faced Trent.

"I can't see it, Trent," he objected in a voice that trembled. "What good will it do to send them to Spain—when the whole outfit will come skulking back the instant they learn they've been tricked!"

"I hardly think they will," Trent said grimly.

They reached the vicinity of Arcachon at dusk, left their car and turned north on foot. A walk of several kilometers brought them to the little fishermen's settlement where Johanssen had turned off to his launch. The darkness was broken now by a new moon which added its glow to the pale rays of myriad stars. Trent kept looking at the luminous dial of his wrist watch.

Shortly after 8:30 o'clock they heard the chug of a small automobile. It stopped less than twenty meters from where they were concealed in a thicket. Trent saw Johanssen get out, a large suitcase in his hand. He staggered under the weight as he made his way down through the hamlet. In a few minutes they caught the drone of Johanssen's boat as it drove out into the Bay of Biscay.

"The official records and important luggage of the Swarzwald expedition are being delivered aboard ahead of the passengers," Trent observed in a cynical voice.

They heard the Johanssen boat come chugging back to shore in a short while. Johanssen came back up the slope and waited at the roadside, smoking a pipe. As nine o'clock approached a second automobile came up from the direction of Bordeaux.

FIVE men got out, vague figures in the pale moonlight, and followed Johanssen in a shadowy column down to the beach. Again there sounded the chug of Johanssen's boat. Before he could get back to the shore from the U-77, a third car pulled up, this one a French commercial cab. A fourth and fifth vehicle followed quickly, each discharging its passengers and turning back whence it came.

From the last of these cabs there emerged a figure that Trent identified even under the thin light, a waddling fat silhouette in woman's skirts. Trent saw Swarzwald, as he came to the crest of the sand dunes, halt long enough to strip off wig and skirts. As the nocturnal procession filed off down the trail through the village, Johanssen's launch came puffing in. Trent looked at his watch and saw that it was slightly past nine-thirty o'clock.

"Quite a representation of the Imperial secret service, eh, Ferris?" Trent mused. "I take it that is the whole lot of the Swarzwald-Banholz spy crew."

"See here, Captain, I want to ask you a question!" Ferris spoke up in a tone of irritated rebuke. "I want to know if you've forgot it was that band of cutthroats murdered Hargreaves! Yes, not only Hargreaves but four more of our good men!"

"No, Ferris, I hadn't forgotten that," Trent said in a low vibrant voice, in which there was a grim bitterness. "I hadn't forgotten that—and I hadn't forgotten those men of ours who stood against the wall in Berlin—and I haven't overlooked the fact that this wolf-gang meant to send ten times ten thousand of our soldiers to the bottom of the Atlantic!"

"Then why the devil are you letting them slip through like this!" Ferris flared angrily. "Why didn't we trap this bunch of Hun spies! Why didn't we have men here to catch the last damned one of them

—and send them to hell where they belong!"

"Because one or two of them might have slipped the net, Ferris," Trent replied quietly. "I'm for taking no chances with this nest. But come on—it's time we're moving down to the beach."

The Johanssen launch was far out in the Bay of Biscay by now. As they approached the shore, Trent heard the

motors shut off, which told him that Swarzwald, Banholz and their spies were climbing into the hold of the U-77. Shortly the *putt-putt* of the launch was resumed. Trent led the way out onto the fishing pier.

When the Dane's boat dropped alongside the pier, Trent stepped aboard, arrested Johanssen, trussed him to the stem of the craft and set out into the Bay of Biscay. Carefully estimating his distance, Trent shut off his motors half a mile out and listened. He caught faintly the purr of the submarine's engines, which meant that the U-77 had gotten promptly under way.

He started Johanssen's launch again, quickly gathering full speed, although his gaze centered more upon the luminous dial of his watch than upon the rippling waves of the Bay of Biscay. After a short run he shut down and listened intently for several long minutes. The hum of motors was still audible.

"Poor Donnerwitz," he mused, as if speaking to himself. "He'll never finish his book of poems, I'm afraid. But neither will he sink any more of our transports, and the Imperial secret service will need a lot of new replacements before many minutes."

Almost as he spoke there leaped through the yellowish void a sheet of vivid flame. It blinked with the volatile swiftness of lightning, followed by a tense moment of silence in which some ominous hidden force could be felt gathering its vindictive fury. Then came a racking detonation that shook the Johanssen launch from stem to stern.

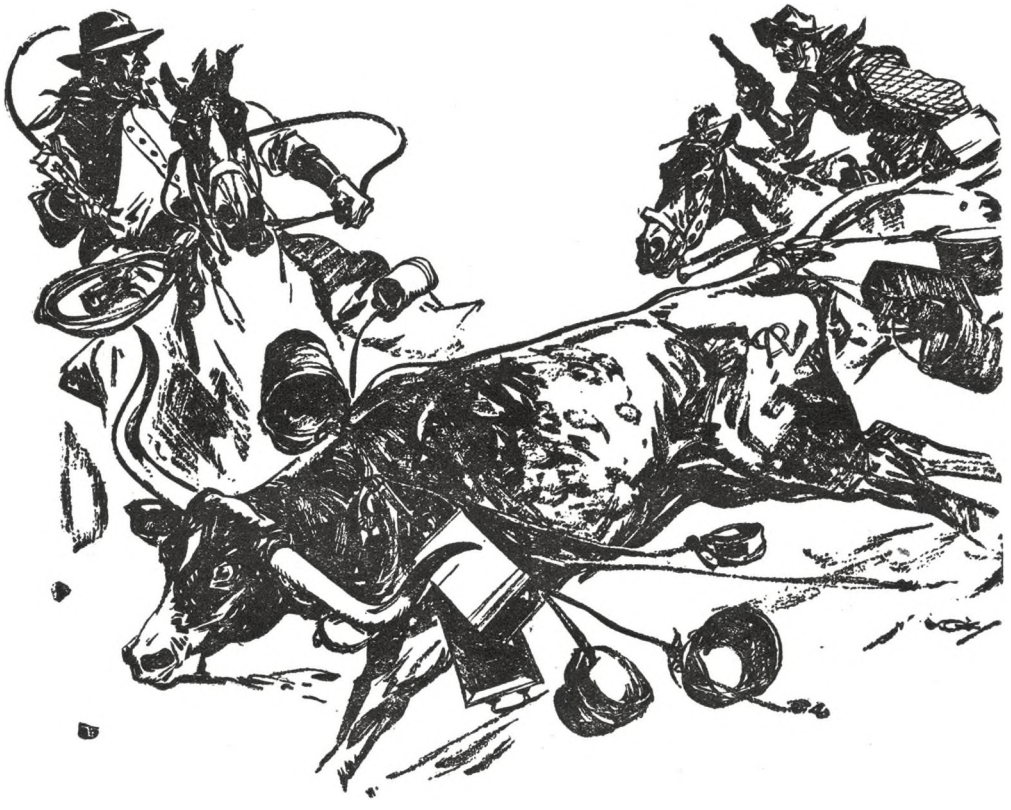
Trent, his ears ringing from the force of the explosion, sprang to the engine and set it in motion. As the little craft leaped forward it began bobbing in the teeth of a suddenly agitated sea that for a time threatened to swamp the boat. Trent drove straight in the direction whence had appeared that sheet of flame. He played his flashlight on the surface of the bay and shortly, with a sharp exclamation, shut off the engines and leaned over the gunwale to dip his hand in the water.

"Oil," he said grimly.

For some time he sat with straining ears. There was no other sound than the wash of water against the hull of Johanssen's boat. Gradually the heaving sea calmed itself, the Bay of Biscay became a placid void as if hushed by the swift tragedy of the moment before.

Trent sat down and gazed back at Ferris.

"That ordnance officer you got for me, Ferris," he said in a cool, measured voice, "evidently knew his explosives. The U-77 must have gone to the bottom like a plummet. But he must have used a very cheap French clock to time his blowing up of that suitcase we sent out here. It went off just three minutes later than the time I set for the event."



OL' STAR

by S. OMAR BARKER

"JOHN PETER DARBEE," said the judge, "you have heard the charge. How plead you, guilty or not guilty?"

The defendant gazed up at Judge Lennard, batting small blue eyes at whose corners the sun wrinkles bunched so thickly that he seemed continually to squint. His roundish, short-chinned face was so much brown leather, much used and weathered, contrasting sharply with the shiny pink baldness of his head. Something less definable but more subtle and sure than mere boots and bowlegs, bespoke this banty's breed, even before he opened his mouth. In a thousand little ways the cow range marks her own.

Maybe it was partly the way he stood there, batting his squinty eyes at the judge—respectful and humble enough, yet neither fearful nor cringing; unabashed, yet neither bold nor belligerent; obviously troubled, yet able to view judge, jury, officers, even the menacing attorney for the railroad, not as awesome instruments of an implacable, impersonal Law, but merely as other men, not too unlike himself. A mild, shy, little man, neither physically nor mentally prepossessing, who had swum many a river with the herd and would do to take along.

He had been looking at the judge a while ago. He had been thinking:

"Looks like a right usable feller, spite o' them stylish whiskers. Prob'ly kinder

new to this country, o' course, but—"

"How pleads the defendant, guilty or not guilty?"

"Well Jedge," began Pete Darbee twangily, rubbing his baldness uncertainly with a brown, weathered hand, "puttin' it thataway, yes or no, seem to me like it ain't hardly a fair question. Y'see, I—"

"What you think of the question," broke in Judge Lennard sharply, "is immaterial to the court. Answer it! Guilty or not guilty?"

"Oh, I held up the train all right, if that's what you mean, Jedge. Didn't use my gun, though. Shoot it off, I mean. 'Course I had it *ready* to use if needful, but—"

"If the court please," the voice of Mr. Evan Cunningham, counsel for the railroad, carried a faint tone of contempt in its formal dryness, "we ask that the defendant be directed to enter plea in this case so that we may proceed with its prosecution."

"Now, now, mister lawyer," began Pete Darbee, turning to bat his eyes at the attorney, "I reckon you'll git your turn. Jedge, as I was sayin' I—"

"John Peter Darbee," said the judge sternly, "have you not had the advice of counsel as to the proper manner of pleading?"

"If the court please, he has." Old Charlie Chote's black Prince Albert was a shabby, rusty green, his Abe-Lincoln chin streaked with a dried dribble of tobacco juice, but his eyes were shrewd and keen above his bony cheeks. "In view of the facts in me confided, I originally advised my client to plead not guilty. But—" he flourished a thin bony arm—"Mr. Darbee seems to feel that—"

"I shore 'nough do, Jedge," broke in Pete Darbee earnestly. "What I done, I done, an' I ain't aimin' to lie out of it. I held up that train, Jedge. It was on account of—"

Judge Lennard's gavel once again interrupted him. He pointed a commanding finger at the defendant.

"John Peter Darbee!" he thundered. "How plead you—guilty or not guilty?"

"Why—why, guilty, I reckon, Jedge. Only I kinder wanted to explain how come me to do sech a thing. You'd have done it yourself, Jedge, if—"

"If the court please," the dry voice of Mr. Evan Cunningham broke in with raspy asperity, "a plea of guilty has been entered by the defendant. I object to further—"

"Jedge, I wisht you'd tell that lawyer feller to hold his hosses till I git through. 'Course I'm guilty, like I said, but—"

"Your Honor, I object!" Mr. Cunningham rose angrily. "The defendant has counsel present to speak for him. Your Honor, this is not the garrulous tail-end of a chuck wagon! It is a court of law and—"

"Of justice, I presume," broke in old Charlie Chote in his nasal twang, "where even the guilty may be permitted to speak in his own behalf!"

"Now, now, Charlie, don't you go gittin' all het up!" Pete Darbee got in ahead of the judge again. "I'm aimin' to take my medicine, Jedge. I jest wanted to kinder tell you about ol' Star, an' how come me to—"

"I object!"

"Sit down, Mr. Cunningham," advised Judge Lennard, firmly. "The defendant will be heard."

PETE DARBEE had never been in a court of law before. Wholly innocent of any breach of propriety, he backed up to the slightly raised pine planking jutting out from the empty jury box, squatted on his booted heels, fiddled out a sack of Bull Durham and began to roll a smoke. But first he extended the round-tagged sack inquiringly toward all those within close range, including the judge. The railroad attorney snorted in disgust. Old Charlie Chote indicated the "chaw" in

his cheek. Judge Lennard shook his head in refusal, but he did not forbid old Pete his smoke. A keen eye, in fact, might have caught a sort of nostalgic glint behind the bearded judge's spectacles as he watched the brown pill take form in the shabby cowman's fingers. Not since his appointment to the territorial bench had he rolled one himself.

Jedge, (said Pete Darbee), I ain't nothin' but jest an' ol' flea-bit cowhand. Got me no wife, no family—jest a few speckles an' linebacks on a little ol' two-by-four ranch, an' a right comfortable *'dobe* boar's nest where I keep batch when me an' my saddle ain't hired out some place. But no matter whereall I been ridin' nor what time o' day or night I drift in home, I git a genuine ol' home-comin' welcome. I'd miss it mightily if I didn't. All I got to do is holler, an' the best friend I got quits grazin' or chawin' his cud, wherever he is, an' comes to me snuffin' an' bellerin' an' bowin' his neck, an' follers me in for his oats an' pettin'. An' it won't make a damn to him whether I'm homin' frum the pen or frum pleasure. Feller gits that kind of a pardner, Jedge, he's got to stand by him.

But it ain't only that. You see I come out to this country jest a kid. Hillbilly folks, us Darbees was. My pappy was a pore man. Had purt near as many young 'uns as they was usable acres in his little ol' Ozark farm, but he aimed to do right by us, best he could. He always made out to keep a few cow critters, an' as quick as ary young 'un got to the age of wearin' shoes on a Sunday, he give us our start in life.

"Pick you out a heifer calf this spring, Johnny Pete," he told me when it come my turn. "Long as you're here to home she kin run right with mine. But she'll be yours—her an' all that comes out of her, an' all that comes frum them, to have an' to hold. Only I'm askin' you," he says, lookin' mighty sober, "jest one thing: mind out that you don't never lose the strain, long as you live. It's all your ol' pappy has got to give you. I'd kinder like that twenty, thirty, forty years frum now; even if you git to be a rich man with five hundred or a thousand critters an' yore own place to run 'em on, you kin still go out in the bunch an' pick you out an ol' speckle cow or a heifer, an' say: 'That there 'un comes frum the calf my ol' pappy give me, time I come shoe-wearin' age.' It ain't only a start of cows that I'm givin' you, Johnny Pete, but kinder of an everlastin' keepsake—to recollect your ol' pappy by. Pick you out a heifer calf, Johnny Pete."

So I picked me out a little ol' red an' white speckle. Prouder'n an ol' red rooster, I was. I'd done started me into the cow business. I give her the name of Queenie an' raised her gentle like a dog.

She was comin' two year old when a wagon train of immigrants made camp one night down on Bullfrog Creek. I'd been hearin' a heap about the West an' cowboyin' an' so on, so when I found out these folks was headin' for New Mexico to settle, I right up an' asked 'em if I could come along. A couple of big boys name of Tate give me the horse laugh, but their old man said he reckoned they could use another boy mighty handy to he'p drive the cattle, since his own two pups was kinder no-account, always ridin' off skylarkin' an' letting the stock drift. But he didn't want to harbor no runaway. Would my pappy let me go?

Pappy never said much. I was kinder of his favorite son, I reckon.

"It'll give you a chance to make somethin' of yourself, Johnny Pete, goin' to a new country like Mexico." (They always left off the "New" back in Arkinsaw. "I reckon you kin go."

SO I tolled my little ol' speckled heifer down to Bullfrog Creek, throwed her in with them immigrant cattle, an' the next mornin' we started West. Old Man Tate give me a plug of an ol' plowhoss to ride. Jest past sixteen, I was, Jedge. Kinder of a one-gallus hillbilly that shore didn't know much about trailin' cattle; but them immigrants only had about two hundred head, an' we made out to keep 'em movin'. Main trouble was them Tate boys, smartin' along close to their twenties, they not only throwed off most of their share of the drivin' on me, but they like to hurrawed me to death besides. I taken it as good as I could on account of the Old Man. He treated me right good.

Well, how come me goin' so far back, Jedge, an' tellin' about this trip, is on account of my little ol' speckled heifer, Queenie. About the time we begun gittin' purty well out to the short-grass plains the Old Man called the different wagon owners together an' says he reckons maybe we better butcher us a beef.

"You can pick one out of my stuff," he says. "They're as fat as any."

"They ain't as fat as that heifer of Johnny Pete's," speaks up young Hoke Tate, givin' his brother a wink. "Besides, she's a damn nuisance, hangin' around the wagons all the time. Let's slaughter her."

"That's right," says the Old Man. "I can trade you another heifer jest as good, maybe better. What you say, kid?"

Jedge, I didn't have time to say nothing, because already Hoke Tate had grabbed his ol' .44 carbine an' was drawin' a bead on the head of my heifer, like the matter was already settled. She was always hangin' around close to the wagons when we stopped. The main Tate wagon was unhitched. I grabbed the nearest thing I could lay my hands on. It was the hickory neckyoke. I reckon I didn't weigh over an even hundred pounds, but I had hillbilly muscles. Bud, the other Tate, jumped out to stop me, but I give him that neckyoke right across the belly button, an' got apast him in time to swing at that carbine before it went off. It jumped right out of Hoke Tate's hands, goin' off into the bows of the next wagon jest about a foot too high to kill a woman settin' on the seat. An' when Hoke Tate give a roar an' dived to pick it up, I swang again. It caught him kinder across the arms. It cracked a bone in one of 'em. I never aimed it to, but you see how it was, Jedge. I didn't aim to stand by an' see them butcher that heifer my pappy had give me.

I reckon I was purty rollicky, Jedge, for my size. I throwed the neckyoke down, grabbed that carbine, throwed it as far as I could send it, doubled up my little ol' bony fist an' backed up to a wagon wheel.

"Come on, you sons!" I hollered, kinder dancin' on my feet. "If you're cravin' to fight!"

Jedge, it must of been right humorous, because either one them Tate boys could of knocked my head loose with one poke or throwed me over a wagon with a couple of fingers—an' they'd have done it, too, only the Old Man stepped in. He settled the ruckus right now.

Well, they didn't slaughter my heifer. They killed a steer out of the Tate bunch. If me and them Tate boys liked *chili* on ours, the dressin' the Old Man give us was all the hot sauce we needed. Only the next day he says to me:

"Actin' so hasty gen'rally makes for trouble, Johnny Pete. But I reckon," he says, "a man does kinder have to look out for his own proputty, don't he?"

It set me up right smart, him referrin' to me as a *man*, thataway, an' me only sixteen. That was why I never tattled to him, the rest of the trip, when Hoke

an' Bud would ketch me off out of sight of the wagons with the herd an' handle me purty rough. One thing, though, they minded their Old Man about keepin' their hands off of my little ol' speckled heifer.

JEDGE, I ain't aimin' to wear you out relatin' about them next ten years or so. Except that the next summer after I come to New Mexico with Old Man Tate, word come frum Arkinsaw that my ol' pappy had hit the long trail. Us Darbees is kinder of a stubborn breed. I heard it taken four bullets plumb through him to down my pappy. He was tryin' peaceable to settle a ruckus one of my brothers got into, but when it turned into a fight he taken his part. They never brung the feller that killed him to trial. Jest buried him.

An' the word come, too, that now pappy was dead, all my brothers had sold out the cattle, includin' them he had given 'em an' quit the hills to go work in the coal mines. I kinder hated that.

Meantimes my little Queenie heifer had brung a heifer calf. Old Man Tate was keepin' her for me whilst I circulated around workin' at whatever jobs I could git—wranglin', roustaboutin', an' so on. So that next Sunday I rode over to Tate's place. I hunted up my little ol' speckled heifer, an' jest spent the afternoon layin' around watchin' that speckled calf of hers playin' around an' cuttin' up while she grazed. Seemed like we was all that was left of the Darbees now.

I taken to cow work purty handy, Jedge. Time I was nineteen I was makin' a regular hand at the 3B wagon. Time I was twenty I was ridin' the rough string, an' I come of age somewheres in north Texas helpin' trail a herd to Dodge. From then on I was on the trail somewheres most ever' year. Never got to be a regular trail boss. Jest wasn't cut out for it, I reckon. But I made a hand.

All this time my little bunch of cattle outa that little Ozark heifer an' her offspring was steadily increasin'. I made a deal with the 3B spread that I rode for to let 'em run on their range, an' we worked 'em through the 3B roundups, same as 3B cattle. Only branded 'em different. PAP Connected, was the brand I taken. You make the first P backwards, the second P regular, with the A between 'em, usin' the same legs as the two p's. I figgered that brand made a purpty good keepsake to recollect my ol' pappy by.

Now I kep' all the she-stuff, but the steers, I throwed 'em in with the 3B market herds ever' year and sold 'em—some plumb up in Montana, some in Dodge an' Abilene, because lots of years the 3B herd frum New Mexico was trailed acrost into Texas, an' throwed in with another 3B herd movin' up from the lower country. Because Bob Baggett and Beam, the 3B owners, they had big holdin's both places.

It was on one of them drives that I run into Hoke an' Bud, them two Tate boys, again. They'd hadn't stuck by their old man long. They kinder run off to the wild bunch, an' then lit out for Texas—somewheres west of the Pecos—where they'd heard the life of a cowboy was a heap wilder than around here an' more accordin' to their taste. How come 'em to git an honest job follerin' a 3B herd, I don't know. But anyways, there they was.

I was ridin' point, an' so was they when we eased the two herds together. It's kinder of a ticklish job, throwin' two big herds together thataway. There's always a heap of neck-bowin' an' bellerin' an' fightin' amongst the lead steers that gits the cattle all stirred up. It ain't no time for visitin'—nor monkey business.

But as quick as he seen me this Hoke Tate opened up his black mustache an' give a whoop.

"Bust my bellyband, Bud!" he yowls. "If it ain't little Johnny Pete, the speckled heifer kid from Arkinsaw! But where's the heifer? You sure ain't gone an' deserted her in her old age, have you, Johnny Pete?"

It wasn't no pleasant manner that he said it, Jedge, an' I rode stirrup to stirrup in the trail dust with *men* too long to enjoy bein' called Johnny Pete *thataway*. But I never was no hand to nurse a grudge. I answered him civil an' pleasant.

"Sure haven't," I says. "Queenie's still afoot, back yonder in New Mexico An' she's perduced a heap more beef than if we'd slaughtered her that time. See that big ol' line-back there with the spotted rump? That's one o' her grandsons, an' there's more in the herd, back a piece. But not far. The oftspring of that little ol' specle, they got ginger. They're always up in the lead. How you boys been since I saw you?"

You see I aimed to be friendly. But instead of answering, them two Tates looked at each other and laughed, kinder mean. Then before you could say Jack Robison they made a run at that line-back steer, where he was bowin' up his neck an' pawin' around them Texas leaders. They spooked him out, run him a little piece, an' Hoke tailed him to the saddle horn an' busted him end for end. You know Jedge, that ain't no way to act around a nervous herd. But that wasn't the worst. That steer got up on on the prod, an' when he made a rush at Hoke Tate's horse, damn if Hoke didn't shoot him right between the eyes. I reckon you know what we had on our hands then, Jedge. Them cattle was already nervous like I said. We was in the saddle continuous for twenty-four hours before we gathered a full count again from that run.

Then come the showdown with the trail boss to find out how come. An' what them two Tates says, an' swears to, is that I taken a shot at them, missed an' killed that steer my ownself.

"Is that true, Pete?"

"No," I says, "it ain't. An' by your leave, a little even-draw shootin' match here'll prove it!"

But this boss wasn't a man to stand for gunplay between the hands on the trail. An' a cowboy name of Billy Mayes says he seen exactly what happened. The boss was nursin' his gun right out in his hand.

"You two," he says to them Tates, "your trail drivin' days is done. *Now git!* An' if I ever see hide or hair of you within a mile of a 3B herd again, by God, I'll kill you both!"

They never waited to augur it, an' that was the last we seen of 'em that trip. I kinder hated it, havin' helped cause such a mess, but the boss never mentioned it no more, an' we made a good drive.

But Jedge, when I got back to New Mexico again, an' begun ridin' around to kinder check up on my speckle cattle I felt purty bad. There jest wasn't any to be found, that's all. Seem like a gang of rustlers had swooped through the country, gathered an' pulled out before folks realized it. An' the fact that they'd made it a pertickler point to take ever' damn head of my PAP brand didn't leave no doubt as to who was their leaders.

You wouldn't think growed men would hold a grudge thataway, would you?

I DRAWED my time an' follered their trail clean down into Mexico. Way down yonder I found the carcass of a cow that'd give out on the trail. There wasn't much of it left, but I knowed by the horns that it was ol' Queenie. That was all of that thief-drive I ever found, except that I learnt, below the Border, that this whole rustled bunch had been sold to the Mexkin army and butchered.

The trail of them Tates jest plumb petered out, after that.

Jedge, mighty nigh the first man I run into when I got back up here was Old Man Tate.

"Pete," he says, "come on over to the place. I got a surprise for you."

"Tate," I says, "you been a mighty good friend to me. If either of your boys is li'ble to be there, I better not go."

"They ain't," he says, mighty sober. "I don't know where Hoke it. Bud's been killed—down on the Pecos. I wisht you'd come on over, Pete."

Funny, but on the Old Man's account I felt kinder sorry to hear it. I was fellin' purty sorry, anyhow, Jedge. I couldn't help recollectin' how my ol' pappy had asked me to always keep a strain of them ol' Ozark speckles to remember him by, an' I hadn't done it.

Well, I was mighty glad I went with Old Man Tate. He had a surprise for me shore 'nough. It was one of my speckled cows—one of Queenie's own calves, about an eight-year-old now. Somehow them rustlers had missed her, an' some of Tate's hands had picked her up. Sidin' her was about a two months old steer calf—Tate's hands had done run my brand on him—an' cut him, before the Old Man knowed about it. Old Man Tate was the only one I'd ever told about wantin' to be sure an' keep up that speckled strain. Though Hoke an' Bud must have heard about it, or they wouldn't have took so much trouble to clean me out. Most folks would have laughed at the idee, I reckon. Well, anyhow, thanks to Old Man Tate, God rest him, in that cow I had me a new start.

Jedge, I want to tell you about that little ol' steer calf. Two generations of longhorn in him had kinder run the speckles together, for he was a rusty red-roan all over except he had a white spot in his face, right up between the eyes. First thing I done when I seen him, I named him. I called him "Star."

I raised him such a pet that I doubt if he ever knowed but what he was a dog.

Instead of going back to work for the 3B I taken the little stake I'd saved an' got holt of me a little place with a strip of creek runnin' through it, an' bought a couple dozen head of cattle. Mostly red an' white speckles. Not that such markin' means good cattle, but I liked to see 'em around. Looked something like the kind I'd growed up with back in Arkinsaw—only longer horns.

Come spring I see that this one Arkinsaw speck I had left was going' to bring a calf. I sure felt mighty pleased. I hoped it'd be a heifer, an' I swore I wouldn't never let that Arkinsaw strain git down to jest one breedin' animal again. But I did—an' worse. In the special little creek pasture I'd poled off for her so she'd be fat when the calf came, I'd neglected to notice wild parsnip roots showin' along the creek bank. Cows sure like it—though they never git to eat it the second time. It's a plumb deadly poison.

So now all I had left outa that Queenie heifer was this one little ol' steer. Jedge, you know frum then on I taken mighty good care of him. He got so he'd hang around the shack for biskits, an' he'd foller me around like a dog when he wasn't grazin'. You can make pets outa cow critters, same as any other if you jest handle 'em right—an' I'd growed up likin' to monkey with calves.

The spring when ol' Star come two year old, with a horn spread already two foot acrost, Mr. Baggett come over to see if I wouldn't go up the trail again for the 3B. Jedge, the cattle trails to a cowboy is kinder like the ocean to an ol' sailor. I told him I'd go—but I'd have to take that there roan two-year-old of mine along.

"He'll be a wagon pest," I says, "but you put me ridin' point an' I'll make him a leader, too. He'll foller me like a dog."

You'd be surprised, Jedge, how much

steadier a thousand head of steers travels with jest one critter steppin' out ahead like he knows where he's goin'. It didn't take a week for me to git the leadin' idee into ol' Star's head, an' before we got half way to Abilene ever' man in the outfit was braggin' on him like they'd raised him their ownselves. Ever'body but the cook. This ol' coosie shore snorted about the way this steer would hang around the wagon everwhen we made camp. But I noticed him savin' the biskit scraps and potato peelin's mighty careful to feed to him, jest the same.

We bedded down the herd a little piece out of Abilene—where they was to be shipped from—an' Brock Mason, the Trail Boss, told Billy Mayes to stand my guard, as he wanted me to ride into town with him to see about our turn at the loadin' pens. We got through with that *pronto* an' stepped into the Big Star Saloon to see if we could still swaller good before headin' back to camp.

But we hadn't even downed the first one when we heard a mighty big commotion outside: shootin', yellin', a noise like somebody dumpin' a load of dishpans on a rockpile, an' the bellerin' of a steer.

Jedge, I be dogged if that there ol' Star hadn't missed me an' follered me into town, an' a bunch of wild-eyed hooligans had roped him, festooned a string of buckets an' pans onto his tail, an' yonder they went, hell-bent in a cloud of dust, whoopin' an' hollerin' an' shootin' off their go-bangs—jest havin' theirselves one hell of a big time time watchin' that pore steer stampede down the street. They'd done passed the saloon when we come out, so the rumpus had spooked our hosses an' busted 'em loose frum the hitchrail, an' there we was afoot.

I don't know what would have happened to ol' Star if there hadn't been one man in town, anyways, that didn't see nothin' funny in tormentin' a poor skeered steer. As it was, all of a sudden the shootin' an' yellin' stopped, an' the crowd that me an' Brock was pushin' through slowed down. We shoved on through, an' purty soon we see what stopped 'em. It was one man, afoot, squared off in the middle of the street with a double-barrelled shotgun movin' slowly back an' forth acrost the front of that crowd. The steer had done run on past.

Jedge, this feller wasn't even a cowboy, nor a marshal, nor anybody you'd expect to pull such a play. But he had the guts. There was plenty of hootin' an' yellin' at him, threatenin' him with mighty sudden death, but seem like nobody liked to be the first feller to start it.

This feller wasn't cussin'—he was jest talkin' in kinder of a plain, quiet way—well sorter like the way a Jedge feels free to talk in his own courtroom, I reckon.

"Let's call it a day, gentlemen," he says. "I would prefer not to kill any of you—but this tormenting of a poor dumb animal has gone far enough. I will shoot if I have to—and I warn you—it's buckshot, gentlemen!"

Jedge, I've always been kinder sorry I never got to meet that man an' shake his hand. But things happened too fast right then. I'd caught my horse again an' I hollered out that the steer was mine; an' this hombre with the shotgun hollered back for me to go right ahead after him, an' I done so. Less'n a quarter away, yonder come ol' Star, rampagin' back, them pans a-bangin' his heels, his tongue out an' jest abellerin'. There was a big tall feller with a black mustache ridin' at his heels, whalin' him with a rope at ever' jump.

Jedge, I'd promised Old Man Tate that if I ever met up with Hoke Tate again I sure wouldn't kill him unless I had to. But I forgot all about that right then. All that saved him was I shot in too big of a hurry, without even slowin'

my horse. An' takin' care to aim high enough not to hit ol' Star, I missed Hoke Tate three shots straight—an' by the fourth he was already gittin' out of range, for he taken out from there when he seen me, like a skeered coyote.

I caught ol' Star an' taken him back to the wagon.

WE was mighty busy loadin' them cattle the next two days. When we got through I hunted that Abilene town frum one end to the other, but I couldn't find hide nor hair of Hoke Tate. Nor of the feller that had stepped in with the shotgun an' saved my steer. Rumors was that he was a lawyer or doctor or something from K. C., jest happenin' to be in Abilene that day. None of the trail hands seemed to know who he was. I wouldn't hardly have knowed him if I'd seen him again myself, only I'd took note of a scar acrost the jaw.

So the next day me and a couple of the others headed back for New Mexico—an' we brung that little ol' steer of mine along with us, all the way. He mighty nigh got to thinkin' he was one of the boys before we got home, we treated him so sociable. Travelin' fast thataway, his feet got sore, so we stopped the first settlement we come to an' had a blacksmith make him some split-hoof shoes an' tack 'em on. He traveled mighty nigh like a horse after that.

Jedge, I'm a takin' up a heap of your time. To short cut the trail a little, I'll jest tell you that for the next seven years me an' ol' Star led a 3B herd up the trail ever summer. Mr. Baggett always said it was the steer, not me, that he was payin' wages to, an' he tried to buy him from me. Offered me $500 cash, but I'd sooner of sold a leg than part with ol' Star. I used to kinder wish my old' pappy could see that steer, with his six foot horns, steppin' out at the point of a herd; or nosin' into camp to roust the cook out an extra hour early when he had a long day's drive ahead—an' he knowed it. Or swimmin' a river a dozen times, back an' forth, to lead the herd over by installments when we'd hit a bad crossing an' couldn't handle 'em all at once. Or bawlin' an' pawin' on a picket rope when I wouldn't let him foller me into town at the end of the trail.

Because, although we never drove to Abilene again, on account of the railroad's shovin' on farther west, I never knowed where Hoke Tate might show up—or but what some other hoodlums might try repeatin' that Abilene performance if I let ol' Star trail me to town.

Jedge, that steer led herds to Montana, to Idyho, to the Canady line. He made trips acrost Arizona purty near to California, an' it's many a drive he headed up to Pueblo an' them closer places as the rails moved west.

But we shoved him into the ol' Canadian River at flood, one time, against his better judgment and the current jammed him into a mess of drifting logs, so I had to swim my horse out there to try an' work him loose before he drowned. Only the way it turned out, it was ol' Star, finally, that saved me from drownin' myownself. A floatin' log knocked me loose from my horse's tail, then swung around an' walloped the horse in the head. It sure looked like I was a goner, but I reckon that steer must of heard me holler, because when I come up the second time, never expectin' to do so the third, there was ol' Star right within arm's reach, swimmin' like a paddle wheel, them ol' horns pokin' up above the water like shipmasts. I don't know how he made it to the bank with me aholt of his tail, like he did, because not only did I have a cracked arm, but them logs had busted half a dozen of his ribs.

Jedge, I quit the herd an' camped right there, then, lookin' after him, till them ribs got well so he could travel.

Then we come right on back home, an' when Mr. Baggett come to see me about trailin' the next spring, I jest told him:

"Me an' ol' Star's done with the trail, Bob."

He offered mighty big wages, but me an' ol' Star wouldn't budge. Anyhow, a steer is gittin' kinder old at eleven years, Jedge—an' that's been several years, now.

"We got our little place here," I says, "an' our roamin' days is over."

JEDGE, I'd ought to have stuck to it. But when the feller that bought Old Man Tate's stuff last month, jest a while before the Old Man died, come over an' says that the Old Man's big steers was mighty rollicky, an' the Old Man wanted to know if I wouldn't come over with ol' Star for kind of a leader to help drive 'em in to the railroad an get 'em loaded, I give in. After all it wouldn't hardly be a hundred mile drive. I reckoned me an' ol' Star could stand that much.

We done the job, Jedge, an' we done it right. You never seen ol' bush-wild rannyhans loaded as easy as these was with ol' Star walkin' right up the chute to lead 'em into the cars. Then when I'd call him, he'd sidle back out, an' we'd start loadin' up the next car. I sure was mighty proud of ol' Star. I wish my ol' pappy could have been around that day to see what a smart animal the last of them ol' Arkinsaw speckles was.

Jedge, I don't know jest how it happened. While we was loadin' the last car, that buyer called me to come with him into the shippin' clerk's office an' witness the tally-sheets, an' Jedge, when I come back out I didn't see ol' Star anywhere in the yards an' that stock train was movin' out.

Maybe it was accidental—maybe on purpose, Jedge, but that damn buyer's men had loaded ol' Star. When I run up along the train hollerin' for him, I seen him put his big ol' head down to a crack close to the floor, lookin' at me. He kinder *mooed*, like he knowed what was happenin' to him.

When I seen I couldn't hope to jump the car an' git the door open in time, I run back an' hollered up to the conductor on the caboose for God's sake to stop that train. He jest grinned and waved. Either didn't hear me, or didn't give a damn.

Then that buyer taken me by the arm.

"Hell, that's all right, Darbee," he says, "that 'un we lost on Bullswitch Creek made us one short. Your ol' steer'll be purty tough meat, I reckon, but he'll even up the tally. An' o' course I'll pay you for him."

Maybe I done wrong, Jedge.

"Pay me for him, hell!" I hollers. Jedge, I hit that buyer feller right over the head with the barrel of my sixgun. I wouldn't of cared if I'd killed him.

"An' that's about all, Jedge. I mighty nigh killed my horse gittin' up over the Rockwall shortcut to the Pass before that train had time to climb it by the roundabout way the rails run. But I made it, an' I flagged that engineer down with my gun, an' I stopped that train. If that engineer would have listened to me an' not tried to start 'er up again, I never would have had to climb up in that cab an' club him an' that fireman down with the shovel like I done. Reckon I couldn't have done it anyhow, only they seemed kinder skeered to fight back as long as I had my gun in my left hand thataway.

An' if that conductor an' the brakemen would have helped me like I told 'em, I might have got ol' Star outa there without turnin' out the whole carload. But I reckon they figgered it was their duty to prevent me openin' that stock car door, so all I could do was jest hold the gun on 'em an' *make* 'em open it for me. Natcherly the whole carload swarmed out an' scattered.

But—well, you see Jedge, I'm guilty, like I said.

PETE DARBEE stood up as he finished, took a burnt-out fragment of cigarette from his lips, ground his heel on it, and faced the judge patiently, batting his small eyes.

Judge Lennard stroked his whiskers, rubbing a long finger thoughtfully along a gray streak on one jaw.

"You realize, Peter Darbee, that your delay of this train *might* have caused a disastrous wreck?" His tone was quietly stern.

The defendant batted his eyes.

"I'm aimin' to take my medicine, Jedge. I—I'd do it again rather'n to lose ol' Star!"

"Poppycock!" It was the railroad attorney's voice, acid with contempt. "If the court please, now that we have wasted our time listening to cleverly concocted lies devised for the sole purpose of—"

"Lies?" There was a strange gleam in Judge Lennard's eyes as he interrupted. "Gentlemen, I chanced, a few years ago as district attorney in a certain Kansas court, to prosecute a charge of murder against one Hoke Tate. It may interest the defendant to know that he was hanged."

"Gosh," said Pete Darbee, "I'm glad Old Man Tate never heard of it before he died. You see, Jedge, the Old Man—"

"Your honor," began the railroad attorney angrily, "is this a court of law? I demand—"

"Mr. Attorney!" interrupted the judge. He rose to his feet. His voice remained calm, judicially impersonal, but his words—and the gleam in his eyes—belied it. "The defendant is dismissed!"

"Preposterous!" shouted Mr. Evan Cunningham. "Such irregular procedure is unheard of! It is the act of—"

"The act," broke in Judge Lennard, smiling, "of a man once foolhardy enough, in his lawyer days, to rush into an Abilene street with a shotgun, for the purpose of protecting a mere roan steer from torment! Gentlemen, court is adjourned!"

With dignified stride he came down to the dazed looking cowboy.

"Johnny Pete, are you going to invite me out to renew acquaintance with that old roan steer?"

THE DARK GODS CALL

A novelette by ROBERT CARSE

CHAPTER I

A PRETTY DAMN FINE HELL

IT WAS long before Morris could believe it. The land, the shore of the rich, greenly fertile tropical island was to him a part of his fevered dream. But Stam, the other man in the boat with him, the other man who had lived, sat calmly in the stern-sheets at the tiller and spoke in the voice which always reminded the American of the clashing of swords.

"We're here. It's the coast of Haiti. Get up; you say you know this country. Get to the bow and watch for reefs. The sharks are there yet."

Morris got slowly to his feet in the boat where he and Stam had lived for sixty-seven days since leaving the prisons and the coastal mud of French Guiana. He stood straight and looked over the side, astern of the small, lug-sail-rigged boat, where the sharply angled fins of cannibal sharks cut through the calm night water, a glimmer of phosphorescent bubbles softly about them.

"Yeah," he said, "we can do without them now." Then he walked forward over the salt and sun blistered footboards to the bow. Ghosts rose about him as he took those few paces. He was a hard and unimaginative man, had spent all his mature life in the frequent execution or sight of violent death; but the faces and the voices of the men who had been his and Stam's boatmates and

had died here, all of them horribly, came closely about him. Remembering those men, he cursed the sharks in a cracked, slow voice.

Then a sudden gust of the faint night breeze came off the land and was in his bearded, sun-tortured face; he lifted his head and knew he could laugh, aware that he had lived, whereas during those sixty-seven days of their escape from Devil's Island, other strong and brave men had died.

From aft, Stam's flat voice seemed to be an echo of that thought.

"You're getting to be like those others," Stam told him. "You'll be braying at the sky, or the sea or the sharks next. Stop it, man. And show me what you're good for. What's ashore there?"

Morris had already stared ashore through inflamed and rheumed eyes. He had watched the great, looming shoulders of the mountains, the breaking of the surf in liquid lunges of silver against the rocky shore and the distant glim of lights along the coast to the north and west.

"It's Haiti all right," he said. "Those lights up there are the town of Jeremie. That big light we saw eight days ago, before the hurricane hit, must have been Cap Dame Marie. But there aren't any reefs here; you've got open going right in to the beach. And I'm not getting like the others; I never did. . . ."

He turned and came aft as he spoke, his blinking gaze on the other man. Stam rested quietly in the stern-sheets, one broad and hairy forearm crooked over the tiller haft, his heavy, nearly square head rested a bit to one side as he seemed to do nothing but study the slant of the ripped lugsail and the horizon beyond.

Morris had seen him like that for practically all of the sixty-seven days. No other man except himself had held the tiller for long, and he was the only one of them who had remained fully sane. Sometimes, Morris recalled now, he had thought that Stam was not real after all, but some figure contained by no human emotions, not in any way gripped and consumed by the desires of the others for food, water, release from the monotony and the pressing terror of the sun, the sea and storm.

THE last time that had happened was in the middle of the hurricane which had struck the boat when they knew they were north of Jamaica and Puerto Rico, when Morris had seen what he recognized now to have been the light on the cape of Dame Marie. In Guiana he had known little of Stam, except that the man had only been a very brief time in the prisons before his break. But even in that period Stam had established some secret, rapid and certain channel of communication with the outside world. For he had quite smoothly arranged for the purchase and supplying of the boat, organized the party of eight men; then slipped with them with amazing ease and rapidity down across the bar from the Maroni River and out to sea.

And from the first night on Stam had told them that the big water cask lashed amidships was all they would have until they reached Haiti.

In the hurricane, the cask had been stove in, the last few quarts of water fouled with salt. Ghurkine, the Russian-French convict, had gone out of his head, raved and smashed with his hands at Morris and at the other remaining man, Aroud Barf, the Oran pickpocket.

Both the American, Morris, and Aroud Barf had been very weak, just capable of standing on their feet to bail and tend sheet on the cracking sail. They had been wholly unable to strike back at Ghurkine's blows. So the big man had stumbled aft through the lifted whip of the spindrift, yelling out at Stam, calling him the strongest one and the leader, the one who should pay for

their plight and danger now. Stam had not changed his position at the tiller. He simply told Ghurkine to get back from him before he was forced to kill him. Ghurkine had laughed then, watching Stam's eyes, and had stumbled back. A few minutes later, screaming in a high voice, he had leapt over the gunwale into the green-veined, dark waves where the sharks waited.

The Algerian thief, Aroud Barf, had followed him the next night. Aroud Barf's going was different. In this moment, the knowledge of the close and fragrant land in his brain like marvelously quieting music, Morris was able to tell himself that the Algerian had been a subtle and a really patient man. Aroud Barf had waited, anyhow, until he, Morris, had slumped down in a lax dullness of exhaustion beside the mast butt, and until he thought that Stam also slept at the tiller. Then he had brought the evil little knife out from the lining of his prison jumper, started creeping aft from his position in the bow.

Stam had awakened Morris, had called sharply, "Look out! The *bico* has an idea he wants to drink your blood!"

Aroud Barf heard the words also. He took a flicking slash with the knife at Morris, kept on screaming along the plunging foot-boards of the boat toward Stam. One hand yet on the tiller, holding the battered and laboring boat up into the eye of the hurricane, Stam had brought a pistol forth from inside his trousers waistband and shot the Algerian dead, once through the throat, once through the skull.

"Tip him overboard," Stam said then. "He can't bail any more and he's no good as ballast. Then come on aft; I've got a *bidon* of water here. We can drink it now—you and me. . . ."

Morris had been too dazed, too driven by thirst and the awful accumulation of all those days, to wonder then. But the thoughts came with distinct outline in his brain now: Stam must have had that big automatic pistol since leaving Guiana, although he had not used it until the last, and almost all the men who had died had threatened him violently before their going. And the felt-covered, two-quart *bidon* of clear water he had taken from under the foot-boards must have been in his possession from the beginning. Yet he had stinted himself with the others, drunk only from the communal cask with them, had also gasped and writhed with the agony of his thirst, had seen them go mad for want of water, die in front of him, had never spoken of the *bidon*, never made its presence known, not even surreptitiously used it himself. It had been full to the brim when he had handed it to Morris, quietly telling him to drink lightly or he would be ill.

Morris looked again at the other now, the small, closely set eyes, that were as lack-luster and oddly shapen as cheap shoe buttons, the long cruelly thin line of the mouth, the massive shoulders of the long-trunked but not tall body. Stam met his gaze; he smiled.

"You and me," he said. "We're alone now. And here's where we begin, or where we stop."

FOR an instant, Morris looked from him at the land. Haiti was to him a familiar place; he had spent nine active years of his life here as a sergeant in the Marine Corps and a lieutenant in the national police force, the *Garde d'Haiti*. He had never expected to see it again; to him it had still a kind of dream-like quality of unreality. But the man beside him here was so strangely and vibrantly intense in his purpose that even now he, Morris, could not keep his thoughts on the land. He knew nothing of Stam's past, he told himself; did not even know why the man had been sentenced to the prisons in Guiana; or why, from the thousand or so men in the main penitentiary depot in St. Laurent du

Maroni, he had chosen him with the few others to make this voyage of horror and death that was now so quietly ending.

But he did know that after sixty-seven days of horror, death, semi-starvation, thirst and storm, Stam was coming in to the shelving rock beach of this island in a mood of calmness that to Morris was far beyond his wearied understanding. Stam, he knew now, had never doubted that—his ability to reach Haiti. He had secretly arranged for, bought, equipped and manned this boat to reach here. Now, he was only coming to his destination. Impelled by the strange, dark knowledge that he in those days of thirst and madness had come also to hate Stam inescapably, but that the man had saved him alone, he said harshly:

"Why the hell did you come here, to Haiti?"

Cold eyes glanced briefly at him. "Because there's no better place—for you and me."

Obliquely, Morris stared away, saying a curse word slowly. Stam had saved his life. That was what he had told him just now. Although often, here in the boat, he had sensed Stam's eyes upon him and had known that Stam had no real liking for him, no more than for those other men whom he had watched die. Yet Stam had given him to drink of his final, secret possession of water, and warned him when Aroud Barf had sprung with the knife.

"Why you and me?" he persisted. "Together? Haiti's no bed of roses for any escaped man."

Stam was slacking off on the lugsail sheet, casting the turns clear from the salt-corroded cleat on the gunwale. He turned around and Morris saw him smile for the first time.

"Because I know about you," he said. "All about you. I picked you, and those others, out of a lot of men. But you're the one man who can help me here, in this country. And you can help yourself. . . . Because from all I've heard this is a good country for a man like you to hide. They had you in the *bagne* in Guiana for murder; you're supposed to have shot and killed some *gendarmerie* agent back up the Maroni near the gold diggings."

"That's right," said Morris simply. "I did. I met the guy on the river, when I was coming out with a full sack of dust for the bank. It was all I had made since I'd been in the country, and he tried to take it from me. He gave me some gag about how I'd stolen it from some other guy, further up the river, and how he'd been sent to catch me. I called him a lousy liar, then he pulled a gun on me and I plugged him. Even then I brought his body down the river with me, and turned myself in to the authorities."

"Who responded with grace and gave you fifteen years at hard labor. And told you that luck and an American citizenship alone kept you back from the guillotine."

"You've got that just right. They shoved me through that marine tribunal so fast I never saw a lawyer or a consul; I don't think they've got any in the country, anyhow."

"French colonial justice in Guiana usually does without those. But how about this place?"

Morris looked up and smiled at Haiti. "This here is really a pretty damn' fine country."

"And you know it."

"I should; I fought all through the central and northern half of it in the Caco rebellion and was stationed right here in the Jeremie district afterward when I was a lieutenant in the *Garde*."

"But they have laws that extradite a man from here for murder."

Morris smiled back. "Sure, if they can catch him. But there's a lot of guys, black, right back on that mountain, who have been my friends for a long time, and always will be. The only reason I left this place was because they started

returning the American officers in the Garde back to the Marine Corps and orders came through from Washington that the whole Marine brigade was to be evacuated out of the place last summer. My hitch in the Corps was almost up anyhow, and they were just starting that lousy gold rush in Guiana. So all my old buddies are out of here now, in the States or back on sea duty, and you and I are piling in here like this, after a little sea duty of our own. . . . But how about you, guy?"

Stam had got up; with the American helping him, he was furling the sail and unshipping the stub mast, breaking out the pair of cracked sweeps for the last few hundred yards' passage in to the sloped rock beach. He spoke, looking intently at Morris:

"I could use a little Haitian hill peace and quiet myself. What they got me for in Guiana wasn't murder and I don't think is extraditable from here, but it's too long a story to tell now."

"What you want to crawl back up in the bush for, then?" Morris asked sharply, squatted on a thwart, the thimble of one of the oars between his hands. "This is the end of the coffee season right now and a lot of ships are in and out of the island. You could catch one nearly any day from Jeremie up there, for most anywhere you'd want, the States or Europe."

Stam gave him his steady and searching glance.

"It's a funny impression men get of me sometimes," he said. "That I am made of steel, or some other non-wearing, indestructible material. Maybe you are beginning to forget now that I was at that tiller there for almost two straight months. You and I—both of us —are buoyed up by the facts that we are not dead, and that this island is right ahead of us. But wait until you feel the land under you again, and have the knowledge that you can sleep, sleep in peace, then rise and eat and drink, all you want. . . . We will not want to move, to even turn our heads, for days."

"Yeah." Morris was panting over the oar, sick with the exertion, giddy to the point of dull hysteria. "I remember, how we used to be back of the lines in France after a battle. . . ."

"But," Stam's voice was as impersonal, as insistent as the stroke of a piece of machinery; "how about this place? Can you take us to where we will be safe, and can sleep and eat?"

Morris rose up on the thwart and reared around, reeling to look at the dull, small glimmer of the fires of cooking huts far on the mountain slope above.

"Yeah," he muttered, hearing the keel of the boat grate jouncing over the first rock of the beach. "Up there. . . . They know me on the mountain. One of my old *Garde* sergeants, Gros Jean, lives there. Don't forget that name—Gros Jean. He's the guy for us now, he's the only one."

CHAPTER II

GROS JEAN

GROS JEAN'S black, big-featured face was right above Morris when he awoke. Gros Jean was grinning at him, his blunt yellow teeth gaped wide. *"C'est bien vous, Lieutenant,"* he said in one of the few phrases of real French that were his pride.

Morris rolled over and sat part way up on the banana stem sleeping mat; took the tall black's hand and rose swaying to his feet. *"Oui, c'est moi,"* he muttered. "I'm the guy all right, Jean. But, *coument ou kalle?*" How's it going?"

Gros Jean held out a huge, brown-palmed hand. "All right, Lieutenant. Very calm and very slow. There's been peace in the country for a long time now, and not much work for a real soldier. I got out of the *Garde* soon after you left. . . ." Gros Jean stopped speaking

for an instant, drawing his splayed toes through a design in the dust of the hut floor, and Morris knew the big man was phrasing a sentence in English:

"I say to myself, 'What the 'ell; the Lieutenant Mor-ris ees gone, w'y the 'ell should Gros Jean stay?"

Morris smiled as he had forgotten how to do for nearly a year; for several moments he was unable to speak. But then he reached out a blistered hand and indicated the neat, faded blue pair of overalls the Haitian wore and the huge tin shield on the left breast. "I see, though," he said in the guttural country *patois*, "that you still stand for law and order."

Gros Jean's grin seemed to brighten his whole face. "They made me do it, down at Jeremie; they made me *chef de section*; what in English you call a 'cop', hey? They said I'm head man in the village anyhow, and somebody here on the mountain should keep the *petits negres* in line. So they give me the shield and this funny blue suit, and now I can carry a gun and buy ammunition and shoot all the ducks and guinea hens I want without a permit. A man has a gun on this mountain, he feels better sometimes, Lieutenant."

"But you have one of your wives polish the shield, anyhow," Morris said, laughing softly with him. Slowly then, his feet and legs still feeling insecure under him, he moved towards the door of the big mud and wattle hut. "I don't remember coming here, Gros Jean," he said as the green-shaded jungle sunlight slanted across his face in the doorway. "All I remember is stumbling along trails in the bush. But there was another man, a blanc, with me when I left the beach."

Gros Jean did not answer for a moment; he had reached down into one of his pockets, brought out two little native peasant pipes with red clay bowls and reed stems, a crumpled heap of local tobacco. In silence, he filled one pipe, handed it ceremoniously to Morris, filled the other for himself, then lighted them both. With the flare of the sulphur match flame, Morris saw that Gros Jean's eyes were on him, and on the badly printed black numbers across the breast and waistband of his tattered canvas prison jumper and trousers.

"Who is that other man?" Gros Jean asked quietly then. "We know you here, Lieutenant, but we do not know him."

"I will tell it in a few words," Morris told him. "When I left here I went south, to the French colony of Guiana. They have been finding gold there, and I went for that. But I got in trouble there, no trouble that I could help. I had to shoot a man, a *gendarme* who was a crook and tried to rob me of a little gold I had. They put me in their prison down there. That *blanc* who is with me helped me and six other men to escape. The others all died, getting here. If it was not for that men, I would not be here. You understand me?"

"I understand you, yes," Gros Jean said slowly. "And that man came up the trail into the village, carrying you on his shoulders. He must be a strong and a brave man, if what you say is so. He has only slept for two days, while you have slept for three. He is up now, and eating. Look out there."

With Gros Jean at his side, Morris had stepped from the door of the hut out into the pale but warm sunlight of the village clearing in the jungle. His eyes widened and he smiled as he looked about him. This to him was as familiar and pleasant as anything in his life. He and the ex-sergeant stood on one side of what formed roughly the village square.

Rows of mud and wattle *cailles*, the typical Haitian huts, were on two sides of the clearing. Low *ajoupas*, open structures thatched with palm leaves, sprawled in between at irregular intervals. Old men and young, strong ones dozed before the doors of the *cailles*, their bare feet comfortably up to the afternoon sunlight. Women worked

under the thatches of the *ajoupas,* over cooking fires or at the picking of wild cotton and coffee. Skinny dogs, chickens and black, naked children ran in a constant flurry of noise across the packed earth of the clearing. At one end of the space, where the trail dipped down towards the lowlands and Jeremie, the jungle closed in around patches of maize and cassava. A droop-eared *bourrique,* the stunted and always sad breed of Haitian donkey, brayed under the blows of a fat old woman who drove him before her with a load of firewood and water. At the other end, made distinct by its location, solid structure and size, the *houmfort,* the local temple of the *vaudou,* stood forth solitary, flanked only by the sacred mapou and ceiba trees.

STAM was there, close to the *houmfort.* The man sat calmly beside a cooking fire made in the open and built around a big iron pot. Once again, staring at him, the strange old doubt and wonder concerning the other man and his purposes here came to Morris. But a trembling ache of hunger was all through him and the scents of the cooking pot in his nostrils.

"A *grilot,*" he said to Gros Jean hoarsely.

Gros Jean grinned at him. "A real *grilot.* You would like some, eh?"

"I'd like a good damn' lot," Morris said in English. "Who's the old guy playing host to my friend Stam?"

Gros Jean slowly lifted and reset his wide-brimmed straw sombrero before he answered.

"It is the *hougan,* the witch-doctor, Papa Lassin," he said in a voice which was only several notes above a whisper. "Maybe you do not remember him, Lieutenant? He is one of the oldest and one of the most famous witch-doctors in the country. For years, he went all across the country, from Miragoane to Jeremie to Hinche, to Cape Haitien.

"But the last few years he has begun to feel his age, and has said he has wanted to stay still and in peace. He lived for a time down near Hinche. But the *Garde* officer in command there came to dislike him; he even broke up some of the dances and ceremonies. So the old man came here. Me, I don't like him either; but he is a venerated priest of the *vaudou,* he was born here and the people of the mountain have great respect for him. I could not stop his coming. . . . He is a learned man; today I found that he could speak good French, the kind the *gens de couleur* speak in Jeremie and Port au Prince. He and the blanc you name your friend are speaking French together now."

Sharply, Morris glanced at the two men across the fire. Stam lay sprawled with a chicken breast from the cooking pot in one hand, a bottle of *clairin,* the raw local rum, in the other. He laughed and raised the food and the bottle when he saw Morris, barked out, "Come and get it! Sleep isn't worth this!"

But Morris only nodded at him, his glance on the other man. The witch-doctor, Papa Lassin, sat erect and quite motionless, almost in the position of a strange idol. His only garment was a pair of clean white jean trousers. His concave and hairless chest was bare, but his arms were folded over it as his knees were folded under him. His hair was long, gray and thick, a tangled cloud he had braided at the sides of his face like the mane of a horse. His skin had the color and quality of dark old leather. It pouched in loose folds below the caverned sockets of his unblinking, light-colored eyes and about his wide, spatulate mouth. Morris' immediate thought was that the man's true identity and expression were hidden behind a mask, and one that would never change, even in death. But the *hougan* spoke to him now, in the excellent and liquid French Gros Jean had remarked.

"It is the Lieutenant Morris." He

lifted a hand up from its light clasping against his other shoulder, made a gesture of grave welcome. "Perhaps the lieutenant does not know Lassin, but Lassin has head of and knows the lieutenant. You would sit and eat in the company of such an humble man as myself?"

Morris gave him a controlled and gradual smile.

"Why not?" he asked. "I also remember the Papa Lassin. . . . Gros Jean has just told me of you, and I can recall you from the old days, but I never knew of you as an humble man."

The dim eyes moved slightly then in the weird face, turned upon Stam's face, then upon that of Gros Jean, who had stopped and stood still several paces from the fire. But it was Gros Jean who spoke.

"Sit," he said then, "and eat and drink, Lieutenant. This is my village."

THE food pot and two more bottles of *clairin* were empty when Morris and Stam were through. The American had mixed his rum judicially in a gourd with lime juice and fresh water, and Stam, laughing hoarsely at him, had consumed the rest of the fiery, thick liquor straight, grunting as the American watched him narrowly:

"Don't worry about me. I can take it —this and a whole lot more. Old Mumbo Jumbo—" he waved his blunt hand towards where Papa Lassin had been sitting "knocked down two other bottles with me before you came along. But where's he gone now, and where's your pal, the ex-sergeant and village father, taken himself?"

The abrupt and fragile jungle dusk, then the almost violently sudden blackness of night had closed the clearing a

few minutes before. The women and bigger children had come from the yam and maize patches with their evening's loads on their heads. The cooking fires in the *ajoupas* gave the only light in a lanced yellow wavering into the clearing. Morris looked slowly about him and heard the first soft, preparatory thrumming of the big *rada* work drums. Their sounds came from the *houmfort* of Papa Lassin and from the huts of the several village drummers around the rest of the flat open space.

"You speak French very well," he said to Stam, "but I guess you don't get the *patois* yet. Because Gros Jean told me all about it before he and Lassin left. This is *Mi-Câreme*, and a big *fête* for even these hilly-billies up here."

"The Christian Lent, you mean," Stam said, refilling the little pipe Gros Jean had also ceremoniously supplied him. "But what's that got to do with these folks?"

Morris smiled a little, listening to the gradually increasing tremored throb of the drums. "A lot of what they think is religion is all mixed up in their *vaudou*. In the old days, for the hundred years while the French ruled them as slaves here before the revolt, Christianity was compulsory for the blacks. Some of it's just clung on, that's all, and confused in the worship of their own dark gods. Tonight, though, is just one big, old-fashioned good time—a big dancing and a drunk. Those aren't the ritual drums playing—they're what they call the *radas*. They take those drums and dress them all up, with ribbons, and lace and even little silk dresses. '*Rada*' is a corruption of '*le roi royale dit*'—'the royal king speaks.' They'll be dancing here until 'way after dawn."

"Who will be?" Stam spoke with his eyes upon the bowl of his little gift pipe. "All the village?"

"All the village and everybody on the mountain who can walk or dance, if what Gros Jean said is so. He says they've got the best drummers anywhere around here, on this mountain, Morne Macaque. Wherever there's a powerful *hougan* like Papa Lassin you'll find good drummers; they help the *hougans* a lot in all the *vaudou* business.

"Then, too, these folks up here are still pretty wild and unspoiled. This is one of the highest, wildest spots in Haiti, and damn' hard to get to. The runaway slaves who broke from their French masters in the old days came up in here. They built their own villages and protected themselves; they called themselves 'maroons' and all but dared the French to come and get them out. Which was something the French never did. These boys around here now still know that, and you'll find more than one of them who'll say he's a direct descendant of a maroon and has never been licked by any man, white or black. Which, by God, is true. Gros Jean is one of them, and about a dozen more men I know in the village. They're real tough babies when they get started. I know; I fought with them in the *Garde*."

Stam looked up and smiled in the firelight. "So I guess we slept and ate and drank just in time, hey? What happens to us, with this place jammed full tonight with tough, rum-loaded blacks who are proud their ancestors couldn't be whipped by the whites?"

Morris lifted one hand and made a quick, denying gesture.

"Don't be silly," he said. "As you've seen, Gros Jean runs this place, and is a real friend of mine. These real hill blacks hate what they call the 'colored men', the people of part blood down in the towns, a lot more than they hate any white. The only thing we've got to be afraid of is a visit from a *Garde* patrol from Jeremie or the little sub-station at Terre Rousse. But they don't bother these people up here, especially on a dancing night in Lent. All Gros Jean advised me to have us do was to get rid of these lousy prison outfits from our

old, gay life in Guiana, put on the regular shirts and pants he's got for us over in his hut, then stay back out of the way when the crowd gets rummed up and really hot."

"Gros Jean is not afraid for us, then? He thinks no one will inform the *gendarmes* we are here?"

Morris spat into the gold-red heart of the fire and laughed. "Gros Jean himself is the representative of law and order up here; he's *chef de section* for all the mountain. He'll take care of us as long as we want him to. If anybody's going to get us into trouble, it will be ourselves." But then, abruptly, he swung where he sat and his intense gaze came fully upon the other man's eyes. "I was walking like a dead man when we left the beach," he said. "I hardly remember any of the trip here. Did anybody see us leaving the boat, or coming up the trails?"

Stam set his head back and smiled at him.

"I sank the boat," he said quietly. "Stove her bottom in and pushed her off into deep water. And nobody I saw noticed us on the trails up here. We came the whole way at night. But come on; the one thing I'm interested in now is losing this long-wearing uniform of the French government. . . ."

CHAPTER III

JUNGLE TRAP

THE dancing, the singing and the drumming had been going on for hours, until, finally, even some of the drummers, big and powerful men, had reeled away from their instruments in weariness. But others had taken their places, crouching down spraddle-legged around the high drums, their eyelids hooded in the fascination the drumming gave them also, their black hands working with the lithe motions of snakes, lifting from time to time to intricately cross and catch odd notes or whip into action the *baguettes*, the little, hammer-headed sticks of hardwood that hung from their forearms on coir cords.

Several thousand people, some of the finest and most savage blacks Morris had ever seen in Haiti, danced, roared in song and reeled, stamping about the drummers. The songs they raised in the repeated choruses of the drums were ancient ones, the famous "*Gellico*" and "*Nous Bouvons Etrangere*." Men whose black, tremendous torsos were patined silver with sweat danced knee to knee, thigh to thigh with women partners they had chosen only with a wild jerking of the head and eyes; further out in the crowd, pairs of men danced with one woman between them, and men and women danced alone, the raw fire of the *clairin* and the mounting fierceness of the never-ceasing drumming flaming in their blood.

From the door of Gros Jean's *caille*, squatted immobile in the thick shadow there, Morris and Stam watched it, unable and unwilling to speak often. Morris, in his Marine Corps and *Garde* service, had seen many other *bamboches*, nights of drinking and dancing, but none as huge and directly primary in every form as this.

"Most of them are the true, unspoiled black savage," he muttered once to Stam. "You'll find big bucks out there who never saw a white man in their lives and who still wear their hair cut to a topknot and their faces scarified in the old African style. . . . Watch Gros Jean and Papa Lassin; they're without doubt the two most intelligent and educated men here, but it gets them, too."

"I have been," Stam said, staring briefly aside at him in the shadow. "And Papa Lassin must rule them, all right, with the drums and his dark gods. Although your friend, the *chef de section*, seems to be enjoying himself."

Morris looked forth again with the other man. Near the immense central

fire, crouched back on his hams and motionless, Papa Lassin rested right among the dancers and the drummers; but not even the most drunken and hysterical of them came within feet of him. It was as though he were an idol, a living representation of all they worshiped or feared, and that somehow they danced and played for him, in his honor. But Gros Jean had stripped off his treasured government suit of overalls and his shield of office. His big, broadly sinewed body was covered only by a tight-fitting pair of jean trousers. He danced with the easy grace and speed of some sort of jungle animal, and always with the same girl. She was almost as tall as Gros Jean, straight and high-breasted, her smooth black skin and hair gleaming with sweat and coconut oil. Gros Jean had marked her out instantly when she had come into the clearing with some group from a distant mountain *ajoupa*. He danced with his hands constantly on her hips, smiling into her open, eager eyes.

Morris smiled as he watched.

"Gros Jean's finding himself a new wife," he said. "I've seen him find about a dozen since I've known him. He supports 'em all and keeps 'em all happy, too. The more wives a man has in this part of the country, the more he's looked up to. Gros Jean is what they call a '*gros negre*'—a real big shot. Papa Lassin might have all the dark gods behind him, but—"

His low voice broke sharply. He had just sensed the sudden tautening of Stam's body beside him, heard the other's abrupt curse; then he also flung himself back, flat on his stomach, and out of any possibility of vision from the exterior of the hut. At the far edge of the clearing, up through the notch of the trail leading to Jeremie, more than half a dozen closely grouped men had come, swiftly and in silence. The firelight caught upon them, limned their bodies distinctly against the solid, dark wall of the jungle. The red waver of light flicked over polished buttons and leather, the steel and wood of rifles, fell across khaki uniforms and the sun helmet and face of the young mulatto lieutenant who led the detail of *Garde* troopers behind him.

The dancers stopped as the lieutenant and the file of *gendarmes* advanced past them. Then the drummers broke in playing, their splay hands fluttering flatly down. The lieutenant walked quite slowly, his hands nowhere near the revolver holstered to his Sam Browne belt. He spoke once, part way across the clearing, but it was only to the corporal of the detail, telling him to halt his men at the position of order arms. Then he did not speak again until he was right in the center of the clearing and among the deserted, garishly decorated drums.

PAPA LASSIN rested in the same position of complete immobility; he did not seem to be aware that the drums had fallen into silence. Gros Jean was the one who came forward to greet the lieutenant. He gave the tall black girl a gentle push with his hand that sent her away from him, took three quick paces, halted and brought up his hand smartly in salute:

"*Bon soir, Lieutenant.*"

In the brilliance of the central firelight, Morris could see that sweat darkly stained the collar of the lieutenant's tunic, and small knots of muscles jerked nervously at his jaws. "It's Germaine, a young kid who was still in officer's school when I was here," Morris whispered dimly to Stam. "He must be in charge of the sub-station down at Terre Rousse now, between here and Jeremie. And he must be after more than fun; any *Garde* officer with sense never walks into the middle of a big *bamboche* like this unless he has to. . . . But, take it easy! You hear me? There's a hole here in the back of the hut Gros Jean showed me. When-

ever we want, we can slip through that, right into the bush."

Stam gave him a faint, hoarse sound that might have been laughter. "Yes, I hear you.... But, can you hear the string of stuff the lieutenant's calling off to your friend?"

In an abrupt, jerked movement, the young lieutenant had answered Gros Jean's salute, was speaking now in a hoarsely rapid voice, using the Creole *patois* in preference to French so that, Morris thought swiftly, everybody in earshot might understand:

"Under orders received tonight from Jeremie it is my duty to apprehend and arrest one Stagg Morris, an American blanc who once served in the *Garde d'Haiti* as an officer. He is wanted as an escaped murderer from French Guiana. He is said to have escaped several months ago with a number of other men. The remains of a boat answering the description of the one he and his comrades are supposed to have used in their escape have just been found down here off the beach at Anse Pitou. He is also reported as having been seen here on the trails of Morne Macaque in the last twenty-four hours, in company with another man who is yet unidentified. You are *chef de section* for this area and head man of this village; my orders give me to understand that he is here, or that you have information concerning his location. *Ou connais ce moun, yo la?* You know of that man, in any way?"

Gros Jean had set his big hands on his flat hips and laughed. "Yes, I know that man, Lieutenant. When he was here, I was his platoon sergeant in the *Garde*. But I have not seen him in a long time; it is nearly a year now. And *tout moun* —all the people on the mountain who have eyes to see and legs to walk the trails with—are here, for you to ask them. You have picked a good time to come and ask questions about a *blanc* supposed to be hidden in this village or on this mountain. You can ask them, Lieutenant, or you can have your *petits negres*, there, search all the village. But we have been having *bamboche* here, Lieutenant, and some of the folks are drunk, and might lie, or be rude to you, and all of them know the drumheads are getting cold, and stiff. Let us start the dancing again, Lieutenant, after you have searched the huts. And I can give you a little snort of *clairin* first?"

The lieutenant said one strong and expressive swear word in pure Creole, then swung, his boot heels smacking, and rapped an order at his corporal and the detail:

"Search every *caille!* Hold anybody who tries to run or hide. *Vite, allons!*"

Across the floor of Gros Jean's hut, Morris was already sliding on his belly towards the opening the ex-sergeant had shown him there. But Stam still remained behind, gazing out into the clearing at the nervously striding and cursing lieutenant and the group of glumly unwilling troopers he drove before him along the row of huts not a hundred feet away.

"Come on!" Morris husked. "They spotted me for a sure identification, because everybody in the country here knew me in the old days. But if they catch you, with or without me, they'll hand you the same thing. This is a lot tougher and quicker than I thought...."

He reached out and caught Stam's bare foot and ankle, hauled him towards him, shoved him first through the low opening in the hut wall, crawled kneeling after into the high Guinea grass that grew there in a narrow strip before the thick heavy reach of the real jungle. He was right beside Stam, moving with silent speed through the whip of the tall grass when the shots slammed across the clearing.

They were fired in one nearly continuous volley, so fast the reports of the shots and the echoes clanged and blurred together. Morris stopped, and stood up to his full height. "God," he said whisper-

ing; "God Almighty!" A rear corner of the hut was before him; he flung himself against it, stared forth into the clearing.

Germaine, the young lieutenant of the *Garde*, was down on his hands and knees. His khaki sun helmet had been knocked off his head and blood ran down his brow into his eyes. Blood was bright and thick across the front of his tunic; he coughed and choked as he tried to find and pick up his revolver from the ground in front of him. Then, as if an immense, unseen hand had pushed him, he sagged forward on his face, rolled half over and was still. Four of the *Garde* troopers behind him already lay like that, in the hunched, sudden rigidity of death. Another bent far over as he staggered, his hands shoved at the wound in his stomach, his Springfield dropped behind him. The little, tar-brown corporal and the other two troopers of the detail were near him, but did not appear to see him.

They were backing across the clearing, working their Springfields as fast as they could lift and jerk back the bolts, cresting the jungle right beside Morris and Stam with lead; then at last, when they were at the trail head and were dimly aware they were not trapped from behind, emptying the rest of their magazines into the ducking, screaming, milling mob which in absolute surprise was also trying to break from the place. Then, behind the flicker of of their rifle flame, they were gone, and there were only the dead sprawled on the stamped, hard earth, and the wounded *Garde* trooper, who had sagged to his knees and now was also dying.

MORRIS did not remember coming forth from the rear of the hut, had no knowledge of shoving and slamming through the screaming mass of blacks; very suddenly, he and Gros Jean and Papa Lassin stood facing each other in a little freed space in the center of them, and that was all. A kind of epileptic seizure seemed to have come upon Papa Lassin; he trembled and shook rigidly, a white froth of saliva bubbling on his lips as he muttered to himself in a shrill lost voice. Morris looked with level, wide eyes at Gros Jean and held out both his hands.

"Who?" he said, forced to shout the words above the roaring of the mob; "who fired those shots?"

In that moment, Gros Jean was beyond speech. He slowly turned his gaze and Morris swung and stared also.

"No," Morris said harshly. "Stam was right beside me all the time. They were fired about twenty feet from us, right out of the bush. But there's no sense looking now; whoever pulled that job is gone."

But Gros Jean's eyes were still on the other white man, and Morris's eyes narrowed hotly as he watched. Stam had advanced to stand by the door of a hut. His pose was graceful, casual, almost indolent. It was Morris's sudden and bitter thought that the man stood there as though he were at a show, or watched some athletic contest of more than fair interest. But then he remembered the man as he had known him in the boat, and that steady, inflexible calmness which had brought him, them both, here while other less quiet men had died.

"No," he said to Gros Jean. "He had nothing to do with that; he couldn't have. He had no reason."

Gros Jean slowly moved his long lips, and his head.

"We only know you here," he said. "I and other men here have fought with you; we trust you. But, we do not know him."

Morris swore in a burst of uncontrollable anger. "It was me that Germaine and the others came for. They don't even know Stam by sight or name. But, what's going to happen now?"

Gros Jean did not answer him; a curiously mouthed, thick mumble of words from Papa Lassin broke in across. "The

drums," he said. "The drums will beat for war now. . . . You hear them, *blanc*? You hear the dark gods calling? Ougoun, and D'Amballah, and Legba, the Opener of the Gates. . . . We struck the drums in *bamboche*. Now we will strike them in war. . . ."

Gros Jean's motion was like the unleashing of a tremendous spring; his opened hand hit the little, long-maned man a blow in the chest that knocked him staggering and stumbling to his face through the gaping frieze of blacks beyond. Then he raised his long arms high above his head and let go a shout that boomed like the pounding of a dozen drums. They stood still there, caught and mastered by the sheer magnificence of his physical power and the whiplash sound of his shout.

"There shall be no war!" he bawled at them, his eyes wide, fierce and steel-colored in his staring across their faces. "The gods do not call—and the drums will not!" A skirted, ribboned drum was beside him; half a dozen others tilted around him. He picked up that nearest drum with one hand, smashed it into jerking fragments on the ground, then deliberately and quite slowly went on, rent and smashed each of them in turn, jamming his great black heels through their cowhide heads, ripping their wooden sides in his hands. Some man, a drummer from a hillside *caille* down the mountain, cursed him then, and Gros Jean caught him, by one arm and by the throat, hurled him spinning thirty feet away. He lifted back his head and looked at them, his face calm, his eyes utterly quiet.

"You have heard me!" he called to them. "This is my village! Go pick up the dead, take them from here! Then go from here, back to your own *cailles*. *C'est Gros Jean qui dit ici, pa' les tambou's!* I speak here, not the drums! You have heard me? Move!"

They moved about him; they eddied away and back from him, stumbling in their haste and hysteria, the women and the old men of the village picking up the bodies of the dead, the lieutenant and the troopers of the *Garde* with the three or four mountain people that last volley had killed.

Gros Jean spoke again after a time then, to Morris at his side:

"What do you wish that I do now, Lieutenant?"

Morris waited until he possessed the ability to smile a very little bit before he answered.

"You are a very fine man, Gros Jean," he said in a voice he kept to a note beyond a whisper. "But you still forget: I am no longer 'Lieutenant', no longer in the *Garde*. I'm a hunted man, and those dead men over there came hunting me. . . . This is your village, and I only came here as your friend, not to bring you trouble. What do you think is going to happen now?"

Slowly, Gros Jean moved his feet, his scarred, hard hands. "That stupid corporal and the two troopers will be almost down to the *Garde* post at Terre Rousse by now. In this last year, they've strung a telephone line between there and Jeremie. The district commander down at Jeremie is Captain Beaugarthe. You must remember him, from the *caco* fighting in the North. Beaugarthe is a real soldier; he was a sergeant in that French Foreign Legion in the big war in France. Beaugarthe will be up here soon; he will be up here by tomorrow noon, and he will bring a platoon or a full company with him. The mountain—"

"—Will be no longer safe for me or any man who tries to get away from Beaugarthe," Morris cut in quietly. "Let me tell you that. And let me say it first that we'll get out of here now, right away, the other *blanc* and I. Enough trouble has come here already; we'll leave here right tonight."

Gros Jean made a small, awkward gesture with one of his hands, as though he wished to lift it up and out, to Morris'

shoulder. "That is the only thing to do, Lieutenant. Not—not because you are not welcome here, but only because it would be dangerous for you if you stayed. . . . I cannot give you a gun, but I can give you food, and a man to lead you and put you on the trail to the Dominican border. It will be better for you, right now, over in Santo Domingo, and it is not far from here. Tomorrow night, you should be across, this side of Juanamente. And maybe then, while you are gone, I can find out who fired those shots, and why. Beaugarthe will have been here by then, too, and will have helped me, and I will have made my peace with him. Then maybe you can come back, and your own affair will all be straightened out, and this here just a laugh—between two men who were once soldiers. . . ."

"Sure." Morris's voice was dully pitched, but he could smile. "Maybe, soldier. But, we'll wait to see, about that." His hand reached forth and he took Gros Jean's hand. "Thanks, for this, anyhow. . . ."

He turned, as though marching in review before an invisible parade, his strides measured and deliberate as he left the tall, silent black man and came to the hut where Stam stood. Stam rested in quietness, his feet spread, one shoulder up against the wall of the hut. Easily, he raised his eyes as Morris stopped in front of him.

"We're going now," the American said hoarsely to him. "You and I have got to shove off out of here right away and beat it for the Dominican border. Not that I want to run; I'll only figure it would be a lot better if I did. I've never seen Gros Jean lie before, and I don't want to see him again. Let's go! He's got a guide and a couple of *macouts* full of food waiting for us."

Stam nodded at him quietly.

"I've been waiting for that," he said, "for some little time now."

CHAPTER IV

GODS OF WAR

THEIR trail was high and steep, along the great main mountain ridge of Haiti. Their guide, a stocky young cousin of Gros Jean's, led them swiftly. They were over fifteen kilometers from the village on Morne Macaque when the dawn broke in flame and the night mists rose up about them, lifting towards the immense new sun. They stopped for a moment then; Morris called out to the guide, Didac, and to Stam, and they swung and stared at him. He stood with his head low against his chest, not looking at them, but down at where they had come, and then ahead, towards the Dominican border and where he knew quite certainly lay safety. He laughed after a time, his head raised to Stam.

"I'm going back," he said. "I was wrong; my running out of there didn't do anybody any good, and 'll do a lot of harm. I'm going down to Beaugarthe in Jeremie and turn myself in. I'm through with running away. Gros Jean's responsible for what happened there last night, and he'll take the rap for it unless I do. And what's the difference, between being wanted for killing one man—or killing six?"

"You're stupid," Stam said to him, instantly and flatly. "Nobody on that mountain will let any *gendarmes* arrest that guy Jean for a job he didn't do. But if you go back, after running away like this, the *gendarmes* will have reason to believe he pulled the job; now they have no proof at all that either you or I were ever there."

"No." Morris slowly shook his head. He spoke in the Creole to Didac, telling him he was going back. Stam stood quite near him in the trail. One of Stam's hairy hands was close to the pistol butt at the waistband of his trousers, his weirdly alight eyes upon Didac, who

carried his uncle's old Belgian shotgun in his hands. Stam pronounced a soft curse.

"So you'd leave me, hey?" he asked, "and go back to play the fool and put them on my trail. You'd leave me alone in a country I don't know and where I don't speak a word of the language. After I pulled you through, saved your life and all but carted you here in a sack."

"That's not quite right," Morris said simply. "But—" He had begun to swing the rough palm fibre sack of food down off his shoulder, and then he had seen Stam's eyes, and the man's fingers going for that black pistol butt. He flung the sack square at Stam's face, swerving himself back and aside in the same instant the pistol roared. It roared twice, the bullets coldly lashing past Morris's jerked head. But then Didac had the old shotgun up and around, sweeping it in a half circle at Stam's body. Stam laughed at him, and sprang as a diver leaving a springboard, off the trail, vaulting, smashing into the thick cover of brush beyond.

Didac let both barrels go at once, was jamming in fresh shells and running forward towards the swaying wall of brush when Morris stopped him.

"Cut it out!" the American told him. "You were about six feet high with both barrels the first time. And he can rap holes all through us with that rod of his. Turn around! Beat it! To hell with him now—for keeps!"

Didac spoke once after he and Morris were several kilometers from there and had started sliding down the way they had laboriously climbed during the night:

"My uncle did not like that man, Lieutenant. He thought he spent too much time with Papa Lassin. . . . Gros Jean told me to watch him on the trail That man was not really your friend, eh?"

Morris stood still for an instant and let go a burst of laughter in self mockery.

"It looks that way now," he muttered. "But what the guy was playing me for, and just how, I can't figure yet. Come on; I want to be at Morne Macaque before Beaugarthe gets there. That other bird is bound for the border, and let him go! Because the next time I see him, it won't be to thank him."

They were going single file along the narrow, dim winding of the trail through a steep valley where immense arrowheart and logwood trees cut out all real sunlight when Morris reached forth his hand and tapped Didac on the shoulder.

"Wait a minute," he whispered. "Somebody's ahead up there in the trail."

Didac's eyes rolled around at him, the whites showing. "No one," he husked. "You're wrong, Lieutenant. What you see must be a bird. Nobody lives up here. The next—"

The shots cracked like vast sticks being broken. They caught Didac in the chest and mouth. He fell headlong and sidewise, the old shotgun clattering from his hands. Morris did not try to reach for the gun; he did nothing but drop in much the same way as death had found the young Haitian. For several minutes, just like that, he lay still there, half hidden among the big tree ferns along the trail, listening to the excited shrilling of the forest birds, watching a pale-winged butterfly come to rest upon Didac's rigid face.

Then the man who had killed Didac came along the trail. He walked quickly, confidently. The man must be well-armed, Morris thought, and absolutely certain of his aim. . . . Then, unmoving, he saw the other. He was a mountain Negro, from his dress and the sure manner in which he walked this trail. But he was no man Morris had ever seen before, and about the band of his straw sombrero was tacked a bit of red ribbon, the mark of a *caco* bandit and revolutionary. Around his waist was a loaded cartridge belt, in his hands a Mauser rifle.

He clucked his thick tongue against his teeth as he saw the effects of his marksmanship on Didac, and the way

the white man lay flung across the trail. Then he knelt down, to pry the shotgun up from under Didac and turn him over to go through his pockets for ammunition or money. Morris sprang at him in a sidewise dive. He landed with his right knee across the Mauser, the left smacking with a crack of breaking bone against the black nose and mouth.

The other writhed over backward and away, but yanking the shotgun into his hands. He had it waist high in his grasp when Morris killed him with his own gun, kicked him down in death with two of the big calibre rifle slugs. The black reared to his knees, nearly to his feet, then whirled down. For a moment, standing above, Morris smiled at him.

"Somebody lied to you, brother," he whispered then. "Either that or you never handled a highpowered job before, and thought it would kill anything in sight as long as you aimed it right. . . ."

He stooped, ripping the buckle of the cartridge belt loose, swinging it up to his own hips. Then, inside the loose cotton shirt, against the black, bloodied column of the throat, he saw the little *garde-corps* charm sack. It was brand new; the piece of serpent skin covering it had not entirely dried yet. Morris took and turned it in his hand, flung it finally off among the ferns.

"There's only one guy around here who makes *garde-corps* to protect a man in battle," he said aloud. "That's Papa Lassin, on Morne Macaque. And Lassin was talking about the gods calling for war last night."

AT the next turn in the trail, he looked back, the Mauser gripped strongly, to take a last glance at Didac and the way the other black man had prepared his ambush here. After that, he did not look back at all. He did not understand all of this yet, he told himself grimly; a great part of it was still too confused and complex for him, but he did know a Haitian mountain ambush when he met one.

Me met two more on his way to Morne Macaque. The first was contrived in the typical bush manner: the killer who waited for him had climbed into the branches of a ceiba tree along the trail, hidden himself quite cleverly there. Morris had seen traps like that before, during the *caco* hill fighting in the old days of the Marine occupation. He slowed, then stopped, a hundred yards away from the ceiba. In the green pallor of the jungle sunlight he studied its foliage and branches, found finally the branch that sagged over the trail with the weight of the man upon it. He smiled, and brought the Mauser gradually up, fired only once.

The man fell on his neck and back in the trail, his gun and machete pitching after him. He was dead and still when Morris reached him. He also was a mountain man, one of the fierce, big type of blacks Morris had marked at the *bamboche* the night before. Morris looked only briefly: this man's gun was also a new, high-powered weapon, and about his neck was a *garde-corps* charm no one but Papa Lassin could have made.

"Yeah," Morris said, rolling the body aside with his foot, "I can see now why the *Garde* district commander down at Hinche didn't have so much liking for the *gros papa*. . . . But, where the hell does Stam fit in this, and where do Gros Jean and I?"

But it was not until long past noon, and he had come again to Morne Macaque, before he could answer that. Then, he had finished fighting his way through an ambush trap where three men had lain for him among the trees and ferns and sniped him for half an hour—until, one by one, in their eagerness, they exposed themselves. He drilled them with the Mauser. A bullet had nicked him in the shoulder; thorn trees and rocks had ripped the clothing nearly from his body. His teeth were clamped down over his uneven breathing. He crawled

slowly, carefully, the Mauser always lifted. But, he found, the guards and patrols were all behind him now, along the trails and in a wide circle around the village, and here the frantic hammering of the drumming beat down any other sound.

The village was packed with men; not a woman was in sight. The men were around the drums, the big, central cooking fires in the open, and the piles of rifles and ammunition before Papa Lassin's hut. The *hougan* stood between his living hut and the temple of the *vaudou*. A ceremony, the Petro sacrifice of the goat, had just been concluded. Papa Lassin was splashed from head to knees with the blood of the goat; it was on his hands and hair. The black, staggering men before him passed a wooden bowl holding the rest of it from hand to hand, drinking of it, dipping their fingers and faces deep.

Papa Lassin lifted his hands and shrilled at them. He whirled in the steps of a mad kind of solitary dance. They and the drummers were silent, staring at him.

"You have seen," he yelled at them, his head far back, "and you have heard. . . . The gods have called, and told you what to do. That yellow-skinned man, Beaugarthe, was here with his monkey soldiers before the gods would listen to me. He has taken Gros Jean and the other head men of the village to the prison in Jeremie, to the prison white and yellow men built to hold black men. He took Gros Jean and the other village men from here although they were honest, had done nothing, and the two *blancs* had been gone long before. But we have guns now, and the blessings of the gods. The road is open to Jeremie! The road is open for us to Port au Prince and all Haiti! We, the mountain men, can take and hold the place as we would take a toy! The yellow-skinned men in the towns will run from us, but they will leave their women, and their money from the coffee crop. . . . *Allons-y, nous negres!* The dark gods have called to you, black men! Go!"

In the shoulder-tall Guinea grass, for more than a minute, Morris had been standing fully upright, the rifle lifted to his shoulder as he took slow and deliberate bead between Papa Lassin's insanely lighted eyes. But then he laughed at himself and what he called his stupidity, visioning briefly how he would die here afterwards, killed by a hundred men, and then how this horde would stream down out of the mountain darkness upon un-

warned, peaceful Jeremie and all the rich coastal land.

"Later," he whispered aloud, speaking half to himself in promise and half to Papa Lassin, "later, you and I will have our little fun, you—and me—and Gros Jean." Then, bent to his hands and knees, he turned back into the darkening jungle, straightening fully to run only when he had cleared the patrols at the head of the trail, could see the plain and Jeremie far below.

CHAPTER V

"A DRINK FOR GROS JEAN"

IT was night when he came into Jeremie. Files of *Garde* troopers with bayoneted Springfields on their shoulders patrolled the square in front of the yellow-walled headquarters and jail. He let the first of them arrest him, take the Mauser away. "*Le Capitaine* Beaugarthe is the man I want to see," he told the hulking sergeant who led him, a bayonet point against his back. "And quick. . . ."

Beaugarthe stood just within the door of the *Caserne*, a khaki web duty-belt about his waist, his big American .38 revolver slung low against his thigh. He stared for an instant as the American came in at the door, then laughed, and held out his hand. "How are you?" he asked in the clipped, sharp French he had learned in the Foreign Legion during the War. "I've been hearing a lot about you lately. Gros Jean from Morne Macaque swears that Germaine told him last night that there's a warrant out for your arrest in the country, on a charge of murder. He says that's why Germaine and that detail from Terre Rousse went up the mountain last night. He insists that Germaine said he had orders to find and collar you. But, he insists just as much that he hasn't seen you since you left the *Garde* last year. One thing, though, is certain; I don't know of any order for your arrest, and no order anything like that came through here from headquarters at Port au Prince."

"Listen," Morris said hoarsely, "there's a lot of things I've got to say, and I've got to say them fast. . . . Isn't there a telephone connection between here and what was Germaine's sub-station at Terre Rousse?"

"Surely." Beaugarthe smiled as he held forth a cigarette. "There are between all *Garde* posts now."

"And wouldn't you shove through some important order over the phone to Germaine, instead of sending a messenger up?"

"*Naturellement;* that's why they put the phone in."

"All right. . . . So some wise guy, who wanted to make a lot of trouble and knew how, could cut into the wire between here and Terre Rousse, say he was you talking, give Germaine the order, then ring off. Germaine wasn't out of officers' school more than a couple of months. He couldn't have known you well enough to be sure of your voice every time over a telephone, and he was green enough in the outfit yet not to check back on such an order as that, or get it in writing from you first before he acted on it."

With a flick of his thumb, Beaugarthe tossed his cigarette out into the dusty darkness.

"What are you trying to prove?" he said. "That Gros Jean and the rest of the lads I jailed today had nothing to do with Germaine's detail getting shot up?"

"That and a whole lot more. Because Gros Jean and those other lads you collared had nothing to do with the job, and I've got a good idea who has. I just came from Morne Macaque. Before that, I'd been on the trail to the border, knowing you were coming up and not wanting to mix Gros Jean any deeper in than he already was. Morne Macaque is full of hell and drunken hill-billies right

now. Every man on the mountain who could carry a gun was there when I left.

"And Papa Lassin was handing the guns out—good guns, with plenty of high power ammunition. They were starting down here, to clean up this place and get Gros Jean and the others out, then go on to Port au Prince and do a looting job on the country in general and the banks holding all the coffee crop receipts. In other words, a good, old-fashioned *caco* rebellion and pillaging campaign. As far as I can see, Papa Lassin's running it, and started it by having Germaine and those troopers shot last night. Although I'm not absolutely certain that Lassin is the head guy, after all; there's another bird, a white man, who escaped from the prison in Guiana with me, and who I'm still trying to figure out yet. He's in it somewhere I think, but just how I'm not sure. . . ."

Beaugarthe turned, and took a few paces across the room, stared briefly at the intently grave faces of his lieutenant and senior noncoms grouped as inconspicuously as possible about the doorway.

"If that's so," he said in a quiet voice, "Port au Prince and headquarters ought to know about it. I've got a full company here, and they're good boys and well-trained, but there must be three or four thousand men Lassin can bring off Morne Macaque."

Morris slowly turned his blood-caked shoulder towards the box telephone on the wall.

"Try that," he said. "That's the main line to Port au Prince, isn't it?"

"The only line," Beaugarthe said, his hand lifting for the crank.

Morris stood in the doorway near the company lieutenant and noncoms while Beaugarthe tried the phone.

"Which way will they come, do you think?" the lieutenant, a middle-aged and gray-haired man asked him in a whisper.

"From all over," Morris told him. "There's enough of them, with enough guns." Then he turned; Beaugarthe was coming cursing from the phone.

"It doesn't work," he said. "I can't even get the next sub-station down the line." He paused, staring up sharply. As though it were a clap of sudden thunder, the sound of the drumming had just broken in the jungle and upon the town. "All right," Beaugarthe said; "we know now. . . . Lieutenant Vareil, pick a detail of fifteen men, take my car and try to get through to Port au Prince or to where the phone line isn't cut. You are to tell headquarters I want at least two companies in support as soon as I can have them. *Au revoir, bonne chance!*"

He was down the steps now, shoving Vareil by the shoulder as the lieutenant started at a quick run across the square. Then he swung towards the group of noncoms:

"*Rassemblez! Toute la compagnie!* Sergeants, take your posts! I want the bugler here with me, and two squads to hold the town hall until I tell them not to. *Allez-y!*" He wheeled as the sergeants saluted, broke and ran for the barracks, staring across the square. His lieutenant, Vareil, had started a big touring car roaring down the street, the detail of men, their hastily grabbed Springfields slung from their shoulders, hanging tightly on the running-boards.

"They won't get far," he said calmly. "Not if whoever's running this show had enough sense to clip the phone wires. . . . But how about you? Shall I take you at your word, and put you in the brig with Gros Jean and his pals? Or shall I lend you a Springfield, and the idea that you're back in the *Garde* again for a little while?"

Morris tapped the cartridge belt he still wore about his waist. "Just give me back the *caco* Mauser your patrol sergeant took from me. I've got the ammunition for it right here, and you'll have need for all the Springfields you've got."

"I think," said Beaugarthe slowly, his

revolver out from its holster and up in his hand, "you're right. Listen to that. . . . They're stopping Vareil and driving him back. And there they come —from the trail up the mountain. Get inside, you wild man!"

Morris laughed, kneeling where he was, the Mauser at his shoulder.

"Later," he said. "Not now. . . ."

THE battle in Jeremie was brief. It was all over in less than half an hour, fought and won in the square around the *Garde caserne*, the jail and the old town hall. And, from the very beginning, kneeling behind the loop-holed shutters of the *caserne*, firing their guns as fast as they could load and lift them, Morris and Beaugarthe knew they could not win. The forces they opposed piled in from all directions, struck upon the square and the *caserne* in stumbling, yelling waves.

Black men who were mad with *clairin*, two days and nights of drumming and the promises of Papa Lassin's dark gods, attacked stubbornly and at once. The *caserne* became a shattered place, smoke-filled and heavy with the smells of powder, hot steel and blood. In the first ten minutes, Beaugarthe had ordered the town hall across the square to be disoccupied, calling the men back from it into the *caserne*. But Vareil, they learned, had been wholly unsuccessful in his attempt to break through in the car along the road to Port au Prince, had been killed trying; one of his men crept in, a *machete* wound along his shoulder, to tell them that.

Beaugarthe, who had been at the battles of Verdun and the Chemin-des-Dames, took it quietly. "Even if we lose, they can't keep it up," he said to Morris. "Every time they charge now, they drop down and start crawling when they're halfway over. The *clairin* and the drum effects are wearing off. Pretty soon they'll start counting up their dead and thinking how nice life used to be up on Morne Macaque. Those fellows aren't soldiers; the discipline isn't in them, and any rewards they can see won't be big enough."

Morris did not answer for a time. There was an odd lull in the firing from outside now, and he had crept prone up against one of the bullet-ripped shutters. The advancing, drunken horde from Morne Macaque had fired huts and houses on the outskirts of the town as they entered; a vermilion glare was upon all the place. Morris could see the palely gleaming eyes of Papa Lassin's converts where they crouched down behind their barriers of carts, old furniture and coffee sacks across the square; he could see the livid mouth of the street which led into the town from the mountain.

The men who came down it now rode in columns of twos. They sat easily astride shambling, runted ponies in deep wooden saddles. They were of a smaller and much different breed than the men of Morne Macaque. These men were swarthily yellow-skinned, with features that were more angular and Spanish than negroid. Most of them wore sombreros of fancy felt and boots with long-rowelled spurs; all of them carried modern, high power carbines and rifles either in saddle scabbards or in their hands. And the man who led them was white, although he wore the cheap cotton clothing of a Haitian hill black, was hatless and without shoes. That man, perceived Morris with no surprise and a kind of bitter humor, was Stam—Stam, whom he had left hours ago up on the trail which led to the Dominican border.

He drew down a bead and fired a burst of shots as fast as he could pull trigger. But Stam had already turned in his high saddle and barked an order in Spanish, and he and the column had swung from sight with smooth precision behind the shoulder of a big warehouse. Morris turned aside and looked at Beaugarthe.

"You saw them?" he asked.

"Yes." Beaugarthe was winding a strip torn from a handkerchief about a gun-blistered thumb. "Dominicans from over the border. Real *guerillereros;* guys who will fight for any man's money and against anybody. Do you know the white man leading them?"

Morris let his lips pull back in a small smile.

"Yeah," he said. "He's a man I came here with from Guiana. He saved my life. So he could pull this; I'm just getting to appreciate that now. But those Dominicans look like business."

"They are," answered Beaugarthe quietly. "This out here was just a drunken mob before; now it's an army. Your friend must be certain of what he's doing, Morris."

"He'll be less certain," whispered Morris, shrugging his Mauser stock closer in against his shoulder, "when I meet up with him—and really pay him for the ride. Here they come!"

The Dominicans came slowly, though, far more shrewd in the ways of war than the Morne Macaque men. They crawled on their stomachs and hands and knees across the square, finding shelter behind each heap of Haitian dead. They clambered up into the church tower and the town hall, began to snipe carefully and steadily, giving a screen of covering fire to the men on the ground. Death stormed, along the windows of the *caserne,* whined constantly through the heavy shutters, caught the *Garde* riflemen where they crouched.

When Morris looked up, reaching down for a Springfield one of the wounded troopers behind had been loading in relays for him, he found that he and Beaugarthe were alone here. The stocky, quiet *Garde* captain no longer held a rifle. It had just sagged from his hands to the littered, blood-pooled floor. He had both his hands up against his left shoulder and he was trying to smile, but Morris could see the white jut of the broken shoulder bone and the raw gaping of the wound.

"Get back out of here!" he yelled at the man, "before you're no more good at all."

Beaugarthe nodded, tipping to his knees so that one of the wounded men behind could cut the tunic material away with a bayonet point, clean the wound and tourniquet the arm.

"Get away from there yourself," he called up then at the American. "It's time we got out of here. Right?"

"Right," muttered Morris, still facing the loop-holes. "But not for a minute yet, and not without Gros Jean and those other guys in the jail. . . . The last five birds I've picked off have all been heading for the jail. I guess Papa Lassin has been asked by some of the Morne Macaque citizens just why not Gros Jean and the others haven't been sprung yet. And in my memory there never has been any love lost between a Haitian and a Dominican, even though they're fighting on the same side and for the same thing. Have you got the keys to the cells, Beaugarthe? Gros Jean was one of the best sergeants I ever saw in the *Garde.* . . ."

Beaugarthe gave him a wry smile in the semi-darkness as he pitched the ring of keys up with his good hand.

"You're running this now," he said. "Answer your own questions!"

THERE were seventeen men in the long block of cells behind the *caserne.* Morris was forced to kill three more Dominicans before he could get to them. Gros Jean, the first man out the jail door, knelt at once, not even bothering to speak; he whipped up the laden rifle and cartridge belt from a dead man. Morris spoke to him then, shoving him and the others before him towards the main room of the *caserne.*

"Stam, and Papa Lassin," he said. "This is their show. Lassin brought your people down from the mountain.

But Stam must have contributed the guns and this collection of Dominican monkeys. We've got to get out of here."

"Where to?" asked Gros Jean quietly, loading the Mauser he had found.

"We've got to give them the town, I guess. Beaugarthe's got a bad wound; there can't be twenty sound men left in the company. Do you know the swamp back here, on the road to Port au Prince?"

"Basse Terre, you mean," Gros Jean said, stooping to smile in the smoke-clouded dimness of the big room at Beaugarthe. "I used to go shooting alligators there when I was in this company with you. I know every foot of it. But why hold Basse Terre?"

"Because we can't hold this, and from Basse Terre you and these guys can hold the road to Port au Prince while I get in to town and find a little help. They cut the phone line here hours ago, and Lieutenant Vareil got killed, trying to get through just as the show started. But it'll be different now, for us on foot. Tell your lads from the mountain and the other jailbirds that any man outside, Haitian or Dominican, will cut their throats from ear to ear if they find 'em here. Tell 'em they've got to fight with us, and fight like hell. Stam and Papa Lassin don't only want this town—they intend to raid Port au Prince and all the country, too. Get 'em going, Sergeant!"

"*Bien, Lieutenant!*" For just a moment in the darkness, Morris could see the flash of Gros Jean's teeth; the big man was smiling.

They left the *caserne* and the town by the rear. They carried with them Beaugarthe and all the lightly wounded, every serviceable gun and belt of ammunition. Morris was the last man out of the *caserne* and Gros Jean was right beside him, covering his back as the American fired the building with a match flung into a tin of kerosene. Then, shoulder to shoulder, shooting calmly at the leaders of the attacking wave, they joined the hollow square the troopers and Gros Jean's hillmen had formed about the wounded.

They found the outskirts of the town nearly deserted when they got there. The inhabitants had fled; the patrols Papa Lassin and Stam had stationed, having already looted all the houses, had gone on to the greater excitement and spoils around the *caserne* in the main square. In the dusty road, horribly hacked by *machete* blows, Morris found the body of Lieutenant Vareil; a few paces beyond, run off wildly into a yam patch behind a row of palmettos, tilted the blood-spattered car he had been driving.

He cursed aloud as he found the car, examining the gas supply, the lights and oil and tires. Then he swung up in the seat, backed it and sent it pounding out in the road. Gros Jean stood there waiting for him, the last man of the little column.

"*La bonne chance, eh?*" he asked, grinning.

"So; a lot more luck than I bargained for. I guess the boys who killed Vareil were all from the mountain and didn't know how to run or even ruin a car. I'm shoving off for town now. How about you?"

"Me, I'll be all right," Gros Jean said. "They're busy looting back there now, and they seem to figure they can come and get the rest of us when they want. But I won't give them such an easy job, once I get these boys in among the mangroves in Basse Terre. That Papa Lassin is a smart *macaque* and that man, Stam, is smart, too. But neither of them will be able to keep a Haitian from fighting a Dominican over loot, no matter how much they yell and promise them. Bring back some of those nice little Thompson guns, Lieutenant, and a drink for Gros Jean. Before dawn, hey?"

"Before dawn," Morris repeated hoarsely, his hand down and out; then he jammed his foot hard against the ac-

celerator pedal, hurled the big car wide-open down the road.

CHAPTER VI

A DEBT TO PAY

HE STOPPED four or five times in the first twenty or so kilometers but only to find telephone wires cut and dragging down at each place. After that he did not stop at all. The rest was something out of a nightmare. He pitched splashing through the fords of rivers; he slammed down muddy slopes of hills in fog that was so deep he could not see beyond his radiator cap. Then he was on flat country, the coastal plain along the gulf, paralleling the rusted rails of the narrow-gauge railway, high, waving yellow fields of sugar cane on each side.

The Champs du Mars was deserted and the presidential palace rested like a lovely white shadow as he swung along the Rue de Caserne towards *Garde* headquarters. The sentry on duty before the door was half awake; he hardly had his rifle off his shoulder before Morris was up the steps and inside the building. The room was filled with staring, alert men. Morris leaned against a wall and spoke very fast, first to the officer of the guard, then to the sharp, steel-eyed general in command and the American Minister.

"You're supposed to want me," he said, "but let that go for now, will you? Gros Jean and those others out in the swamp at Basse Terre are the ones to get now."

The general and the American Minister smiled shortly, at each other, and at him.

"The only fellow we've had any real interest in lately is not yourself," the minister told him. "In fact, it's this fellow who calls himself Stam and who you say came north from Guiana with you. We've just heard from the French Guianan and a lot of other authorities about him. Stam's a filibuster, an international gun-runner. He was caught down in Guiana selling guns to the Negro bush tribes.

"But he made a pretty smart play when he escaped with you like that. . . . He's got pals up here, or did have until yesterday, in Santo Domingo City and this town. They're all in jail now; they tried to sell a load of guns they had first to the Haitian government, then to the Dominican. This idea of using the guns to outfit a *caco* army and raid the coast is a new development, probably something all Stam's own. But, how about you? Do you want to go back with the troops General Galexte is shoving off to Basse Terre?"

Morris formed a weary and a wry smile. "Why not?" he asked. "After this, it will be the jug for me."

"No." The American Minister shook his head at him and smiled. "Not now, I don't think, Lieutenant. Certainly not if you should win at Basse Terre."

"Win?" Morris let his glance meet the hard-faced little general's eyes. "Hell, we can't lose!"

Eight trucks took more than two hundred fresh and eager troopers into the edge of the swamp at Basse Terre about fifteen minutes before dawn. Morris rode the seat of the first truck with the colonel commanding the column. He had tried to keep awake, talk with the colonel, tell him more in detail of the exact terrain and the probable battle alignment, discuss with him just how Papa Lassin and Stam had started smuggling the guns up to Morne Macaque after Stam's second day in the country. But sleep had dragged all through him, even against the violent jolting of the truck; the colonel had been forced to take the cigarette from between his fingers before it burned his hand.

He awoke, though, the instant the driver of the truck jammed his brakes on, and leapt down after the colonel, staring. The colonel was speaking in whispers with his assembled company

and platoon heads, assigning the Thompson gunners, guides and runners.

"Leave one of those chopper guns to me, will you?" Morris asked, his head cocked to listen to the high-pitched thrash of firing off the narrow roadway to the left. "I've got a debt I want to pay, over in there."

The colonel grinned at him, swung him one of the stubby guns and a canvas sack full of clips.

"We'll be there," he said flatly. "See you later!"

WHERE Morris crawled the mud had been trampled deep by fighting men; where Gros Jean and the dozen guardsmen who remained lay prone, firing, half a dozen dead were heaped around the huge, contorted black elbows of the mangrove roots. Gros Jean was caked with green slime and mud from head to foot; only his rifle and his eyesockets were clean. But he laughed softly when Morris came beside him, pointed off through the low-hanging Spanish moss and lianas with his shoulder.

"I've been out in there," he said. "Out and back twice. Sniping, talking to any black man who would listen before I had to kill him. They had a fight in the town, after we left. The Dominicans Stam brought tried to grab all the loot. There's not many mountain men left out there now; nearly all those are dead and most of them died fighting the Dominicans. The real Morne Macaque men have listened to me and gone home. Some of the Dominicans have started that too. These *bundas* who are left are only desperate; they know they should have been into Port au Prince and out again by now. But I see you brought one of the nice little guns. . . ."

"Just for fun," Morris said. "Because the colonel is flinging a flank attack around their rear between here and the town, and sending infiltrating groups right in through the swamp. He said for you to hold all fire as soon as you heard whistle blasts."

Gros Jean wiped a little of the swamp scum from his face, scowled off into the fog.

"The lieutenant wants to stop?" he asked in a whisper.

Morris said a very profane word very softly.

"I haven't really begun," he said. "How about Lassin and Stam? Do you think they're still out there?"

"We could go and find out," muttered Gros Jean, and grinned, crawling around the piled dead and forward, shoulder to shoulder with the American.

The last of the Dominicans and the men from Morne Macaque who had chosen to stay and fight were gathered on a high and soggy knoll of swampland.

It was there, behind a barricade of twisted mangrove roots that Morris and Gros Jean found Stam and Papa Lassin. First, though, Morris had swept the place with the Thompson gun, enfilading shrewdly from one side then the other, while beside him, waist deep in the mud, Gros Jean handed him up fresh clips for the gun and meanwhile carried on his own slow, calm task of sniping. One by one, the Dominicans and the Morne Macaque men slid down and ran from there, driven by the slam of fire from Morris' gun into the quick death of Gros Jean's shots. But Stam preferred to stay, preferred also to keep the *hougan*, Papa Lassin, beside him.

Morris came in upon the knoll from the left, Gros Jean from the right. Papa Lassin, jungle-born and trained, sensed their coming, yammered in a thick voice at Stam and tried to catch at the gun the white man had taken from him long before. Stam laughed at him, and butting him in the face with a knee blow, swung to meet Morris on the other side of the barricade.

Morris sprang at him as though making a football tackle, caught him smacking below the knees, Stam's pistol roaring

over his head. Then, laughing aloud, he lifted and threw the shorter, heavier man bodily up against the immense, rough bole of the mangrove.

"Wait a minute," he said hoarsely to Stam. "Wait just a little while. I'm not in such a hurry to kill you. . . . But, if you lift that gun, I'll blow your top off."

Speaking, he obliquely and swiftly looked aside. Gros Jean had his hands on Papa Lassin. The little, mane-haired man screamed, kicking and biting, writhing like one of his sacred serpents. Gros Jean smiled, lifted and tightened his grip.

"The dark gods," he whispered, "are calling, *Papa hougan*. . . ." Then, with a simple flexing of his fingers and forearms, he snapped the man's neck.

Stam sprang then, whipping up his pistol, in the exact second of Papa Lassin's fluttered cry of death. Morris shot from the hip, shattering the pistol hand and arm with a brief burst. He shook his head at Stam.

"I told you to wait," he said. "You waited sixty-seven days to get here, to trap me and all those other poor guys, to pour hell on this place. But you can't wait now. . . . All right; one of your killers nailed me this morning; I've got a bum arm, too. Come on!"

Stam swayed back, and up, then forward, his good hand clawing out.

"You can laugh," he whispered thickly. "You're laughing now, at me. . . ." His eyelids were blinking widely; his lips twitched away from his teeth. He took a staggering, sidewise step, another, then rapidly straightened, and Morris could see the knife in his good hand.

"Yes," Morris said. He had come back on the trigger of the gun and was firing pointblank. "Why not?"

THE STRIKE AT KENNEBEC

by WILLIAM J. SHULTZ

A THREE days' blizzard had tied us to the camp. No timber could be cut, no logs could be snaked. Cooped up in our dark bunkroom with nothing to do, we fell easy prey to an attack of camp nerves. A logger's life was not a happy one, we grumbled. It was a rotten life, a dog's life, a louse's life. Hard work, little pay. Some one muttered, "Strike." The word was caught up and repeated in rising tones.

The red head of Moriarty, our cook, appeared in the bunkroom doorway. "Strike did you say, you spawn of low-country sleiveens that would like to call yourselves lumbermen," he thundered at us. "There was one strike at Kennebec Camp, but by the grace of God and Patrick Moriarty, there'll never be another."

He stalked imperiously into the bunkroom, seated himself by the fireplace, filled his pipe, and dropped a glowing ember into the bowl. Subdued, we ranged ourselves along the deacon seat.

'TWAS four years ago, I'm minding me (began Moriarty) when most of the old gang—Red Jacks, and Swede Olsen, and Jarge Hollis, and the rest of them, real white men and not a raft of jelly-fishes like yourselves—were here. There came to our camp that fall a snip of a man named MacIntosh. He was Canajen Scotch, and he'd done lumbering out in Oregon and the Northwest. We were short-handed that season, and glad we were to be taking him on.

He could swing a broad ax, could that

MacIntosh lad, as well as the next man. But when it came to spinning a bunkhouse yarn, glory be! 'Twas the old Celtic tongue he had, and you may not be believing it, but Patrick Moriarty himself was proud to be silent before him. He told us of logging in the Northwest Country, of how they cut down redwoods that had been a thousand years growing and stood high over the other treetops like lonely kings of Tara, and of how they floated their timber down the Columbia in rafts as large as townships.

The little Scotchman threw himself upon the tale, like a hunting dog with the scent of the game in his nose. He told us of how the loggers of the Northwest Country had been given low pay and bad food for years and years and years. And then he came and talked to them and they organized, fought the lumber companies till they went on their knees and wept for mercy. And after that the lumbermen lived like kings of the earth, and they cut their timber with axes of gold, and their cantdogs were fashioned of ivory and silver.

I'm not saying now that the little Scotchman stuck by the gospel truth in every word he spoke. But the tongue of him was touched with the fire of the old Celtic bards, and the blood flew into our heads as he talked. Long it was not before the boys were grumbling over the food I put before them—mind you that 'twas food cooked by Patrick Moriarty of the Moriartys that in time immemorial had cooked to the old kings of Ireland, and them the grandest eaters that were ever seen on the earth—and they were calling the bunkroom a stable. All the while the MacIntosh lad was egging them on with the smooth tongue of him and his stories of the lumbermen's paradise in the Northwest Country.

Before the season was past, the boys were talking of striking. 'Twas not to my liking to be walking out on the Kennebec Company that had been giving me food and a bunk-berth for ten winters past, and I said so to the boys.

"For what would you be striking now?" I asked the MacIntosh man.

"For shorter hours, and better pay, and a decent place to live in," he answered me.

At that I leaned back against the wall and laughed me a good belly-laugh.

"Is it shorter hours you would be having for lumber-lubbers like us?" I asked. "Sure, and 'tis the daylight itself is too short in the winter season to be cutting of the timber we want to cut. Is it more pay these bubble-jumpers should be getting? Man, man, what do we do with the hundred dollars the company gives us now after the drives are over? Sure, and we all go down to town and scorch our throats with the red poison that Mother Timberley sells for whisky when the Government man is looking the other way, and we try to burn down the police station, and afterwards it takes us a week to be sobering up in the calaboose. If the company gave us more pay, by the gizzard of Jonah's whale, we would only drink twice as much of Mother Timberley's poison and be trying to hang the sheriff of Franklin County.

Well, as soon as I had made my little speech, MacIntosh turned to the boys and began talking like a Bald Mountain blizzard.

"Aye," said he, "so that's what the Kennebec Company has done to you! You're living like beasts, and you've forgotten how to be men. But who made you this way? I'll tell you. It's the Kennebec Company that has taken the work of giants out of you, and has been treating you like a bunch of field mules. All day long you swing your axes till your arms are ready to fall off, and then when you come back to camp, what does the Company give you to sleep in—one bunk thirty feet long for

the twenty of you, packed each by the other like a row of cows in a stall!"

The little Scotchman said a raft of other things that I'm mis-remembering now, and his words went to our heads like sparks fly up a chimney. 'Twas a council of war we held in the bunkroom that night, and we laid our plans for the Great Strike. A dark secret we would keep it till the timbering was over and the logs were ready for the spring drive.

Then, when the rains were upon us, and the streams were rising, we would announce our strike. The Company would have to brush our shoes for us, or there would be no logs going into the streams at their flood, and when low water came the company would have to wait another year before its logs could float down to the lake. It was to our minds that we were the Napoleons of strategy as we put our heads together and confabulated by the light of the bunkroom fire.

'Twas two months we kept the secret, and not even Dan Gordon, our boss, knew of the ructions we were plotting. The winter's cutting was all snaked down to the stream banks, and we were watching the skies for the spring rains before we told him of our plans. His face went fourteen colors of red when he heard, and he wanted to pitch in and fight the lot of us. It made the tobacco in my pipe taste sour to be going against Dan Gordon, but we held him down and made him be seeing the light of reason and that there was nothing he could do against the twenty of us.

We wrote a letter to the company, with grand long words and a potful of "whereases," telling of the wrongs we suffered, and ordering them to inform us by return mail that our pay was doubled and—because at the moment we could not be thinking of anything else we wanted—that we could be having a clock on our bunkroom wall. We posted the letter and sat down to wait for the answer.

Eh, but those two days were a taste of perdition. Dan Gordon cursed us till our shirts crawled up our backs, and went out by himself. The boys sat around the camp-house, smoking and darning their clothes, but 'twas unnatural to be doing nothing with the rains only a day or two off, and we were nigh to jumping out of our skins every time a twig cracked or snow slid off the roof of the camp-house. Red Jacks and Jarge Hollis fell to fighting, and when we tried to separate them, a shindy started between MacIntosh and one of the Down East boys. I'm remembering, too, that I took a crack at the Swede when he turned up his nose at some beef stew I had made from frozen horse meat.

'TWAS the evening of the second day, when we were sitting down to mess, that the door of the bunkroom opened and a new face looked in. A keen sharp face it was, of a man of about fifty, a face that had a smile to it, but that made you want to jump to attention. The man was dressed in mackinaw and leggings, and my first thought was that he was a boss from one of the neighboring camps come to pay Dan Gordon a call. He stepped into the bunkroom, closed the door behind him, and came to the mess-room door.

"May I come in?" he asked. "I am Willis, the president of the Kennebec Company."

The boys dropped their knives and forks and sat looking at him with their mouths wide open like a bunch of pond suckers. Those sitting at the end of the table began to squeeze away from the door where Mr. Willis was standing. 'Twas like the sides of an accordion buckling up that the ten men on each side of the table closed in on one another.

Mr. Willis pulled off his mittens and slapped his hands to warm them up. "I came up from Portland as soon as I received your letter, boys," he said. "I haven't eaten yet. Is there room for me at the table?"

I felt my heart go clear down through my legs into the floor and on its way to China. Being on strike myself, along with the rest of the boys, I had dished them up the odds and ends of the kitchen in a sort of Mulligan stew. It wasn't bad fodder for a raft of lumber-lubbers, but it wasn't fit to be putting before the president of the company. I ran into the bunkroom and grabbed our only chair with four solid legs. I put it before Mr. Willis and said:

"Now you sit there a moment, Mr. Willis, and in twenty minutes I'll have a supper before you that will be making your palate sing Hosannah in the Highest."

Mr. Willis pushed the chair to one side and laughed. "I was a lumberman when you were still a lad, Mr—"

"Moriarty, sir, from Ireland," I told him.

"Mr. Moriarty," he continued, "and I've never before refused lumberman's stew. Just fill another plate for me, a big one, and I'll sit here at the foot of the table."

It was little eating the boys did for a bit, they were that nervous at being to table with their president, and him come all the way from Portland because of their letter. I'm not blaming them either, for I wasn't any too confident of things myself. But Mr. Willis fell to like an old trencherman, and seeing him eat so hearty gave the boys some of their own spirits back, so that they all scraped their plates clean.

After the supper was finished the boys were afraid to be moving into the bunkroom, they not knowing what was the proper etiquette of the occasion. Mr. Willis made things easy, however, by patting himself contentedly on the stomach, stretching himself as every decent lumberman should, and saying:

"Well, boys, I guess we'll have a smoke on the deacon seat while Moriarty clears the table."

He stood up and put his hand into his pocket. Then his face went long.

"Damnation," he said, "I've come without a pipe."

I had my hand on my own old black clay at the time, and before thinking of my impudence, I pulled it out and handed it to him.

"Take this, sir," I said. "She's old, but she draws well."

"Thanks, Moriarty," he said, and stuck my old dudeen between his teeth.

Then he marched ahead of the boys into the bunkroom.

When my plates were scrubbed and I went into the bunkroom may I go forever dry if the boys weren't ranged all along the deacon seat like a row of chickabiddies on a fence rail listening to Mr. Willis tell of the days of his youth when he had logged all through the Rangely country.

There was a time when he was up Cupsuptic Creek in a camp which burned on a blizzard night, and the ten men in it escaped with nary a set of boots or a pair of trousers among them, and they had to be tramping fourteen miles in their drawers through a zero storm to reach the next camp; two of the loggers died on that march, and four of them had toes frozen off, and Mr. Willis himself got a cold-bruise that bothered him every winter after that.

He told us of falling into a bear hole one spring and landing on top of a mother bear with cubs, and how he got out alive only by reason that the four of them were so mixed together in the cave that the mother bear could not be getting clear in time to make a swipe at him. Ay, and there was a time when he loosened the pin log of a jam, and fell into the stream as he was trying

to win shore, and saved himself by swimming under water through a deep eddy of the stream till his lungs and his eyes were close to bursting.

Arrah, but 'twas music to the ears of us lumber-lubbers to be hearing of the old days when the timber stood tall on every North Country hillside and when king spruce were to be had at waterside for the swing of an ax.

'Twas late when he rapped my little cuddy on the fireplace and said:

"Boys, as you can guess, it wasn't to yarn of the good old days that I came up here, but because of your letter. However, that's a matter that can wait over until tomorrow. If there's room in the bunk for me, I'll sleep with you tonight."

Well, to be telling the truth, there would have been no other place for Mr. Willis to have slept that night. Besides the which, his tales of the old lumber days had made us feel that he was one of ourselves, so without ever a thought of ceremony we made a place for him between Jarge Hollis and one of the Down East men, they having fallen into an icehole the week before, by token of which they had the cleanest skins among us. The sleep of the blessed came soon to us, and ere ever a log could snap in the fireplace we were all of us snoring a North Country chanty.

'Twas that night the spring rains came —not respectable pattering rains that take a week to melt the snows and let the streams rise slowly, but a cloudburst the like of which could only have been seen before by Grandfather Noah. I woke in the night, and sure it sounded as though the whole cataract of Niagara was crashing on our bunkhouse roof. There was a roaring and a thunder which may I never hear again till my soul rises up to meet the Maker on Judgment Day. Said I to myself:

"Glory be, and 'twill be ocean-full the streams will be running tomorrow."

The next morning we were just rubbing the sleep out of our eyes when the door was thrown open and a man from the Settlement rushed in. He collapsed on the deacon seat, for he was drenched and winded from running. As soon as he could find words, he gasped:

"For God's sake, you men, get down to the town. The river's up four feet. It's washed away the bridge, and now it's washing away the town. There's no way we can get the women and children out."

We were into our trousers and our boots and out of the camphouse before a dog could bite its tail. 'Twas a sword of destruction the storm had been, for trees had been torn from their roots, and branches were scattered to the right and to the left. Every hillside was cut by torrents of water, all racing down.

WHEN we reached the bank of the river, sure our hearts stopped still with horror. The bend of the river where the town stood wasn't a bend any longer. The river had cut through the low ground behind the town and was rushing past it now on all sides. The bridge was gone, and the town was on an island which the racing waters were gnawing away. Just as we arrived, the ground sank under one house, and it slid into the river. For a bit it bobbed and butted along, then it collapsed and the boards floated away in pieces. There was a cat crouching on one timber. The waters whirled it about, then sucked it under. A few minutes more, and another house toppled into the river.

Through the rain we could see some of the people of the town standing back from the shore. There were a few men among them, but mostly they were women and children, the men of the town being away at the camps. They were not fifty feet away from us, but the waters were between them and us, and we could not reach them.

Dan Gordon pushed past me, and his

face was that of a soul in its last agony.

"Merciful God," he was saying to himself, "Nan's over there."

I looked hard through the rain, and between gusts I could see Mrs. Gordon on the other bank.

Dan tore off his jacket and started unlacing his boots.

"Get a rope, some one," he shouted, "I'm going to swim it."

At that moment, when we'd completely forgotten him, Mr. Willis stepped up. He looked at the women and children on the far shore, and he looked at the river between. Then he put his hand on Dan's shoulder.

"You can't swim it, Mr. Gordon," he said quietly. "No man could."

Dan looked up at him.

"I've got to do something," he said. "My wife is there."

Mr. Willis kept his hand on Dan's shoulder and looked slowly around, his eyes searching through the rain. As he looked down the river he stiffened.

"Quick, two axes," he said.

I followed the line of his eyes and saw what he had seen. A bit down the bank stood a pine, perhaps seventy feet high. At a glance I could see that if it fell just right, it would reach across the river with a little bit to spare. On the far bank some rocks made a V-cleft which would be holding the top of the pine fast if it ever fell in. With the high wind blowing, there seemed one chance in a thousand that human arms could fell the pine into the cleft and make a bridge of it across the river. One chance in a thousand it seemed.

Before Mr. Willis and Dan reached the pine, we had put axes into their hands. 'Twas Dan who made the first cut, and then Mr. Willis's ax swung wide around his shoulder and bit into the trunk of the tree. *Chip-chop-chip-chop* you could hear the song of the axes over the howl of the wind. The white cuts on each side of the pine grew wider and deeper, but it seemed it would take an eternity for them to close on each other. *Chop-chop* went the axes, and they were swinging faster and biting truer than any pair of axes in the history of the North Country.

At last—was it an hour or was it a century, I cannot be telling—the pine was cut through but for a thin wedge. Each blast shook it in an agony of death. Dan Gordon lifted his ax for the last strokes that would bring down the tree, but Mr. Willis stopped him. We had bent two ropes to the trunk as far up as we could run them, and Mr. Willis now directed the men where to stand ready to pull.

He picked up his ax again and stepped up to the pine, but he did not cut. He just stood there, feeling the wind and the rain blow upon his cheek. It came hard, then soft for a moment, then hard again, than soft. It seemed the word to pull would never be spoken. At last there came a hush in the roar of the wind, and we heard Mr. Willis shout, "Pull!"

His ax swung into the pine and threw out a gleaming chip. Into the other side went Dan Gordon's ax. We on the ropes dug our heels into the sodden ground and pulled till our muscles crackled. Slowly, slowly, then faster, faster, and faster, the top of the pine curved across the sky. Louder than the lash of the rain, louder than the roar of the river, you could hear the branches of the pine sing through the air.

Sweet and true as a rifle bullet, the top of the pine crashed into the cleft of the rocks on the far side of the river. 'Twas the perfect cut of a master lumberman, and it will not be forgotten in the North Country.

Before the tree trunk had stopped quivering, Mr. Willis had jumped upon it and was dashing across with his ax balanced in his hand. Dan followed close behind him. While they hacked away the branches from the top side of the

trunk, we men on the shore lashed the base of it to the stump.

You could not be saying an "Ave Maria" before a way was cleared along the top of the trunk, and we had a bridge well over three feet above the top of the river, that would hold unless it was hit by a tree trunk or a wrecked house.

At the crash of the pine, the people of the town gathered about the far end. Dan jumped from the pine to the shore, and we could see his wife throw herself into his arms. They held each other for the space of an eye-glance. Then Dan lifted her aside, slung a child over one shoulder, took a baby in the crook of his other arm, and started back over the bridge. Mr. Willis came behind him, with a baby in each arm, and a boy riding him pig-a-back.

As soon as they reached the bank, a half-dozen of us men raced over the log, and brought back some of the women and the other children. In less time than I've been taking to tell you all this, we had the whole town, including two dogs and Mother Timberley's parrot, safe on our bank of the river. And none too soon it was, for another house rolled into the river and came sweeping down against our bridge. The tree was torn from its moorings and carried into the stream. Before evening the whole town had washed into the river.

'Twas late before we trooped back to camp. We were inside the bunkroom and pulling off our wet clothes when Mr. Willis leaned against the wall, then slid slowly to the floor. Dan Gordon picked him up and laid him on the bunk. We had his clothes off and him wrapped in a dry blanket in no time, and I poured a pannikin of our best whisky down his throat. He came to and grinned at us.

"I guess I'm not as young as I used to be, boys," he said.

By the time we had the fire blazing and ourselves steaming out, Mr. Willis was sitting up comfortably in the bunk.

"If the rains let up before night," he said, "I'm going to try to get back to Portland. I'd like to stay with you boys a bit, but there's work waiting for me back in the city. Suppose we talk over your troubles now."

Have you ever seen a class of boys caught throwing chalk when the teacher came back into the room? 'Twas that foolish-looking and shuffling we lumberlubbers stood then. We looked at each other. As if by agreement our eyes all turned to the little Scotchman MacIntosh. He was a man, he was. With never a hesitation he stepped up to where Mr. Willis was sitting.

"I am speaking for the boys here, Mr. Willis," he said.

"Speak out, man," said Mr. Willis, "what are you striking for?"

"We're not on strike, sir," said the little man. "There's been no strike since this morning. You may be a capitalist and you may be robbing us, but you're a better man than any of us. I say, more power to you, and may you make your two millions grow into twenty."

The rest of us stood a bit, beblathered as coots. Then we found our tongues and cheered the rafters out of the roof. None of us could be telling what we were cheering—the little MacIntosh, or Mr. Willis, or the end of the damned strike. But we cheered ourselves hoarse anyway, and then we cheered our voices back. Mr. Willis was laughing, and Dan Gordon was pumping the MacIntosh's hand, and the camp cat was running in circles trying to find a way out of the bedlam.

And that was the end of the great Kennebec strike.

(Moriarty relighted his pipe.)

"I'm thinking," said he after a bit, "that Mr. Willis is a very clever man—*a very clever man*. But he's a great man, and the lumber-lubber that wants to go on strike against Mr. Willis will have to be starting with Patrick Moriarty—which I'm advising you spawn of hedgehogs not to be trying."

THE SCORPION

by COL. GEORGE B. RODNEY

(Third of Four Parts)

SYNOPSIS

IN the Jolly Pilots tavern Tom Swayne, young American mariner, ran across Ben Ives, an old gunner. Ives brought tragic news. The *Catherine,* commanded by Tom's father, had been overhauled by the buccaneer Long-twelve Porton off the Windward Passage. His ship disabled, Captain Cyrus Swayne and his crew were prisoners. Ives had been sent back as hostage, bearing a demand for ransom.

The fortunes of the young American republic were at a low ebb. Trouble with France had brewed unchecked. Privateers, bearing French letters of marque, had crippled American shipping. Tom resolved not to let his father's ruin go unpunished.

Within a few weeks Tom's brig cleared for the Mona Passage, called the Devil's Graveyard. She was small, but fitted with a long twenty-four pound gun, rifled and on gimbals. She could outrange any boat afloat. Tom bore letters of marque —American—and a fighting crew, eager for a taste of the Spanish Main and booty. To embroil Porton with the

French, Tom renamed his boat the *Scorpion* and masqueraded as the pirate.

Off Jacmel they captured a French brig. Swayne, in the guise of Porton, found gold aplenty. But he gained some information that was even more valuable. One of his prisoners, Mademoiselle Le Gai, was engaged to the Jacmel official mentioned in Porton's letter as the man to whom his father's ransom must be paid. Swayne decided to slip into the harbor, release the girl and try to learn his father's fate.

Jacmel, ravaged by insurrection, was heavily guarded, but they landed a boat under cover of darkness. Miss Le Gai's betrothed, overwhelmed with gratitude, told Tom that Porton had landed that very day to confer with de Berrien, the military governor.

They captured de Berrien and got him aboard the *Scorpion*, aided by the confusion attendant upon an attack by insurgent slaves. But Tom and Etion, Miss Le Gai's servant, were captured by the blacks.

Dragged to their captors' camp, Tom discovered that Porton had also been taken a prisoner. He was confined in the same room with Tom, and dropped upon the floor a map showing the location of El Cubil, his island stronghold.

Tom and Etion escaped with Porton, and the first two made their way through the jungle until they could steal a native pirogue. They let Porton, unaware of Tom's identity, go his way. Alive and unsuspecting, he could guide them to Tom's father. The reckoning could come later. They located the *Scorpion* and Tom informed the irate de Berrien of Porton's real mission. The governor promised to throw the resources of the tricolor in bringing Porton to justice, and on that promise Tom released him unharmed.

Then the *Scorpion*, hot on Longtwelve's new trail, went shaping a course for El Cubil.

CHAPTER X

PORT-FIRE BATTEN

THEY headed down the coast for several hours and anchored on a small bight where wood and water were accessible. When the last cask was filled and stowed in tier and the schooner was making her offing word was passed —"All hands aft." In five minutes the men were hurrying aft and they watched Tom standing by the rail, an arm hooked in the weather main shrouds.

"You all know pretty much what's happened," he said. "I'm layin' my course for all to see. I've talked it over with Ben Ives and Mr. Lynn. If any man thinks he knows more than those two let him come to the cabin and I'll give him a hearing. I was taken prisoner by the rebel slaves ashore. So was that man Porton. He escaped when I did and I got his map that shows how to get to his hidin' place, El Cubil. Porton's got a partner, a man named Portfire Batten. Has any one of you men ever heard of *him?*"

Keene spoke up, a brown-faced seaman with a long white scar from the left corner of his mouth.

"Batten done this," he said, pointing to the scar. "Oh, it was done in fair fight all right. Just a knife cut when we was both drunk in Spanishtown in Jamaica ten years ago. You want to look out fer Batten, Cap'n. He's as smart as a Philadelphia lawyer an' as crooked. You say he's Porton's partner, sir?"

"So I was told by Porton himself. Porton gets asylum in all French ports. Batten picks up information of all sailin's of ships that promise good pickin's for the pair of 'em and then Porton gathers 'em in. Porton's a privateer in port and a pirate at sea. I showed de Berrien that Porton was supplyin' the escaped slaves with arms and powder and de Berrien said he's goin' to revoke Porton's letters of marque. That means that Por-

ton is no longer entitled to usages of war if taken. He's just a damned pirate, subject to the law of nations."

"He's got the loot of ten years on El Cubil," said Ives. "Don't forget that."

"I don't. I called you men aft to hear a change in my plans. I'm makin' now for El Cubil. Porton may or may not escape from the French at Jacmel. If he does get away we'll have Porton behind us and maybe his partner Batten in front. There'll be fightin'. Make no mistake about that. You know the usual lay on a privateer; expenses are paid first out of the prizes. After that, in a ship like the *Scorpion*, where the master is the owner, twenty shares go to the captain, ten to the mate, five to the gunner and one to each man. My proposal is to change that."

They looked at him askance. They were so accustomed to see the quarter deck take advantage of the forecastle that they were suspicious.

"We'll raid El Cubil. We'll rescue the prisoners and take the loot. From that loot will be paid first all expenses of the schooner. After that is paid everything will be divided share and share alike, except that I take no share."

They stared at each other in disbelief.

"You mean, sir—" Parker, one of the crew of the long gun, hitched at his belt and spat overside—"you mean to say, sir, that you ain't takin' no share of what we git at El Cubil?"

"I'm takin' a big share," said Tom. "I'm getting all expenses paid and you follow me till we get Porton. I want him for my share."

"That ain't quite fair." Ives came forward. "Cap'n Cyrus has lost the *Catherine*. It's on'y fair that he be repaid for her first, then the expenses of the schooner. After that all's right, like the cap'n says."

"All right. Now one last word." Tom swung closer to them and his face was set. He told them of his meeting with Porton, of Porton's last words that left him in doubt as to whether his father was alive or dead.

"We're with you to the last shot in the locker, cap'n." A dozen voices shrilled. "Now what, sir?"

"The wind's died," said Doane, a Cape May man, "We've got to lay here like a dead whale till the evenin' breeze comes up offen the land."

The wind died as he spoke. The peak of the great mainsail flapped over and the vang slapped on the empty canvas as the *Scorpion* rolled lightly in the seaway to a little whisper from her bends. There was no sign of any wind.

"Get the canvas off her," said Tom quickly. "We' don't want to take any chance of our bein' seen. We haven't much free-board and our poles'll hardly show against the sky but those damned frigates may follow us."

There was no need for even a rag of sail; all that afternoon the *Scorpion* lay idle on a summer sea, while the men loafed along the decks and Ives struck a knife in the foremast and whistled for a wind.

"It never fails," he said. "If you on'y whistle long enough the wind's bound to come. I wish to God we had a Finn aboard. Them Finns kin magic the wind."

Tom downed a stiff drink and laid down on his bunk with the cabin door open. The sun dropped into the sea almost with a hiss and the *Scorpion* rolled anew in the seaway; then the half-moon rose and silvered land sea. He slept.

AT dawn a hand on his shoulder roused him and he found Ives at his side.

"There's a boat in sight, cap'n," he said, "an' the wind is risin' off the land."

"Boat? What's she look like?" Tom leaped from his bunk and hurried on deck. A black blot to the south resolved itself into a small boat, staggering along under jib and lug sail; he could make out

the figure of a man standing in the bows, scanning them from under the sharp of his hand.

"Tryin' to guess who we are," muttered Tom. "He knows nobody but frog-eaters have any right to be here. The forean' aft sails bother him a bit. Mr. Lynn, run up the French tricolor. We don't want that fool runnin' back to Jacmel to tell he saw us."

At sight of the tricolor the boat filled her sail and ran alongside and a man leaped over the rail. At first sight of the grinning faces he leaped back with a startled shout.

"*'N pas Francais. . . .*"

The man in the boat worked frantically with his tiller but Ives had caught the bow with a boat-hook. Two men seized the man on deck and dragged him aft to where Tom stood grinning.

"Now then—who are you and what are you doing here?" he asked.

"Fisherman, *M'sieur.* But you are not French."

"Who said we are? Are you from Jacmel?"

"Yes, *Capitaine.*" The man's eyes strayed forward to the covered guns, to the racks filled with cutlasses and the boarding pikes along the booms and his unspoken question was answered. "And we are most anxious to return before night," he said pleadingly.

"We'll see about that. Do fishermen not stay out over night?"

The man shrugged.

"Not when that damned Porton is at sea," he said. "On his last cruise he picked up five men out of the *Belle Aurore.* They never came back."

"Who did you say?" Tom's voice almost cracked in his intensity. "Porton! Porton is a prisoner surely."

"No, *M'sieur,* you have been misinformed. It is true that the man Porton was taken prisoner by the blacks but he escaped from them. He got back by night and got aboard his great yellow corvette. I know because it was openly said that General de Berrien had given orders for his immediate arrest. He was to be taken prisoner for having given arms to the blacks. General de Berrien was also made prisoner but was released for some reason. His first act on his return was to set a watch for Porton. But Porton could not be found. Then he came back by night, got aboard his ship and got away."

"How could he get away?" demanded Tom. "A French frigate lay on each side of him."

"That is true, *M'sieur,* but I do not know how you know it. That is how he got away. "The man grinned. "Oh, he is a devil, that man,—and smart! All the officers from the frigates were ashore carousing at the house of the military governor, celebrating his escape. Porton warped his corvette ahead while the officers were ashore. Them frigates could not open fire on him without firing into each other and no man could be found with authority to change the anchorage. Porton left at once, *M'sieur.* He even had the audacity to fire a salute as he passed Fort St. Louis. He is fortunate. All Jacmel knows that de Berrien meant him for the guillotine."

"This is timely news." Tom turned to his men gathered in the waist. "It means Porton can't return to a French port. He'll have to make for El Cubil. And we've got to keep a weather eye open for his partner, Port-fire Batten. Porton will hardly dare head straight for El Cubil. He knows the French frigates will follow him. He'll keep away from his course for a few days. We've got to look out for both Porton and Batten."

He stood watching the foresail swelling in the wind and motioned to the man at the wheel to put it down a trifle.

"What'll you do with these men, sir?" asked Lynn gruffly.

"Do? What do you do to men who bring you good news? Give them a drink and send them on their way."

The man looked his astonishment. He

had expected no less than impressment or capture. Two men put him overside and another lowered a bottle of rum on a line; then Ives let go the painter and the boat dropped away into the wake, both fishermen staring after the departing schooner.

"Now we know where we stand," said Tom. There was such utter relief in his voice that Ives and Lynn both were surprised. Tom laughed.

"Don't you see? It clears all for us. We have the chart of El Cubil. We're going there as straight as I can lay a course. We know that Batten is cruising somewhere to the south and that Porton is somewhere to the north. If he had already dared head straight for his port at El Cubil we'd probably have seen his topsails. We're between Porton and Batten and those two French frigates will certainly be after Porton. I'm glad to know what we do. I'll be damned if I want to play blind hooky over all the Spanish Main with Porton and Batten and two frigates."

"What 're you goin' to do?" demanded Lynn.

"Precisely what we planned originally. Only we'll have to be ready for anything at any time. Mr. Ives, see those boarding pikes are well tallowed and the long-gun crew ready at all times. Here comes the wind."

The *Scorpion* heeled to the growing breeze and the jib rattled as it filled, for the helmsman in his eagerness to hear had let her fall off a bit.

"We'll know more tomorrow than we do today," said Tom grimly. "All right, bos'n. Pipe to dinner."

CHAPTER XI

THE LOST ISLAND

IN the cabin Tom, with Ives and Lynn at his elbows, pored over Porton's chart, which he had spread on the cuddy table. Sweat had marked it; it bore other stains, darker and more ominous.

"It seems fairly clear." Tom dropped a finger on the dirty paper. "The only anchorage faces to the east. That means an almost open roadstead and this is the season of easterly storms. We can't decide what we'll do till we sight the place."

"What's the latitude and longitude?" asked the practical Ives.

Tom studied the chart. "It's not given here. But we know roughly what it is. Stop a bit! Here's a bearing." He traced a line. "This looks like a name—yes. It's the island of Orchilla. That belongs to Spain, but it's uninhabited, I believe. No matter. Orchilla seems to be the nearest land. If this chart's not a liar El Cubil lies about forty leagues northeast of Orchilla. Look! The island of El Cubil seems to be surrounded by a sort of barrier reef. No wonder the place is unknown. No one but a damned fool would go stickin' his nose among uncharted reefs and uninhabited islands unless there was some profit to be had. Let's get started."

He called the new course to the helmsman, listened to his singsong reply and filled his pipe, while Ives and Lynn waited for him to speak again.

"You see," he said at last. "I've got to figure this. If we run into an unknown anchorage we want to be mighty sure that neither Porton nor Batten will run in on us and catch us on a lee shore. Our chief dependence in the schooner is in her speed and in our long gun. If either Batten or Porton get us under their batteries we're done for. We must consider Batten."

"Stop figurin'," said Lynn. "Let's shape a course for El Cubil, pick up the prisoners, loot the place and get away before Porton can get there."

"No. Never." Tom half rose. "I want to meet Porton. But I want to meet him at sea. Here's what we'll do. We'll run down the bearin's and find El Cubil. Under cover of night, one of us will land,

while the *Scorpion* lies on an' off the place. When we know what we're up against we can go ahead."

Lynn bit his pipestem so hard that he bit through the bone.

"I reckon Etion'll go ashore for you," he said.

Tom shook his head. "When the time comes for a man to go ashore I can tell you who's goin'. Let's get on deck and pile on her all she'll carry."

Darkness found them bowling along under all sail, the schooner fairly leaping to the singing wind. To the east the circle of a new moon hung halfway up the sky; the trucks of the two masts moved like tiny black discs above the taut canvas. Tom was standing by the wheel when Lynn came to him.

"Look," he said, pointing off into the blackness. "Yonder are red an' green side lights. A ship of some sort is over there. "He pointed off behind them, where tiny glimmering points showed against the murk. Tom galvanized into action.

"Douse 'em," he said sharply. "Quick, men! Put out every light but the binnacle and hood that. Look alive, Jerry."

The *Scorpion's* lights went out at once.

"It's some damned frog-eater," growled Tom. "Whoever he is, he mustn't see us. From the lights I reckon it's one of those frigates. They're too high above the water to be on a craft less than five hundred tons. She was comin' straight along our wake, too, or we'd seen only one light. Keep her as she goes," he adjured the wheel. "Jerry, give her the flyin' jib and all staysails."

Under the press of new sail the *Scorpion* leaped like a live thing and in a half-hour the lights were dropped astern. Tom drew a breath of relief. Still—he might have been sighted after all. Twice that night he shifted his course.

"It was almost surely one of de Berrien's frigates, after either Porton or us," he said. "If Porton gets his hands on us we'll be due for Davy Jones's locker. If de Berrien gets us it'll be a stone jug till the end of the war."

"How far is it to El Cubil?" inquired Lynn.

"The map shows it to be about three hundred miles to Orchilla. We're loggin' eight or ten knots now. We'll raise the place some time day after tomorrow if the wind holds."

THE wind held and they boomed down and across the Caribbean with filled sails and every sheet taut. The *Scorpion* whispered at every bend, a ribbon of white under her red forefoot.

"Who'd ever have thought she had heels like this," muttered Ives, eyeing the wake that stretched away like a knife-cut in a velvet floor. "They say the French build the best ships. If they can beat this, I'm a Dutchman."

The sun dropped into the sea. Just as its red ball seemed to strike the sea-rim a yell came from Deane in the fore topmast cross-trees.

"Land-ho!" he shouted.

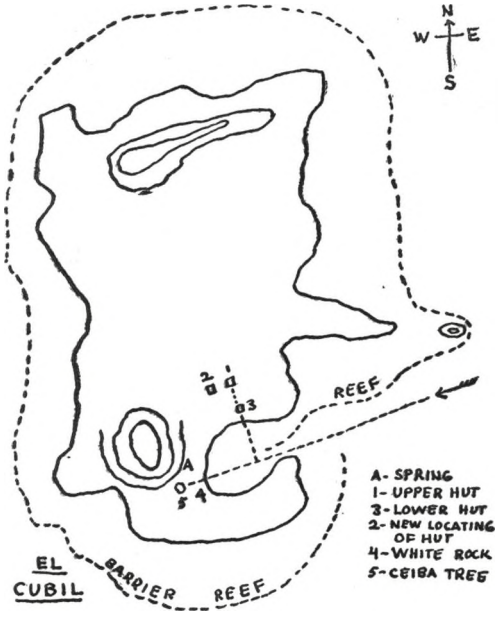
The hail electrified the crew. Instantly every man was on deck. Far away to the southwest, more like a low-lying blur than any land, a shadow obscured the sun. Tom eyed it through his glass and finally motioned to the helmsman to bear up for it.

"That'll be El Cubil," he said, shutting up his glass. "Take in the light sails, Jerry. We don't want to run too close by daylight. We don't know who may see us."

While Lynn was busy with the schooner, Tom went down into the cabin, spread the chart again on the table and studied it intently. The map showed a small bay shaped like a horse-shoe with both heels pointing eastward. The toe of the shoe nested at the foot of a hill and straight across the open heels a dotted line was drawn and above it was written in bold letters the word "REEF." Several

lines drawn in red ink crossed the mouth of the bay and the legend was written clearly. It said:

When off the entrance run in for the white rock. Keep the white rock in line with the stunted ceiba tree at the base of the hill. Keep this course till you sight



two huts on the hillside. Keep the two huts in line and run straight in. If you fail to keep the range on the two huts you'll pile on the reef. They mark the only entrance to the bay.

"Clear enough," said Tom. "We're not likely to pile up on the reef, considerin' our light draft and with the moon as it is. But we'll take no chances. It says 'Keep the two huts ranged on each other after you get them in line.' "

He hesitated, thinking deeply. Porton might have fortified the place. Even two light boat-guns could make the landing impregnable, for no ship of any size could run in close enough to bring her guns to bear. It would be too risky to run in with the schooner till he knew more about the place. There was but one way to find out. Some one must land. He was still poring over the chart when Lynn came into the cabin.

"Send Etion to me at once," Tom said, "and get me a few volunteers. I'll want them to row me ashore after dark and then come back to the schooner. I'll signal from the beach when I want a boat to come back for me."

"Huh." Lynn's face was grave. "Listen to me, Tom Swayne. You're captain here. You can disrate me when you choose, but I'm goin' to have my say. If you land on that place tonight you're all kinds of a fool. The wise thing to do is just to run in and, under cover of our guns, send a boat's crew ashore. Back 'em up with our batteries an'—"

"Look at that island," said Tom.

Lynn's eyes followed Tom's finger. He saw an expanse of jungle-covered land, backed up by a towering hill that rose for some seven hundred feet. A hill covered with a dense forest growth that merged into great trees at the base. A belt of silver beach edged the horseshoe-shaped bay. That was all. The island was perhaps two miles long and half that in width. It had probably been discovered and re-discovered a score of times and left uninhabited because no one wanted it. As the *Scorpion* drew closer they could see a dozen little indentations along the shore, where boats could land if the reef allowed them to pass.

"Plenty of room there to hide the schooner if we want," said Tom. "With our light draft we can probably cross the reef at some place. But it'd be a bad lee shore for us. Get that boat for me, Jerry."

While he waited he tore a page from the schooner's log book and drew a rough copy of the chart of the anchorage and stuffed it in his pocket. Then he summoned Etion and bade him get a length of light line. Lynn came back with Etion and wondered at his appearance with the rope across his shoulders.

"Soundings," said Tom tersely. "If we have luck we'll get that loot of Porton's.

But he may have left a guard here. Don't forget that. We may have to hide the schooner, but I don't want to run her into the bay until I'm sure we can get out at will. I'm goin' ashore with Etion to see what I can find."

Jerry shook his head again but said no more.

"Land us," said Tom. "Dawn must find you out of sight from the shore. When night comes run in to about this same place and look for a fire. When you run in show two red lights, one above the other. I'll answer by two short fire-flashes. If you see them send an armed boat's crew ashore. If you don't see a fire, run out again and come back the next night. See?"

"I see," said Jerry stubbornly, 'but I don't like it, just the same."

"Then we'll get to the boat. I'm takin' along with me a copy of the map of the bay. You'll have the original, in case you have to run in."

He slipped a pair of small pocket-pistols into his shirt with a powder flask and a handful of bullets, put a tinder-box in a pocket and tossed Etion a canteen full of rum.

"All right," he said. "Come on. Are you armed?"

Etion grinned and half drew an eight-inch knife from his sash.

"Better than gun," said Etion grimly. "Not make so much bobbery." He followed Tom to the rail.

They dropped into the boat and one of the men passed some rags about the thole-pins to muffle the oars. Then they pushed off and headed for the beach.

IN twenty minutes the bow grated on rough sand. Etion, in the bows, held her off the shingle while Tom leaped out knee-deep in the warm water. Then the boat backed quietly off the beach and was swallowed up in the sea-mist as Tom, with Etion at his heels, moved inland through the brush.

To their immediate front the ground was fairly open, partly covered with tufts of stiff salt water grass between small clumps of algaroba trees. Once or twice an agouti cheeped or a night bird squawked in the jungle. Then they passed into the wooded belt, where giant trees ceiled the jungle. Here Tom stopped and waited for Etion to catch up with him.

"If any one is here they're almost sure to be down in the bight of the bay," he whispered. "You remember where we saw those two huts?"

He felt rather than heard Etion's answer.

"Come on then," said Tom. "It lies about a half mile to our left, I think."

Foot by foot, chary of making any noise, they passed along a path that was half overgrown with low brush. Suddenly Etion stopped in his tracks.

"Fire dere, Cap'n," he whispered hoarsely. "I smell 'm. See dere." He pointed to a distant spark on the slope of the beach, above the bight of the bay.

"Aye. I see it," said Tom. "Come on."

They moved like shadows through the misty light of the tree-filled flat. Once a monkey chattering overhead made Tom leap aside; again an iguana rustling through the thicket boomed out his call. They stopped at the near edge of a tiny clearing, at the far side of which stood a tiny shelter built of discolored canvas nailed to four poles. It was roofed with the tattered remains of an old sail. They could see it as it stood out against the background of the jungle, thrown into strong relief by a smoking fire that burned in a roughly made fireplace built of rocks. For a moment Tom saw nothing else; then his eyes lit as a sudden shift of wind drove the smoke aside and he saw sitting on the windward side of the fire a tall man and a girl.

He knew by instinct who they were. They could only be Major Derwent and

his daughter. He gave one glance at the man but his gaze lingered on the girl. He had been prepared in a sort of an impersonal way to find a woman but not such a girl as this. As he watched them her voice came to him across the firelight.

"I can see no hope for our escape from this—this hell," she said. "What did he say to you, father?"

The man spoke and Tom's eyes turned to him. He noted subconsciously that his dress was worn and soiled, that he was tall and ought to be fair when properly washed, that he looked more like a roustabout from the Kingston docks than like an officer of George, of Great Britain and Ireland, King. Defender of the Faith.

"He told me he had sent a letter demanding a ransom of forty thousand dollars. You know, Ruth, that I can not raise ten thousand, even by the sale of my commission. . . ."

"That letter that Captain Swayne wrote—" she began and Tom felt his heart give a great leap. His father was here then! "That may bring us hope," she said.

"How can it?" he said passionately. "We don't even know that the letter reached its destination. My God!" He sprang to his feet and clenched his fists in impotent rage. "To be like this! To be marooned at the mercy of a damned pirate! We know he will not keep his word. You remember his threat to you."

At that Tom saw a great flood of color run up the girl's face.

"There is always . . . the sea," she said. "I can at least drown myself. I think I shall never forget—" She broke off, staring, as Tom hitched at his belt and stepped forward into the circle of the firelight.

"Don't be unduly alarmed," he said quietly. "I am Captain Thomas Swayne of the American privateer *Scorpion*. I have come here to rescue you and to find my father."

The girl gave a little scream that she promptly suppressed and her father backed off with an oath.

CHAPTER XII

DEAD MAN'S CAVE

TOM SWAYNE looked like a wreck. The jungle had taken most of his shirt; his face was scratched and dirty. But his words brought the color back to their ravaged faces.

"How came you here, sir? Where is that infamous pirate Porton?" Major Derwent shot question after question that Tom did not heed. His eyes were on Ruth Derwent. Finally he turned to the excited officer.

"Never mind Porton just now! Never mind me or how I came here! I'm Swayne . . . Captain Thomas Swayne. Where is my father? Where is Captain Cyrus Swayne? Where is he, I say?"

Major Derwent gulped.

"If Cyrus Swayne was your father," he said, "you've lost a damned fine father."

"Lost." Tom staggered a little. "Go on," he said.

"Porton murdered him," said Ruth, "That scoundrel Porton was . . . he was . . . I was a prisoner and he was . . ."

She stopped. She could not tell the rest. But the gratitude she felt for the American shipmaster spoke in her eyes and color.

"He was a man and a gentleman," she said lamely.

"He was all of that. Will you tell me what you can?"

He sat down heavily on a rock, and Major Derwent, after one look at him, crossed and stood by him while Etion crouched by the fire. Like every Negro out of Africa, Etion could not see a fire without wanting to crowd close to it.

Ruth drew close to Tom and glanced at him; the rapid pulsing of her heart seemed to choke her. This man had

come from a decent, God-fearing country to rescue his father, and now that father was dead. Her voice seemed to come from some other person far removed. She heard herself say, dully:

"That man Porton came one evening while we were sitting by our fire. He put a guard over my father. They held him. He told me that he had a house here on this island where we—he and I would live. I—I struck him. . . Then he. . . . Then your father struck him in the mouth and knocked him down. All that I remember after that is that the man Porton drew a pistol and fired. Your father fell across the fire. He is buried over yonder." Her voice broke. "He was unarmed," she said. "He tried his best to help me. That pirate murdered him! I hope God makes him pay!" she said hotly.

"He will." Tom's voice was low and tense. "God will make him pay, Miss Derwent, and He has sent me to collect the debt. Show me the grave."

With the major trailing behind, she led him to a little heap of broken coral rock, in which was set a cross made of two small sticks tied askew.

She glanced at him apprehensively. His tenseness was so apparent that she knew it could not hold. His self-control could not last forever.

"Have you heard how the *Catherine* was taken?" she asked.

"Yes. Let me tell you first what I know." He told her briefly of the coming of Ives, of what Ives had told him. He told her of the declaration of war with France—and at that Major Derwent pricked up his ears. He told her of his preparations and of his sailing; in brief narrative he told of all that had happened since he sailed. She listened with her eyes on his.

"So you see, Miss Derwent, I have come with a mission. The fact that Porton was granted letters of marque by the French in no way affects it," he continued. "The robbery and murder was done before he had those letters of marque from France."

"Oh," said Major Derwent, "I tell you, young man, this Porton is a pirate. He has never been anything else. The man who kills him confers a boon on humanity like a man who kills a mad dog."

"I know," said Tom, "Now about my father . . . when was he killed?"

"Within a week of our capture," said Ruth. "We were brought ashore here and Porton quarreled with his partner. His name is Batten, and he is as evil as Porton is."

"It is about Batten that I want to ask first. Where is he?"

"He sailed in his brig," said Major Derwent. "I heard them talk it over. Batten was to cruise in the neighborhood of Cartagena to get word of when the plate fleet sails for Spain. Then he is to bring back word to Porton, who is to return here, and then they will raid the plate fleet."

Tom nodded.

"That is how I understood it," he said. "Who else is on this island with you?"

"Not a soul." Major Derwent spoke passionately. "Porton and Batten buried the stolen loot and Porton sent Batten on his cruise. He had us kept under guard so we would not know where it was hidden. Then he left my daughter and me. He knows well enough that even if I had a boat, I cannot navigate it. He left us one hatchet to cut firewood. No other tools. Just a hatchet and a supply of food." He burst into a torrent of vitriolic profanity.

"What are your plans now, Captain Swayne?" he asked. "Where is your vessel?"

"Off shore. I dared not run into the bay and risk having Batten catch me. When night comes I will signal the *Scorpion* and take you and Miss Derwent off. After that we will see. Etion, get some wood and keep the fire up."

They sat by the fire that Etion had replenished; after a little Major Derwent

unearthed a bottle of rum and a coconut shell.

"He left me a small supply of rum," he said. "It will do for us to drink to our better acquaintance, Captain."

After a short talk, Ruth went into the canvas shelter and the two men sat by the fire discussing plans until the dawn streamers ran up the sky.

While Tom was helping Etion in a hunt for breakfast, Ruth came from the shelter. Her eyes were still heavy with sleep, and in that first glimpse of daylight Tom saw that old Ben Ives had been right in his description of her. The tropic sun had dealt gently with her English coloring, and her eyes were alight now as they had not been for weeks. She welcomed him with a smile.

"We are counting on you now," she said. "No knight errant was ever so timely as you. Where is your schooner?"

"My mate has orders to lie off the land to show no canvas till tonight. After dark he'll run in for signals. Let's go down and have a look at the bay."

THEY covered the short half mile in a few minutes, and Tom realized at once what a perfect hiding place it was. The heels of the horseshoe-shaped entrance drew close and rose in two high promontories that cut off nearly all the sea view. A ship outside, unless close to land, would have no idea that any anchorage existed. The light surf booming on the barrier reef warned of danger. Tom watched that surf.

"It's a good thing our boat last night drew less than a foot and a half of water," he said. "Two feet would have torn out her bottom. Where could he have hidden his loot, Major?"

"I have no idea," said Major Derwent frankly. "He took two men with him and only one came back."

"Good Lord! You mean Porton hid his loot and killed the men who knew its location?"

"Draw your own inference. That's what I believe. It'd be like him. He went over that way." Major Derwent pointed up the beach to the north. "It took them the best part of a day to get rid of the stuff. Why?"

"I must pay my men," said Tom grimly. "I mean to pay them with Porton's loot. Let's have a look over there."

Wind and rain had long since erased all footprints but after they reached the jungle edge Etion picked up a short trail marked by axe cuts that blazed a narrow path on the trees. That path led well back from the beach; it doubled back and stopped on the edge of a low cliff of tufa rock that ran to the north. Far away a heavy booming like a gun at sea stopped Tom in his tracks. Major Derwent stopped by him.

"That deceived me, too," he said. "Look." He pointed seaward and again that booming roar filled all space. A hundred yards off the beach a low point of half-submerged coral rock thrust like a wedge into the sea. Its outer end overhung the water by some two feet, so that each oncoming breaker ran beneath it. Then a white column of spume rose high in the air and the booming roar again filled all space. Tom laughed.

"I see," he said. "There's a hole in that rock and the waves run in under it. We heard it last night and thought it was gunfire."

"It keeps up day and night whenever there's a sea running from the eastward," said Major Derwent. "It's a good barometer to foretell the weather. That rock tells us right now that a blow is coming from the eastward. What ails you, man?"

"Look yonder." Tom pointed to a rocky ledge that jutted from the low cliff on the beach. At an inner edge, near the base, they saw a dark spot on the rock face. "A cave," said Tom. "If I wanted to hide anything I'd think that was a good place."

They followed him through the ankle-

deep coral sand to the base of the rock, where he stopped.

"Better wait here with Miss Ruth," said Tom. "No tellin' what'll be in there." He jerked his hand at the black mouth of the cave that yawned at them. She stopped in her tracks and Etion pressed forward on Tom's heels.

The cave ran back on a rising slope for some fifty feet and was paved with coral sand that had drifted to both sides. The place was almost dark in spite of the reflection of the light from the white sand of the flooring. The roof rose about six feet, so that both men could enter at full height; it dropped to each side, making a deep room like a tunnel. From the low entrance Tom scanned the dark interior and started at Etion's low chuckle.

"Look, Cap'n." He pointed to a pile of drifted sand alongside the wall, then to a low place in the sand floor. "I think we have come to that man's storeroom. That is a plank."

There was no doubt about it. Two planks, half buried under the sand, were visible, the ends thrust from the sand drift. Tom kicked the loose sand aside and uncovered a roughly made flooring about four feet square; twin auger holes had been bored in one end and heavy rope was looped through the holes, making a rough handle. He seized the loop and pulled. The platform rose clear of the sand, disclosing a yawning hole in the floor. Tom started back just in time to save Etion, who nearly fell into the hole.

"Listen—" Tom bent over the hole and his ears caught the heavy wash of waves.

"It's a sort of a tunnel," he said. "It connects with the sea. What's that you've got, Etion?" For the Negro, gray-faced from fright, had started back and stumbled over a coil of light line. One end, Tom saw, disappeared into the hole; the other end was belayed to an iron pin driven into the wall. "Looks like some one has lowered something into the hole with that line. Let's have a look."

Inch by inch he drew in the line. When some ten yards had been drawn in he noticed it was wet.

"Water below us—wait." He went to the entrance and scanned the sea line. Then he drew his watch and watched. That dull booming roar came to him from the flat rock, then a pause, then a gurgle of surging water below him. There was no doubt about it; a tunnel connected the flat rock with the cave. He stood astonished.

"Good Lord," he muttered, "sound travels about eleven hundred feet a second. That tunnel's near a quarter of a mile long. I'm going to know what's at the end of that line. No one ever lowered a line into a place like that and left it there just for fun. Give a hand here, Etion."

Etion came forward and they both pulled gently but steadily. The line came in and gave finally with a little tug. Thinking the line had fouled the edge of the planking, Tom leaned over the edge of the hole and almost fell backward as the dim light disclosed—a human head!

WITH a startled oath that echoed from the walls of the cave, he reeled in foot after foot of the line, finally hauling out on the floor a tangled bight of the line. In it was twined a mass of soaked and rotted clothing, wrapped about things no man could mistake. Two human bodies!

Working very carefully, they hauled the gruesome find to the hard floor and laid it on the sand. Then Tom turned aside, for a reason. Finally he turned back to the mass and spoke dully.

"Two of 'em, Etion. These must be the men Major Derwent said went with Porton to hide his loot. It's in my mind that we've found his hiding place. See, these bodies are in the bight of the rope. We haven't come to the end of it yet. Pull again."

Etion was nearly past all pulling but he gave a hand. Yard after yard they pulled in; finally they reached a loop, to which were fastened four heavy tarred ropes.

Etion seized the tarred rope and began to haul in the slack, but Tom stopped him.

"We'll see what those bodies show," he growled. "Porton wouldn't have killed them unless he feared them. Give a hand here."

But Etion, who feared not any devil from his Guinea hell, was fearful of the dead men. His face was gray and wet with sweat as he shrank back. Tom had to make his gruesome examination alone. He got little—a few silver coins, a metal pocketbook containing a silver ring and a knife. But at sight of that knife he let go a great oath. The horn handle bore a metal slip on which was roughly scratched two initials, C and S intertwined with a great letter C above them.

"That," he said, "was my father's knife! Wait a minute, Etion!"

But Etion was in no mood to wait. He bolted frankly for the entrance and sought the warm sunlight, where he shivered while Tom made a more lengthy examination. Finally when he came back, Major Derwent and Ruth were waiting on the sands below the cave. The Englishman hailed him.

"What did you find?" he shouted. Then, as Tom came back to them, "That boy of yours looks as though he had seen a ghost."

"He thinks he has," Tom said. "As a matter of fact, I found a curious sort of tunnel in that cave. It connects subterraneously with that blowing rock. Undoubtedly it is where Porton has hidden his loot. I found two bodies in the place. Lowered into the tunnel and left there on a rope. They're probably the men Porton took there to hide his loot. When they had buried it under the tidewater he killed them and tied their bodies to the line."

"But why? What for?"

"You don't know sailors very well, Major," said Tom. "Put yourself in the place of any of Porton's men. Suppose you figured out or guessed that Porton had sunk his loot in that hole. Suppose you found the rope as I did. Suppose you pulled that rope and found two dead bodies as I did? What would you do?"

"Do? Why, by God, I'd drop the rope and quit," said Major Derwent warmly.

"That's exactly what Porton figures on, I reckon. Let's join Miss Ruth. We'll make arrangements to signal my schooner after dark. I'll have a party of men ashore and find out what's in that submarine tunnel if I have to bail the whole Atlantic Ocean through it. By the way, sir, there's a question I must ask you. Ives told me that when Porton captured the *Catherine* that he deliberately drowned a boy, young Jimmy Sykes. Is that correct?"

"He did," said Major Derwent hotly. "And a more dastardly thing I never heard of—and mark you, I have seen an Indian rajah have his prisoners trampled to death by his war elephants."

"What became of the other men of my father's crew? There were eight of them."

"Two were killed when the bark was taken," said Derwent. "The rest joined Porton to save their lives. You can hardly blame them for that. They had seen their friends die. Like young Sykes. They were all sent off with Batten; they're with him now, I think. Those that have not been killed. I heard Porton say he'd take no chance of having one of them escape till he was as much gallows bait as the rest of his men. The man is clever."

"I hope not so clever as he thinks. Isn't that Miss Ruth calling us?"

There was no doubt about it. Ruth was standing behind a ledge of coral rock, calling to them through her cupped hands. They came running.

"Look," she called hurriedly. "What is that?"

Both men looked where she pointed. A tiny white point was lifting against the southern sky, a small fleck that might be white or brown. Tom stood gazing under his hand. Finally he ripped out a hoarse oath.

"That's a sail," he said. "Let's get over to the bay. We can see her better from there."

"It's probably Batten," said Major Derwent. "If so we are ruined. No matter where we hide they will find us. He is worse than Porton."

"Does he know of the cave?" asked Tom quickly.

"I doubt it. Porton, who was always in command, saw to it that Batten stayed aboard his own ship, except when he landed to get drunk with Porton or for conference. He was never far from the rum barrels when he was ashore. Of course, after the long cruise when the *Catherine* was taken, they buried the loot together. That was so neither could cheat the other. That sail may be neither Porton or Batten.

"What was his craft? A brig?"

"Yes. Black except for yellow gunports. That craft yonder may not be him at all. All colors look black, seen against the sun."

"It's a brig," said Tom. "Hurry up, man. Whoever's on her, he'll not be able to distinguish small objects ashore for an hour yet. If it is Batten I have a plan that may upset all his schemes. Hurry, I tell you."

"What sort of a plan? My God, man! I'd give my life to find some assured safety for Ruth."

"That's who I'm thinkin' of," said Tom. "Come on."

With Major Derwent and Etion helping Ruth, the party hastened back along the beach to the shore of the little bay.

CHAPTER XIII

" . . . DEAD OR ALIVE!"

AS they ran for the brush Tom held out a paper to Major Derwent. It was the copy of the chart of the anchorage. Major Derwent, who had never seen its original, seized it.

"A draft of the bay?" he panted. "What the devil nonsense is this? Why, the bay itself is before us. Look here, Swayne, we must find a secure hiding place. If that is really Batten we're done. I don't suppose it can be Porton."

"Not yet. Porton hasn't had time to get here. Anyhow, that ship is a brig. Porton's is a bark. Let me be clear about one thing, Major. I understand you to say that Porton and Batten together buried their loot."

"They did. I saw them take spades and picks and some men. I saw them start for the hill above those two huts. After a while they came back and got the chests of loot and carried them away. They came back after that and got drunk together; then the next day Batten sailed but Porton stayed here. It was then that he insulted my daughter and your father was shot. Then Porton took two men and disappeared. I don't know where he went but I know he came back alone and the two men never reappeared."

"That seems clear as far as it goes. I'm sure now that Porton and Batten buried the loot. I'm also sure that Porton, just as soon as Batten was gone, removed that loot and hid it in some place where Batten couldn't find it. That's probably in the cave. Porton is robbing his own partner. It is also plain that if that brig is Batten's, if he lands here and finds you here and Porton's treasure removed, he'll argue that you took it. In the meantime I mean to fix him so he'll sail on no more murdering cruises."

"I don't see how you'll do that." Major Derwent was skeptical.

Tom opened the map and laid it on a rock. "Look here, sir. This map shows exactly how to navigate this bay. A man without this chart, ignorant of its secret, can not enter. Porton and Batten are the only two men who know the entrance. If that is Batten, he'll come in by the ranges shown on the chart. It says 'Keep white rock in line with ceiba tree till you sight the two huts. Then change the course so's to range the two huts one behind the other and so run in to the anchorage.' Note: 'If you fail to keep the two huts in line you'll pile up on the reef.' "

"Well—" It was evident that Major Derwent did not see.

"Well," said Tom, "by the grace of God, sir, I propose *to move that upper hut.* It's built of wattle an' daub an' it can be easily moved. All we need do is to tear down the upper hut and rebuild it in a new place. Don't you see what'll happen? Batten—if it is Batten—'ll run in on the soundin's he thinks he knows; he'll pile up on the reef."

"Hell, man," said Major Derwent. "That'll release all his men to come ashore."

"We'll be hiding," said Tom. "And at night I'll signal the *Scorpion* for aid. It's our only chance. Give me a hand with that hut."

It was no very difficult task. The flimsy hut did not weigh much; in an hour they had moved it to a new location ten yards east of the old site. When it was done Tom pulled a thread from a sock, stretched it from point to point on the chart and chuckled.

"See?" He pointed the thread to Major Derwent. "This string marks the line on which Batten will enter the bay. It crosses the reef. He'll find more than he looks for."

"That brig may not be Batten at all," said Major Derwent.

"Then he'll know nothing of the entrance at all. If he lays to off the bay we'll know it's not Batten. If it is Batten he'll wreck his brig."

"He's as bad as Porton," said the Major. "And as superstitious as they make 'em. I heard him, one night when he was drunk, boast that he is invulnerable to shot and steel. He said that an old Negro witch-woman in Jamaica told him that he need never fear steel or lead. The damned fool believes it, too."

"If I catch him I'll prove she's right," said Tom. "The rope'll get him. Where's Etion gone?"

"I think he went to the spring for some water," Ruth said. "It's over there at the foot of the slope. It was just a small spring but some of those pirates dug it out and sank a barrel there."

"Well—" Major Derwent rose—"I'll take Ruth over to the cave. It's probably the best hiding place. I think the man Batten does not know it exists. We must get as far from here as we can."

He strode off with Ruth as Etion came running along the path. His face was chalky white; his eyes had a strange film.

"Well, Etion," said Tom, "what's the trouble now?"

"None fo' us, Cap'n. I foun' de spring."

"Miss Ruth told me where it is. She says it's the only supply of water. We ought to get some and take it with us."

"No, suh. Don' drink 'at water," said Etion sharply. "No good. Better take coconuts w'en we hide. 'At water cursed."

"Cursed, hell," said Tom scornfully but Etion had him by both knees.

"Please, suh, somethin' tell *papaloi* to put camaisa bud in water. You know camaisa, Cap'n?"

"I'll be damned if I do. What is it?"

"Call him camaisa in Dahomey, Cap'n. One time Ashantee king gib him to all prisoners in war. Put him in drink. No taste, no smell. Just make men sleep. Good mebbe twenty-four hours, suh."

"Well what of it? This is not Dahomey."

"I know camaisa well. Find it in jungle," said Etion. "I put him in water. You not drink 'at water till I tell can do."

"All right." Tom turned his gaze seaward where the oncoming sail made a white splotch against the blue. "Look at her come. A man might think she's an honest man's craft. My God," he said excitedly, "look, will you."

His finger jabbed at the oncoming brig.

"She's been in action," he muttered. "Look at her. If she got the best of it, then God help the other!"

His thick eyes took in the long, rounded black sides that were slit and spotted with shot holes where the new wood showed obscenely. The jib-boom had been nipped off at its seat and the fore topmast was rigged with preventer stays. The foreyard had been fished; her running and standing rigging hung in wisps and Irish pennants that whipped and snapped in the wind so that Tom seemed to hear them. He grinned happily.

"Tried to measure strength with one of those Spaniards and bit off more than she could chew," he growled. "I hope they gave her hell. Look at her gunport line! Three ports 've been beaten into one. Carronades did that. Look at her pumps goin'. They'll like that. They must have pumped the whole Atlantic through her at that rate."

THE brig was in worse case than Tom could see. Port-fire Batten, a wise and daring seaman, had for once made a big mistake. With his crew of seventy-seven men he had coasted the Venezuelan coast, hoping to get word of the sailing of the Spanish treasure ships that were taking gold home to Godoy, the Prince of Peace, who needed it badly. As long as Godoy could pay the indemnity that Bonaparte demanded the French would keep out of Spain. No longer.

But for once the Spanish ship was commanded by a man. Batten had looked for the unwieldly *San Felipe* to fire one gun and then to strike on a promise of life and *'buena querra'*. Senor Don Carlos Montez had done no such thing. He had kept steadily to his course, heedless of the shotted gun fired across his bows—and when Batten luffed his brig to fire her broadside he was swept by such a storm of heavy shot that the brig's upper works were literally torn to pieces. Seventeen of the brig's crew were killed by that volley and the brig fell off before the wind in time to get the Spaniard's full lee broadside also. Taking it by-and-large, Port-fire Batten was glad to shake the Spaniard off and limp off under half canvas till he could get to a careening beach and repair ship.

Batten knew what Porton would say about his failure. Porton had a vitriolic tongue and the men liked Porton better than they liked Batten. Porton seemed never to fail. It was he who had thought up the plan to get letters of marque from the French. It was Porton who had demanded ransom for the recently taken prisoners. Heretofore the woman had been taken and the men impressed or killed.

He must head at once for El Cubil, wait there while he refitted for Porton. In the meantime, perhaps, he could line his pockets at Porton's expense. There was all the loot that they had left on El Cubil! That Zacatecas silver alone was worth a fortune. And there was the Portuguese gold and the Peruvian emeralds and rubies. He had days in which to think up plans, days of limping slowly across a summer sea with double tides at the pumps and the carpenter's gang at work twenty-four hours a day. A shout from the fore top made Batten stop in his short quarter deck walk.

"Land ho!" shouted the lookout. "El Cubil's dead ahead, sir."

Batten got out his chart. He did not need that chart at all; the gesture was purely perfunctory. He had made that port so often that he could have done it drunk or sober. All he had to do was to keep the white rock in line with the stunted ceiba tree until he opened the range on the two huts that he and Porton had built, then bear up on the huts. He motioned the helmsman to put his helm over a little, glanced at his canvas. Every sail was drawing well but that fore topmast would not stand another ounce. He would just run in to his anchorage, let his canvas hang in the bunts and get his men to work as soon as he could.

He gave the helmsman his instructions and ran down into the cabin for a drink. Batten was a connoisseur of liquors. No raw, red Jamaica rum for him! His choice was the delicate white Santa Cruz rum with a perfume like flowers and a strength like liquid fire. He poured himself a mug and glanced at the compass swinging in its gimbals overhead. All was right there! He glanced at his chart of the bay and chuckled grimly.

Porton would be surprised to find he had been to El Cubil. He would be still more astonished when he found his buried loot gone and the tall English girl missing.

It would take him several weeks to refit but Porton would be gone for at least two months. In the meantime, Batten figured, he would haul the brig out on a careening beach, go over her hull, shape new spars and then. . . . Where? He knew that after being robbed of girl and gold Porton would follow him to the outguards of hell. But there was one place where even Porton would not think of following him. The Pacific! The west coast of South America had been untouched by buccaneers since Swan's day. There were the Peruvian treasure ships to Panama! There was the great Manila ship that in all the history of Spain had only twice been taken by an enemy. It sounded alluring! And he would not be alone! He would take that English girl with him. If she was troublesome he could drop her in any one of a hundred ports where white women sold high. The only question was—could he hold his crew in line?

He poured another drink of the white rum. He would need powder, lead, iron, canvas, spars. But those could all be captured on the way south. Yes! It was a good plan! He—

A long, slow, grinding sound seemed to fill all space. The cabin table shook and trembled. The bottle fell to the deck, shattered, the white rum puddled on the floor. A dull heavy crush filled the air. Then a chorus of shrieks and yells and shouts broke out on deck where hell had broken loose in earnest. Another crash! Another yell! And the pattering of feet along the decks!

He sprang for the companion-way and in two leaps reached the deck. Chaos met his eyes. All forward was a total wreck. The jury rig that had been so laboriously built on the stump of the

foremast had gone by the board. The main yard was broken in the cap and its yardarms trailed by the braces. To make matters worse, a gun had fetched loose in the larboard main deck battery and shot back across the deck as the brig heeled. It caught a man against the starboard bulwarks, smashed him to a bloody pulp, then broke through the bulwark and plunged into the sea, as the bows of the brig rose slowly.

Batten stood paralyzed. For a brief second he could not realize what had happened. Then Yorke, his bo's'n, was screaming in his ear.

" 'E piled us up, Cap'n! 'E done it, the damned sojer!" And he pointed to the man at the helm, who, all composure gone, was running up his wheel like a squirrel in his cage as he strove to bring the brig under control. Batten could see the man's big jaw-muscles working furiously.

"You . . . . you." Batten leaped for him. "I gave you the course! I told you to bear up for the two huts and to keep 'em in line. I told you twice—"

"I—I sir, I—"

Batten shot him.

The man's body slumped over the barrel of the wheel. His dead hands still clung to the spokes as Batten's voice boomed out:

"Another hand lay aft to the wheel. Carpenter, sound the well at once. Cut that top-hamper clear. Let the foresail drop along side. Them spars'll pound a hole in her in a sea-way. Get a boat over quick."

He scrambled down into a boat and squattered along the riven hull to the bows, while the crew, lining the rail, helped him with profanity and witless obscenities. With Batten in a small boat where he could not identify them, all fear of the quarter deck was gone. In twenty minutes he was back on deck and the carpenter joined him.

"Six foot o' water in the hold, sir," he said. "She's as full o' holes as a fish basket. She took the reef head-on an' a big coral rock stuck right through her bottom an' raked aft along the garboard strake. The minute we kedge her off'n the reef, she'll go down in deep water."

"Fother her," suggested Batten desperately.

"Fother hell, sir . ." Oakes spat contemptuously. "You can't fother the Atlantic Ocean. She's done."

BATTEN shouted for the quartermaster and the gunner. He did not care about the seven men killed by the fall of the top-hamper. That whole mass had fallen on a group gambling on deck and had caught seven men. He studied the shoreline. He could not guess how this had happened. He had run that course a hundred times. He thought he knew those ranges as a man knows his own back yard; now he had made some fool mistake that had ruined him. He went back to the cabin and took a drink that he needed and went back on deck to find the men gathered in the waist. He knew that the moment they touched land all discipline would be gone. There was plenty of rum in the lockers. He must keep them sober as long as he could.

"Get the boats over."

Batten did not know his own voice. It sounded like a croak. There were but two boats left in the chocks. The Spaniard had taken care of the boats. They were lowered crazily for the men had broached open the rum locker before Spinney, the quartermaster, could find a man sober enough to guard it. Batten turned to immediate needs. He gave hurried orders to Bates, his second in command, a squat little Yorkshireman who had fled from the iron discipline of the British navy, where Jervis and Pellew tried without success to pound sense into his kind. Piracy suited him better. A little later the boat limped ashore and beached below the spring.

The moment Batten landed he headed

for the two huts on the hillside. He knew them well. He had twice overseen whitewashing them to make them more visible from the sea. It was under that upper hut that he and Porton had buried the bulky loot that they had stolen from a dozen tall ships. They had had to take both crews into their confidence about that loot but they were safe in that. No man of either of those crews could go back to civilization without fear of hanging. Their only hope of enjoying that plunder was to stay with Porton and himself. The delaying hands of the jungle took half his clothing; he was panting when he reached the lower hut.

All was as it should be!

He stood pondering. No matter how quick Port-fire Batten was at sea he was slow in acting on land. He shook his head and walked up the slope to the upper hut and stood astounded.

The hut had been moved! The present walls had been roughly thrown together and were ten yards from where he and Porton had built their landmark!

With a bull roar he dashed for the old site and stood over it. He noted dully that the earth inside the old site had been turned up and dug loose, that there was a yawning hole some three feet wide and five long by about two feet deep. That was where he and Porton had cached their stolen loot! As in a daze he ran back to the new upper hut, stepped aside, lined himself over the top of the lower hut and glanced down into the Bay. There was no question about it: the new line lay squarely over the wreck of the brig. *Some one had moved the hut!*

His breath came short and hard. The world seemed to dance before his eyes. Any doctor could have told Batten that he was very close to collapse. He pulled a bottle from his shirt, took a long drink.

"It was one o' two men," he muttered. "It was either that damned lobster-back or else Porton came back here and dug it up after I had left on my cruise. I'll have that major's life fer this."

As he rejoined his men one glance at him told his crew to tread warily. They had seen him shoot one man that day and he was sober then. He was half drunk now and worse than dangerous. No man spoke as they pulled back to the wrecked brig. The moment Batten touched the deck he summoned Thane and Cullen, men he could trust.

"Take a boat," he said, "an' run down that damned red coat. Bring him to me

or else show me where his body's lyin'. He changed that hut an' wrecked the brig. Get him dead er alive."

He dared not tell the men that the loot was gone. Cullen spoke:

"Better set the crew ashore," he said. "Tell 'em the man who finds the Britisher gits a gallon o' rum. They'll charge hell for a drink right now."

When the news spread a score of men were scrambling for the boats. Thane, standing by Batten at the rail, watched them go.

"I feel kind o' sorry fer that major," he said. "He ain't got nothin' but a hatchet. Where you goin', Cap'n?" he asked of Batten as he hurried to his own boat.

"I'm goin' ashore too. I want to be there when they git that scum. I don't aim to have that girl of his fall into no hands but mine."

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

Wise Little Man of the Night

DISTRIBUTED throughout most of the wooded sections of North America, from Southern Canada to Panama, this little fellow is a very clever and intelligent creature that has a wide appeal for its busy and cunning ways as a pet. It is a valuable fur bearer and is trapped in huge numbers to provide the girls and college boys with coonskin coats.

As a game animal it provides one of the best sports of the field when hunted at night with hounds. 'Coons are nocturnal to a great extent, living in hollow trees during the days, but wandering widely at night on the ground where the dogs pick up the trails and try to drive them to the trees. This is fatal for the 'coon for at the baying of "treed" the hunters come up and either cut down the tree or climb it and shake out Mr. 'Coon to the dogs. The wise 'coon stays on the ground and runs it out with the dogs, resorting to unbelievably clever tricks to throw them off.

The raccoon had a high place in the lore of the settlers of our country. 'Coonskin caps were popular wear, tails attached, and 'coonskins were staples of value in barter.

Raccoons have a shuffling walk, putting the whole soles of all fours to the ground but rising to the toes at the end of each step. They can run very fast when the need comes and have great endurance.

The one in the drawing has caught a ringneck pheasant.

Lynn Bogue Hunt

THE BITE OF MR. BROWNE

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

IT WAS in the private bar of the *Wave* in Fowey, Cornwall, that Mr. Browne tried out the advice of Captain Guthrie of the cargo ship *Rowena*. The advice seemed to work even though neither the landlord nor the barmaid approved.

"Look at me, Brownie," said Captain Guthrie. "Look at me." Lest there be some mistake he indicated his six-foot, beamy person with a blunt, brown finger. "What am I? I'm master—and master of one o' the best in the fleet, too.

"And now look at you." The finger pointed accusingly at Mr. Browne's short, spare, even scrawny body. "What are you? You're older than me in years and seniority but you're a mate—and mate o' the oldest hulk we've got. Why is that?"

The finger switched back to its owner again.

"Because I look after Brant Guthrie, my lad. I wasn't content to slave forever for a lazy old walrus who had forgotten what the weather side of his own bridge looked like. I showed him up, like a smart young officer can show up his commander when he's gone to seed. Cap'n Teagle, the marine super, is no fool."

The third member of the party, Mr. Clode, Captain Guthrie's mate, hit the bar a whack that jarred the brandy glasses.

"I'll say he showed up that old leftover!" he roared admiringly. "I was second in her at the time. With never a word of complaint the cap'n here let the super see in twenty ways that the doddering old wart was past his work."

Again Mr. Clode raised his hand. He was a squat, square man, Mr. Clode, and there was weight behind his arm as he brought it smashing down on Mr. Browne's back. Under that blow Mr. Browne gave at the knees, quivered and rose again, like a ship shaking green water off her forecastle head.

"That's what you ought to do, Brownie!" Captain Guthrie's mate bellowed. "Show up old Dummox Dunlap! Take the *Rebecca* away from him! Haw!"

He winked at his convivial commander, who was no stickler for discipline ashore.

"Can you imagine him doing it, sir? Haw! Brownie the tough nut—Cap'n Brownie, the grabbing hellion of the seas. Haw!"

Despite his expressed desire to advance Mr. Browne's interests, Captain Guthrie, staring at the thin, very red-faced little mate, echoed his mate's guffaw.

"It's eat to be eaten, Brownie!" he shouted, returning his mate's wink, and suddenly laid his own broad palm between Mr. Browne's prominent shoulder blades with a heartiness that flung the smaller man against the bar. "Bite or be bitten!"

Mr. Browne controlled himself while Mr. Clode laughed in his brandy glass.

"I guess there's something in it," the little mate admitted sadly. "Without praising myself I may say I've done my work in my twelve years with this line."

He nodded his head.

"I haven't made much noise about it. But I've stood by my ship and backed my superiors to the limit but—"

He shook his head.

"Now start backing yourself and to hell with your superiors!" Captain Guthrie shouted. "That's treason, I know, but I'm for you, Brownie, and I'm among friends." He scowled suddenly at his own mate. "Jack Clode here knows enough about me not to try anything. Back yourself! I say that to both of you!"

"Old Dunlap's a good sort, but he's loaded a lot of work and responsibility on my shoulders in the last three years," Mr. Browne said reflectively. "In an emergency I've had to take the lead on my own and face the music for exceeding my authority if I guessed wrong. It isn't quite fair."

"You're right, skipper!" bawled Mr. Clode thunderously. "Damn it, you're right! Back yourself! Bite or be bitten! Brownie, if you want to wear four stripes on your sleeve you've got to back—"

Grinning, he raised that thick, powerful hand and started a truly tremendous blow at Mr. Browne's back by way of emphasizing the word.

But this time Mr. Browne moved lithely aside. And as Mr. Clode pivoted under the momentum of his swing Mr. Browne pivoted, too. Briskly he dotted Mr. Clode on the jaw with a small fist full of both granite and dynamite.

The squat mate fell back against the bar. Only the clutch of his surprised commander saved him from slumping to the floor. He hung there, one elbow hooked over the bar, not out but extremely sleepy and quiescent.

The barmaid screamed genteelly and the landlord said: "'Ere! Gentlemen! Gentlemen!"

Mr. Browne stood still, too, staring at his fist in shocked disapproval.

Captain Guthrie, having had three brandies in a row, saw the humor of it.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" he bellowed. "Back yourself, Brownie! That's it! A tap or two won't hurt Jack Clode—he's too cocky by half! Slap or be slapped!"

"You're right, captain," said Mr. Browne soberly. "Dead right! Slap or be slapped!"

He laid a couple of half crowns on the bar and, without another look at the paralyzed Mr. Clode, walked out on Fore Street. Shaking his head, he drew in deep breaths of the mild, misty Cor-

nish air and strode on upstream toward the railway lines that defiled along the jetties of the Fowey River.

"Thomas Browne a barroom brawler!" Mr. Browne muttered in rueful astonishment. "But it wasn't the brandy; I had only two. Bite or be bitten! They're right!"

. Soon he was swinging over the whitened ties and past the jetties, where black ships swept on the swift tideway. The timbers of piers, too, were ghostly white with a coating of China clay. It was that fine clay, dug out of the hills of Cornwall, which had brought two ships of the Bartlett-Pendower Line across the Atlantic into this tiny seaport of England at one time.

Mr. Browne stopped to glance respectfully toward the splendid, five-thousand-ton bulk of Captain Guthrie's *Rowena*. Her hatches would be on, for she was off for New York on the morning tide.

"Guthrie's right!" he declared. "I ought to show up old Dommox! I've carried him long enough!"

He plodded on until he reached his own ship, a couple of jetties beyond. The *Rebecca's* bulk was not so impressive as the *Rowena's*. Even in the dark of the misty night she was an old ship and a tired one.

Once aboard Mr. Browne sniffed the air as if it had acquired new significance. He took a turn on her iron decks to look over her mooring lines with the man on anchor watch stumbling sleepily after him. The river ran swiftly by this narrow reach when the tide was surging up or down the English Channel. But the lines were doing the job.

For an instant Mr. Browne paused on the well deck and looked up at the bridgehouse. A light showed out of a porthole on the starboard side of the saloon deck—the captain's sitting room.

"I've been doing old Dunlap's work as well as my own for years," he muttered rebelliously. "They're right—those two. Lie down and you'll be walked on—that's what it amounts to."

The door leading out of the saloon opened slowly and gaunt old Dummox Dunlap came out in his long dressing-gown. He stood with his hand on the knob, looking around in vague uncertainty.

Mr. Browne, as if touched off by a button, bounded up the ladder to his commander.

"Better keep inside, skipper," he said imperatively, shepherding the old man back into the house. "It's a raw night. I've an idea a sou'wester'll be piping up outside by morning."

Captain Dunlap muttered something. He seemed more feeble than usual.

"Had your pills yet, sir?" the little mate asked, frowning anxiously at him. "Time for 'em—and time to turn in, too, sir."

It was then that Mr. Browne noticed that the old shipmaster had a cable form clutched in his withered hand.

RIGHT off the heads, where the Fowey River debouches through the break in the massive cliffs of Cornwall into the English Channel, the staunch *Rowena* took it on the nose. An instant before the first big gray Channel sea hit her, the pilot, without cracking a smile, had wished Captain Guthrie a pleasant voyage Then he had slipped overside into his motorboat and chugged rapidly back toward shelter. Even had the pilot waited for the broad-shouldered master's response he would have gotten none.

Captain Guthrie was ruffled in mind and body. His disturbance was increased by that tumultuous sou'wester which, with mist and rain, blotted out the sea to windward. It is bad enough to face boisterous January North Atlantic weather without having it come howling into the English Channel after you.

In place of the squat and solid form of Mr. Clode to leeward of him on the bridge, stood Mr. Thomas Browne. The new mate's spare body cut the wind that

whipped in at him over the weather cloth instead of breaking it up, as the sturdy frame of Mr. Clode had done.

Cables from owners play strange and unappreciated pranks with shipmasters in foreign ports. Captain Guthrie was suspicious of the latest one from New York. He had bitten Mr. Browne's ear off as soon as the little man had hurried aboard with his duffle. Now Guthrie looked hard at Mr. Browne for the tenth time and growled in his throat.

The mate was looking quite as hard into the flying spume and opaque gray mist ahead. His lean, intent face gave no indication to the outside world that scant hours before he had been absorbing strong brandy and stronger advice in a pub with his present commander. His concentration on his duty seemed overdone to the shipmaster. There was something of a rebuke about it, as if already, with their port of departure almost in sight astern, he was worried about the master's handling of the ship.

Under the skipper's choleric and slightly blodshot eye Mr. Browne entered the wheelhouse and examined the steering compass in front of the alert quartermaster at the wheel. The man was squarely on his course and the course, in Captain Guthrie's own handwriting, was on the scrap log. Mr. Browne returned hastily to the bridge, took a long look into the thick of it ahead, and approached Captain Guthrie.

The master waited, without betraying by so much as a blink of an eyelid that he knew his mate was beside him.

"Sir, the course—" Mr. Browne began uneasily.

Captain Guthrie let him have it.

"The course will put us on the Manacles," he said with scarifying sarcasm. "That is what you want to tell me, isn't it, Mr. Browne? Even I have heard of the Manacles—a bad nest o' rocks off the Lizard Peninsula, aren't they, Mr. Browne? Is that what you're worried about, Mr. Browne?"

The mate gulped under this barrage of Brownes. The agitated movement of his Adam's apple in his thin throat caught the sardonic eye of his young commander.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Browne.

"Extraordinary that a mere shipmaster should be so bright as to guess the cause of your anxiety," Captain Guthrie remarked savagely. "Well, Mr. Browne, since for some unknown reason you have been made my first officer I'm afraid I must teach you something. Can you figure out on which side this stiff westerly is hitting us?"

Mr. Browne's tanned face darkened a trifle at the captain's tone.

"The wind's on our starboard bow, sir," he replied steadily.

"An excellent guess—or do I misjudge your intelligence?" Guthrie murmured. "Perhaps you worked it out. And now, Mr. Browne, if you'll look forward and aft you'll perceive that, owing to the precipitance of our owners, we're a bit by the stern. What I mean, Mr. Browne, is that our cargo of china clay is trimmed somewhat unevenly—more weight in the after holds than for'rd. Do I make myself clear?"

"I realize that her bow is high and that we're making leeway, sir," the little mate began again. "But—"

"Right!" snapped Captain Guthrie. "We're making leeway! Therefore, Mr. Browne—they told me this at nautical school but it seems to have escaped your attention—we steam on a compass course that we are not making good."

He thrust his head violently at Mr. Browne.

"This ship makes time and saves coal, Mr. Browne. We don't head out into the middle of the English Channel and then turn sharp right where the traffic cop should be. We'll clear the Manacles and the Lizard Peninsula by a good margin. Your life is safe in my hands, Mister Mate."

Guthrie withdrew his head, swung

around and took two steps away from the mate. Then, just as swiftly, he turned back and confronted Mr. Browne again.

"You seem to have acquired a drag with the marine super, Mr. Browne," he said harshly. "Poor Clode is hauled off his ship without warning and slung into that rusty old wagon to take your place. And you step aboard the *Rowena* and start teaching me pilotage, by God!"

Guthrie smacked his clenched fist into his open left hand with a sound like cracking wood. Mr. Browne, staring ahead, winked involuntarily.

"Well, get this, Mr. Browne! My advice of last night is canceled, see? You try any more of your pussyfooting efforts to show me up on my own bridge and, by God, you'll finish the voyage flat on your back in your bunk. And your face will look like a kid of fo'c's'le hash! You've picked the wrong master to work on. Do you get it?"

Mr. Browne didn't reply to that question, but nevertheless he spoke most unhappily, but with a dogged disregard of the ordinary limitations of a watch officer:

"This is the top of the spring tides, sir, and the tidal current—"

Mr. Browne bit off his words as his eyes started out of his head. He leaped six feet toward the engine-room telegraph without seeming to touch the deck. Even as he ripped back the telegraph handle and rasped, "Hard aport!" at the helmsman, a hoarse bellow and a clang of the bell on the foredeck came up to them.

"Breakers ahead! Rocks! Dead ahead!"

Captain Guthrie shoved the lean little mate away from the telegraph with a straight arm thrust that sent him staggering into the wing of the bridge. Vaguely through the spume a jagged, foam-crowned ledge of the terrible Manacles revealed itself to the shipmaster.

"Stay there!" he snarled at the mate and his own hand gripped the brass handle. But already the *Rowena* was shuddering like a creature in pain of death, with her screw surging astern.

It was a close thing.

Ten minutes later she was on her course again, but it was a different course. Mr. Browne, still in the wing, was looking rigidly forward while Captain Guthrie, as angry as only a man in the wrong can be, raged to and fro on the bridge.

Twice the angry captain approached the stiff little mate. On the second occasion the appearance of the radio operator, John Trent, a young man with flaring ears and a pointed nose, deflected him.

Upon the luckless Sparks Captain Guthrie trained his flaming eyes.

"Have you a message for me, sir?" he rasped.

Mr. Trent shook his head. "No, skipper, I just came up for a look around," he said, backing toward the bridge ladder. "That was a narrow squeeze, hey, skipper? I—"

"Get off my bridge!" the shipmaster roared. "Get off and stay off! Off, I said!"

Startled, the radio man retreated. The master, hanging over the rail, drove him with his angry eyes back to the shack abaft the fiddley.

PAST Land's End and the Scillies the *Rowena* took the southwester on the nose. And as her engine hammered on the wintery winds of the North Atlantic came shrilling at her, fighting her progress and raising to aid their futile violence great gray combers that made the Channel chop seem like ripples.

The thumping of the engine grew erratic under the crashing blows of huge seas breaking on the foredeck. White, broken water and often solid green water came racing aft and went roaring out over the sides of the ship. She reeled, shuddered and rose. And in between whiles she contrived to add a little westing to her position. Unceasingly the hard

westerlies came charging at her, sea after sea. From Latitude 49 degrees, 50 minutes North, Longitude 6 degrees, 27 minutes East, just off the Scillies, to Latitude 43 degrees, North, Longitude 50 degrees East, where the hundred-fathom curve of the Newfoundland Grand Banks projects into the deeper water of the Atlantic, is a long slog of 1698 miles on the chart. And it is something more than that over the bottom with a weary and bruised man at the wheel.

The gales never gave her a let-up as she butted and pounded her way toward Fifty East. Captain Guthrie, intent upon making a rapid winter passage, never gave her a let-up either. He pressed her to the limit and her men had all the comforts of a half-tide rock but none of its steadiness.

Nothing let up on that voyage. Mr. Browne found it a strain to walk, a strain to stand, a strain even to sit or lie in that pitching, shuddering rolling boat. Sometimes a sea stopped her dead in her lunging course, with a terrible jolt for her engine, frame, gear and men. At other times men braced themselves as the ship soared up on the shoulders of some great comber for a shock that never came.

"Bloody 'ell!" said the limey steward.

Watch after watch, day after day, the ship lurched on. It became harder and harder to eat or sleep, to wash or smoke, to make a movement or to keep still. Being itself became laborious and work became toil unendurable. It was as difficult for a bruised mind to think as for a bruised, jolting body to work. And it kept up, with no break. The wind snarled on and on in the standing rigging; sometimes rising to shrill climaxes in which it cut the tops off the cresting seas and sent the white water pelting through the air like buckshot.

Danger would have lightened the strain, but the *Rowena* was a stout ship and danger was in the background. The boarding seas smashed a boat, bent the steel plates of a bulwark, raised some Cain with various gear on the foredeck and kept the watch standing by on the lower bridge. But at no time was the ship herself visibly threatened. Her hull took the pounding, her engine throbbed along and the steam steering gear swung the rudder.

The cold and the wet were the least of it but these twin agonies were not such as any man would stick ashore save in an emergency. And this was no emergency; this was a voyage, North Atlantic winter style. Mr. Browne had had plenty like it.

Embittered more and more by each day's poor run, suspicious young Guthrie rode his chief mate hard. Unremittingly he watched Mr. Browne, and quite as unceasingly he corrected his acts and castigated him for his omissions. In Captain Guthrie there was none of that traditional aloofness of the commander which was reflected in brief, polite and rare conversation with his officers. By that old custom the officers, too, attained dignity.

Brant Guthrie put the verbal boots to his mate with all the energy of a boss stevedore driving a roustabout. Mr. Henderson and Mr. Jones, the second and third officers, were appalled, likewise highly apprehensive that their commander's ire might turn in their direction. Privately, too, they decided that Mr. Browne must have almost piled her up on the Manacles to have so aroused the skipper.

"Why else should he jump the poor little devil like that?" Mr. Henderson inquired of Mr. Jones, in the privacy of his stateroom. Mr. Jones, grabbing the side-board of Mr. Henderson's bunk as the *Rowena* took one on the starboard bow, agreed. "The skipper's no man to ask for unpopularity with his mate without a good reason."

"Without a blasted good reason," Mr. Henderson stated emphatically. "Guthrie's always been a bit too much one of the boys to suit me."

Mr. Browne protected his own dignity

with a sort of bleak philosophical acceptance of the situation that actually gave but little protection for his thin skin. With every countermanded order of his own and every direct order from the captain to quartermaster, boatswain, lookout or man of the watch he became a trifle more rigid in his bearing, a trifle more withdrawn from other officers, a trifle more precise in his speech with the men.

Captain Guthrie turned out on the bridge as promptly as the mate for the four to eight morning watch and for the dog watches. The inference that he feared to trust his chief officer was plain. Neither as a watch officer nor as the manager of the deck department did the mate function save under the lowering regard and quick correction of Captain Guthrie.

"You'll learn, Mr. Browne; by God, you'll learn!" Captain Guthrie assured him in the privacy afforded by the flogging weather cloth and the pelting spray. "Maybe one of these days you'll be as good as your friend the marine super thinks you are."

"Yes, sir," responded Mr. Browne curtly.

"Reputations that have been built up year after year under slack skippers go to hell in one voyage under a real master!" Captain Guthrie flung at him. "And you'll learn that, too, Mr. Browne!"

The mate, staring ahead at the next huge, tumbling sea as was his duty and privilege, did not reply but his eyes were troubled. He had long ago divined Captain Guthrie's intention to undercut his name in the line. But there was nothing to do about it.

The old *Rebecca,* where he had had a master's responsibility on his shoulders without a captain's four stripes on his sleeve, seemed strangely idyllic now.

The everlasting gale grew colder as the *Rowena* dragged on across the rough salt trail.

And then, within the short space of a single watch the wind puffed out. From Force Ten it dropped to a calm.

Mr. Browne came up onto the bridge during the third mate's night watch for a look around at the ship and the sea.

The *Rowena* was contending against a swell mountain high. The seas ran under her with as smooth regularity as if the ship herself were swaying on a pivot. She would mount slowly, pause on the crest and then drop swiftly into the hollow.

The air had suddenly become almost balmy. Before three bells in the night watch struck they were running into patches of fog. At four bells Mr. Jones sent down word to the master and started the siren going.

Captain Guthrie came up the starboard ladder with his hand on his jaw. He glowered at Mr. Browne and the fog impartially and motioned the mate away from the engine-room telegraph.

"Keep her moving, Mr. Jones," he said. "We've some time to make up."

Watch after watch the fog hung on. A southerly zephyr fanned over the dying seas as the *Rowena* ground away at the nine hundred miles separating the Grand Banks from Nantucket lightship. The temperature ran up to fifty.

Captain Guthrie clung to the bridge, cursed the cottony vapor, and kept the *Rowena* thrusting through it at all he could get out of her engines. And he kept his hand on his jaw.

Under that protecting hand, as the ship's crew came to know, a tooth was raising fiery hell in the shipmaster's head. His temper frayed out more and more under the lash of pain and lack of sleep. Mr. Browne caught it hard and often. So, too, for the first time did the other mates and the steward.

"Try holding a mouthful of whisky, sir," Mr. Henderson suggested diffidently on the second day of unending fog. "I've heard it deadens the pain."

"You stick to your dead reckoning, mister, and I'll look after my teeth," Guthrie snapped at the second mate.

It was close to noon, with no possibility of a shot at the sun. The lack of a sight did nothing to improve Guthrie's disposition. After jerking up his head to glare at the thick vapor over them he flung himself toward the bridge ladder.

At the top the elbow of the arm protecting his swollen jaw came into violent contact with the head of Trent, the radio man, who was coming up. The skipper gave vent to a roar of pain.

"I've told you before not to hang around the bridge!" he shouted, and drove his fist hard at the pointed nose of the radio operator.

Mr. Trent, taken unawares, went over backward. He bounced down the steep incline of the ladder and only half saved himself from a stunning impact with the deck by a last-minute clutch at the rails.

He got up with his nose gushing blood and a lump rising on the back of his head.

In soundless fury he glowered up at the startled shipmaster and then, without a word, limped aft.

"The nosy fool!" Guthrie growled, with a doubtful eye on his expressionless second officer. "I didn't mean to hit him, but that knock he gave me sent it shooting up—"

He ran his finger upward from his harassed tooth toward his brain.

"Like a hot needle," he added. "I think I'll try that whisky on it."

"I hope it helps, sir," said Mr. Henderson diplomatically.

THE *Rowena*, with her siren crashing, surged on through the fog while Captain Guthrie strode the bridge with a cheekful of whisky. Mr. Browne attended to the ship's work, without so much correction from his superior. Occasionally Captain Guthrie would turn his red-rimmed eyes aft and look thoughtfully, and even uneasily, back at the radio shack It is not considered proper these days in the merchant service for a captain to slug one of his ship's officers.

The steward reported to Captain Guthrie in the chartroom that Mr. Trent had discarded his earphones and taken to his bunk.

" 'E ain't 'urt, sir, 'e's just 'ot," he reported.

The captain nodded, not much relieved by this diagnosis. He poured out two fingers of whisky and with sudden impulse drove the cork hard into the bottle.

"Here, steward, take him this—with my—my compliments," he commanded. "Tell him a sip or two will fix him up."

"Yes, sir," said the steward, taking up the bottle and examining the label respectfully.

The captain's eye remained fixed upon the man during his short walk aft to the radio shack. Then once more he turned to the job of placing the ship's position accurately by dead reckoning. The voyage was drawing to a close.

The fog gave them no let-up during that day, nor did a single star break through during the night that followed to give them a fix. The *Rowena* churned through the lazy, dying swell toward the coast. Captain Guthrie thoughtfully refrained from having the damaged Mr. Trent roused during the night to get radio bearings. The morning would do, according to the dead reckoning position of the ship. The *Rowena* carried no radio compass, but bearings radioed from Surfside, North Truro and Amangansett would give her her position with sure accuracy.

Next morning at four when Mr. Browne came up on the black bridge to relieve Mr. Henderson he found the captain fast asleep on the settee in the chartroom under a couple of blankets. The relief of wheel and lookout did not awaken him and Mr. Browne, for a change, took over without his glowering supervision.

The *Rowena* was still plowing ahead through unending banks of mist, over a sea that was almost flat. Only a long,

slight swell disturbed the surface. The breeze from the south had died out entirely. The mournful bellow of the ship's siren was unheard, unanswered, in that strange, opaque gray world in which they had dwelt for three days.

The night orders were to keep her moving along at the same course and speed. Mr. Browne started the boatswain and men on the day's work. The noise the gang made roused Captain Guthrie about six o'clock. Sandy-eyed, he stumbled wearily out onto the bridge.

The whisky treatment or time was relieving the pain in the skipper's tooth and the swelling was going down. But his eye was no less choleric. Mr. Browne's suggestion of a sounding was promptly vetoed.

"We'll take soundings when we're near enough to get bottom, Mr. Browne," he said. "We've had delay and inefficiency enough on this voyage."

Nevertheless the master sent the steward to arouse Mr. Trent with a polite request for bearings from the shore stations. Rolling his gulp of whisky in his mouth, Guthrie waited in the starboard wing of the bridge.

Hanks came back within a few minutes, shaking his head.

"I cawn't wake 'im, sir," he reported to the captain. "In a—stupor, 'e is, sir, and the whisky's all gone—every drop, sir."

Captain Guthrie expelled his own mouthful over the side.

"I'll see to that young man myself," he said grimly, and clattered down the bridge ladder.

Mr. Browne, left to do a heel and toe on the bridge, stopped a moment to listen intently. Somewhere in this pea soup was moored the Nantucket light vessel, with her fog signal going as well as her submarine oscillator and her radio beacon. He caught no sound and moved to stare hard over the side. The unseen sun was still below the hidden horizon but day was whitening the fog. Mr. Browne thought he could make out in the dark water a lightening tinge of green. And it wasn't quite the shade of honest deep sea water that he had expected. There was more light green than belonged there if the ship were still off soundings. He looked over the side twice in the next ten minutes, frowning judiciously.

"This fog will lift before noon," he told himself, staring skyward. "Probably sooner. And when it does we'll catch something."

Captain Guthrie was still aft in the radio shack, seeing to Mr. Trent.

"We need a bearing," Mr. Browne murmured with conviction. He prowled into the wheelhouse and looked at the course; then moved back to the charthouse to take a glance at Chart 51.

There was Nantucket Shoals light vessel on the chart about 43 miles south of the island, with a formidable mess of trouble between it and the land. Looking at those shoals Mr. Browne muttered a hope that Captain Guthrie and the second mate, his navigating officer, had not slipped up too much in their dead reckoning. The *Rowena* had made good time through the smooth water.

He glanced at the "Coast Pilot" although he knew the language almost word for word:

> Nantucket Shoals is the general name of the numerous different broken shoals which lies southeastward of Nantucket Island and make this one of the most dangerous parts of the coast of the United States for the navigator. These shoals extend twenty-three miles eastward and thirty-nine miles southeastward from Nantucket Island, are shifting in their nature, and the depths vary from three and four feet on some to four and five fathoms on others, while slues with depths of ten fathoms or more lead between those farthest offshore. . . . Tidal currents—strong and variable . . . forming extensive rips and broken water over the shoals.

The radio transmitter back in the shack now occupied by the master and Mr. Trent was still silent. Guthrie seemed to be having his difficulties in rousing the radio operator.

"A couple of bearings would help," Mr. Browne muttered, walking back to the bridge. "And the sooner the better."

The helmsman, catching his glance, rolled his eyes hastily back to the compass.

Mr. Browne moved to the side and looked again, more distrustfully than ever, at the water. Certainly it was a lighter green than he wanted to see.

Suddenly he lifted his eyes to stare intently at the sea a distance of twenty feet off the starboard bow. Upon the surface, no longer quite flatly placid, the strengthening light showed him the dying remnants of a burst of foam, such as a cresting sea might leave. He saw a line of fading whiteness vanishing under the fog.

Mr. Browne rang down the engine and sent a man of the watch for the captain. But Guthrie, having heard the bell, was already emerging from the radio house. Red-faced, he came forward at a trot.

"Looks like a tide rip, sir," Mr. Browne said. "And by the look of it this water's shoaling fast."

Captain Guthrie stopped flat-footed, staring over the side with his red-rimmed eyes half shut in an intent squint. Then he darted a withering glance at the mate and walked to the telegraph. He yanked it to full speed ahead before the engine-room had answered the stop engine order.

"Getting nervous, Mr. Browne?" he inquired softly. "A ship's bridge is no place for a man troubled with the jitters. Or perhaps you think we're making too good a passage? You keep your lily fingers off this telegraph handle no matter how many school o' fish you see. Understand?"

The scrawny little mate bit his lips.

Captain Guthrie swung around and with a stentorian voice hailed Hanks.

"Bring a bucket of water aft to the radio room, steward," he commanded. "Sea water, steward!"

He rounded upon the motionless mate.

"I'll have a couple of radio bearings for you before you get hysterical, Mr. Browne," he said. "Trent's going to come to on a hurry. Try to last out."

He disappeared into the chartroom for a mouthful of whisky and then hurried aft. Hanks, with his bucket slopping over, hurried after him.

Mr. Browne walked to the starboard wing again and looked over the side. The third engineer, who had heard the jingle, stuck his head out of his stateroom and stared inquisitively up at the bridge.

Steadily Mr. Browne searched the face of the sea. He looked until he saw unmistakably the signs of a current, a strong current such as would show in a slue amidst shoal water. Then, with compressed lips, he strode over to the engine-room telegraph once more. This might be the last official act of his career. He pulled the handle up to "Stop"; then to half speed astern. This time the engineer on watch responded in a hurry.

Captain Guthrie came out of the radio shack like something out of a gun. He bounded forward to the bridge ladder and climbed it two steps at a time.

"Didn't I tell you to keep your hands off that telegraph?" he roared. "Go to your room, sir! You're relieved!"

With a wrench he put the handle ahead again.

"Strong current running and a heavy tide rip, sir," Mr. Browne said. "I judge we are well in on the shoals."

"You judge we—"

Guthrie's storming voice died in his throat.

Something had grated softly under the keel of the *Rowena*. The ship lurched a bit to port and her bow came up. Then she lost her way abruptly. Men jerked forward, clawing about them for support.

Captain Guthrie pulled himself away from the bridge rail and stared glassily down into the unwavering eyes of his mate. Grounded! Fast on the outer shoals of Nantucket in January!

Slowly the master of the *Rowena* licked his lips. Shocked though he was,

he was not too numbed of brain to realize what this disaster meant to him. And he stared on, as if trying to read his fate in Mr. Browne's unfathomable eyes.

WITH the prospects of a gale coming howling down upon them in the wake of that unseasonable calm, Mr. Browne worked hard.

While Guthrie, busy fiddling desperately with reversed engine, gave him only vague directions. The shipmaster's efforts had their mainspring in desire, which is a poor substitute for mechanics. Despite the thrash of her screw the *Rowena* stayed where she was.

After a quick glance at tide and current tables Mr. Browne put off in a lifeboat and astern of the ship took his soundings. Then he laid out in the direction of deep water the kedge anchor with a new three-inch Manila line attached to it.

While the captain argued with the exasperated chief engineer over the advisability of more efforts with the engine, Mr. Browne spoke briefly to the second and third mates. Then, with a picked gang, he lashed two lifeboats together, with a strong spar athwart them amidships and resting upon both gunwales of each boat. From this stout timber he suspended between the boats the *Rowena's* starboard bower, a heavy brute of an anchor that put the boats deep in the water. The longest and strongest wire hawser on board was coiled down across the boats.

As he left the ship to swing down into the stern of one of the lifeboats Mr. Browne heard the sound of the *Rowena's* radio going. That meant that Mr. Trent had recovered. Did it also mean that Captain Guthrie had asked for assistance? Even if the *Rowena* got radio bearings that placed her fairly accurately it would be a difficult and dangerous job for a salvage vessel or tug to find her on the shoals in this fog.

Mr. Browne speeded up his men. They knew what they were doing and they knew that Mr. Browne knew, too. That was a good combination. By means of the three-inch Manila attached to the kedge they hauled the lashed boats astern of the *Rowena*, paying out the wire hawser behind them as they went. Close inside the kedge Mr. Browne cut the slip rope and the bower anchor suspended on the spar plunged into the sea.

It was while they were hauling the anchor along between the boats that the fog thinned under the cold breath of an air from the northwest. Before it hit bottom the mist was gone. The wind picked up. Little ripples not due to the tidal rips hissed along on the surface.

Coming back to the ship the mate secured a heavy tackle to the wire hawser to increase the strain of which the windlass was capable.

Captain Guthrie, on the bridge, was staring into the cloudless and coldly blue northwest. Mr. Trent was still busy at his key in the radio shack.

Wearily Mr. Browne looked at his watch. It was within an hour of high water.

"There won't be much more rise of tide and the set of the current favors us, sir," he reported to the apprehensive master.

Captain Guthrie looked from the windlass to the wire hawser vanishing under the sea. On those his ship, his job and perhaps his ticket depended. He had no doubt what would be coming out of the northwest.

"Get going, Mr. Browne," he said gruffly.

Mr. Browne shouted his orders. Steam hissed and the windlass clattered. The line of the tackle came in fast; then more slowly as the slack was taken up on hawser and tackle.

The ship under them remained as rigid as a rock.

Captain Guthrie's weathered face was pallid under the brown.

"The anchor's coming home; she doesn't move," he muttered.

Mr. Browne did not reply. He had his doubts of the holding ground but he had done his best in the time he had.

The ship shuddered.

It was not the tremor imparted to her plates by the straining windlass. It was something else.

"Coming, sir," Mr. Browne reported crisply. The men are yelling; Mr. Jones was dancing on the after deck.

The *Rowena* came off. It was a matter of slow, grudging undramatic inches, with the purchase of the tackle overhauled again and again by sweating and profane men. Mr. Browne rigidly refrained from permitting hope to substitute for mechanics. It was slow drudgery but drudgery without a slip-up.

The rising wind and the waves that slapped ungently against her stern told the more knowing of the ship's company that the stranding of the *Rowena* might easily have been much more exciting. Only, if they had missed the top of that tide, they might never have recounted the yarn.

CAPTAIN TEAGLE, the marine super, boarded her at Quarantine. A precise little man with white hair and a pointed, strangely dark beard, he came up the ladder spryly as a young rooster. In the starboard alleyway he paused a minute to shake hands and wag tongues briefly with the chief engineer.

During the run up the bay he stood in the wing of the bridge while Captain Guthrie and the pilot brought her up. Mr. Browne was down at his post on the forecastle head.

When she was warped into her Brooklyn pier and made fast Captain Teagle beckoned Mr Browne into the saloon.

"Had a cable from our agents in Fowey about your old ship, Mr. Browne," he said in his high, brisk voice. "They reported Captain Dunlap somewhat—ah—unwell. Mr. Clode, the new mate, seemed reluctant to sail with him. Was old Captain Dunlap ill during your last voyage with him?"

"No, sir," replied Mr. Browne.

"H'm," remarked Captain Teagle, eyeing a porthole. "Did his work, did he?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Browne stoutly. After all, a good shipmaster's work is delegated to his mates. It is his responsibility he should bear alone.

Captain Teagle nodded. Before he had time to voice another question there came a sharp rap at the door.

Captain Guthrie entered in response to the marine super's command. His face was flushed and he ignored his mate.

"Perhaps I may be permitted to say a word in my own behalf, sir," he said stiffly.

"Certainly; certainly!" Captain Teagle agreed, quite unruffled by the interruption. "Tell us about the Manacles first, captain."

Guthrie's eyes flashed bitterly at Mr. Browne. His brow was black.

"We steamed close to the rocks but to windward and in deep water, sir," he said. "I believe no one on board will deny those facts."

Captain Teagle nodded again and again. "A good position, to windward and in deep water," he murmured approvingly. "Now, about taking the ground on the shoals, captain?"

"We had been unable to get a sight for several days, sir," said Guthrie, somewhat hoarsely. "The fog was very thick. Our radio man had—had an accident and was unable to ask for bearings from the shore stations. I take full responsibility, of course, sir, but—" His eyes, full of resentment and wrath, bore upon Mr. Browne. "It was the mate's watch, sir."

"H'm!" murmured Captain Teagle. He drummed upon the table with white, boneless nimble fingers. "It happened in your watch, Mr. Browne?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Browne steadfastly.

The marine super waited for him to go on. Then he nodded again and again. Abruptly he pulled out of his pocket a radio form.

"It is not my custom, Captain Guthrie, to discuss a shipmaster with members of his crew before interviewing him," he said. "Mr. Browne and I were speaking about a different matter when you came in. Nevertheless, since Mr. Browne is here I will ask him a question."

He paused to wag his goatee again.

"We have received a long and rather extraordinary radio message from Mr. Trent," he said. "Although a youngish man Trent has been an operator on our ships for some years and he has a good record for veracity. He makes the allegation, Captain Guthrie, that at the time of the stranding and for several days before it you were in an intoxicated or semi-intoxicated state."

He held up an imperative hand to halt Captain Guthrie's roar of protest and turned on the stiff little figure of Mr. Browne.

"In your opinion, Mr. Browne, was Captain Guthrie more or less under the influence of drink at any time prior to the stranding?"

Mr. Browne's eyes flickered irresistibly toward the slumping figure and dejected face of Captain Guthrie. He realized plainly enough in that tense instant while the super waited that Guthrie's principal fault was immaturity. His cocksureness, boastfulness, avoidance of blame, all were the faults of youth.

This stranding might be the making of the young man as a really competent shipmaster—if it were not his ruin.

Mr. Browne remembered well just then Guthrie's own words: "Bite or be bitten, Brownie!"

Should he, Mr. Thomas Browne, take advice from Captain Brant Guthrie?

"He'll grow up and we can't all be masters," Mr. Browne told himself soberly. With unwavering steadiness he answered the question of the keen-eyed old super:

"I am positive that Captain Guthrie was not in the least intoxicated at any time during the voyage, sir."

Captain Teagle raised his eyebrows. The intimation of lingering doubt was unmistakable. All that was needed now to damn Brant Guthrie forever was silence.

Mr. Browne spoke again, without being asked to do so. His voice was curt with conviction and his eyes bored at the super's face:

"The radio operator got that notion because Captain Guthrie was holding whisky in his cheek to cure an aching tooth, sir. He did not drink. He was worn out by a hard passage, constant pain and lack of sleep. It is my custom to speak the truth, sir."

Captain Teagle looked hard at the mate, as if he were seeing him for the first time.

"H'm!" he murmured and plucked absently at his short, pointed and suspiciously black beard. "Thank you. That will be all."

Mr. Browne walked to the door. But there Captain Teagle's voice stopped him:

"There's a well-earned pension waiting for Captain Dunlap; he's leaving the *Rebecca*. For a small man you have broad shoulders—Captain Browne."

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

EIGHT men actually escaped Guiana in a small boat some time ago and sailed on to a mysterious and unknown fate. They are not the eight men whom Robert Carse launches on their way in "The Dark Gods Call," but it is interesting to note that fiction doesn't have to split very far away from fact, even in this year, when a writer sets his story out in the adventurous places. Carse writes:

Several issues ago, with a piece of mine called *"The Devil's Crew,"* the editor printed here some words of mine concerning French Guiana and, in particular, what the French call their penal colony there. I want here only to say a line or so more about the place, and this in direct reference to my story in this issue. In *"The Dark Gods Call"* I have eight convicts escape from Guiana by boat, and only two of them land alive in Haiti. This, fiction; and here the fact:

Some months ago a group of eight men, all of them sentenced for one crime or another to Guiana, escaped in a boat, had it sunk under them, suffered nearly all known sorts of tortures, thirst, lack of food, a superabundance of sharks and the constant fear of being apprehended and sent back. This last they missed. They found another boat, actually a rotten Indian dugout *cayucá*, which also sank under them. But by that time they had the luck to reach Aruba, in the Dutch West Indies. Aruba is not a big place, and from what I know of it the folks there have never been called off as among the wealthy. But nearly everybody in the town came through; I guess they figured that men as persistently, stubbornly and quite tragically brave as the eight must have had some very good reason to prefer a number of forms of awful death to the prisons they had left. So they got up a contribution and fitted the eight out; they bought them a sail-rigged and sound boat, a compass and enough food to keep them. And then the eight pushed off, in the middle of the hurricane season, for Haiti.

Haiti is more than a few miles from Aruba. The eight have not been heard from since; no ship running the Caribbean has reported raising them; there has been no sign or trace of them whatsoever. I have seen just enough of the Caribbean in hurricane time to know where they are now, and that they never got to Haiti . . . .

They made news, though, in their way. The local correspondent of the *New York Times* in Aruba was as much impressed perhaps as the rest of the citizenry; anyhow, he sent North a copyrighted story by one of the eight, a young and intelligent educated man, who right there, flatly, admitted that he and his companions were playing a thousand to one shot, but were going to play it notwithstanding. The *New York World-Telegram* and the *New York Times* printed photographs of the eight pushing off from Aruba, and that's all. Maybe the French Government has a copy of that photograph; and maybe it hasn't.

Of course that story, if it could be told in full, would be incomparably better fiction than an author may write. Here, though, while I'm at it, a couple of more words of fact, these about Haiti. Of the countries I've known, none is more rich and fantastically full of color than what some people have chosen to call the Black Republic. In writing of it, a number of men, though, (naming no names) have chosen to toss off fiction they claimed as fact. And here I want to say that as much as it is in my power I have in *"The Dark Gods Call"* used the facts as I saw and found them in that really wonderful island. Two American old-timers in Haiti, L. E.

Thompson, formerly a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps, then Lieutenant in the Garde d'Haiti and for some years now Secretary to the American Consulate at Port au Prince, and Doctor Reser, formerly a chief petty officer in the United States Navy and for some years now head of the National Insane Asylum, aided me greatly in gaining what information I have concerning the place, its people, religions and customs; they know the island as it has been the privilege of very few or any other white men. I can only hope that someday they themselves will be represented here in Camp-Fire or in the regular columns of *Adventure*. There have been far too many "Magic", "Black" and "Cannibal" island books. But, about those, as they say in Haiti, it is to laugh. . . .

LEAD steers get their due in S. Omar Barker's story "Ol' Star," and in these notes he tells us about some actual ones, "Ol' Blue," "Lew Wallace," and "Barker".

We hear a lot more about the "great" horses of the cattle trail days than of steers, of course, but almost any old trail driver will tell you of some longhorn he remembers whose intelligence and willingness to travel made him a remarkable lead steer, and often a pet. Some of these were brought back to Texas after each drive and used over and over again to help pilot the big herds northward. One, "Ol' Blue," made so many round trips up the trail that it was said of him that he knew the various routes better than any human trail hand alive. In his career he wore out dozens of sets of shoes forged especially for him, and in his old age was pensioned off on good pasture.

A big black named "Lew Wallace" was one of the smartest in the long experience of Col. Jack Potter, veteran cowman, former trail boss, present member of the New Mexico legislature and writer of authentic articles on the Old West. This steer came to Potter's dugout one wintry night on the F H C range near Ft. Sumner and pawed at the door. From his brands Potter identified him as a steer raised by the Knott Brothers in Gillespie County, Texas, sold to Shriner and Lytle and trailed north, sold to Doc Brown in the Indian Territory, then to the New England Livestock Company and trailed to Ft. Sumner, where he now wore the F H C for which Potter rode. Potter welcomed him and named him "Lew Wallace", finding him a wonderfully sociable and intelligent lead steer on the next drive he made.

Aside from these famous lead steers, in practically every herd there were a few longhorn "characters" that stood out as intelligent individuals. One time at Fort Peck, when the beef herd was delivered to the Indians to slaughter in their old buffalo hunting style, such a one turned, when wounded, and disembowled an Indian's horse, giving the brave himself a narrow escape, before another volley of shots brought him down. Regretful, then, that he had delivered him, Abner Taylor made this remark: "From the bottom of my heart I wish that ol' lineback of mine had killed the damn Indian!"

From such almost legendary steer characters "Ol' Star" is drawn.

And if anybody doubts the potential intelligence and learning ability of steers, there's Monte Reger, today, with his longhorn-Brahma, leaping over automobiles, shaking hands, and otherwise putting on a darned smart show at the rodeos. Or Tex McDaniel's pet longhorn, "Barker" (not named for me) on which he rode in 267 days from Texas to New York only last year.

Somewhere in the bovine skull, it seems, there may lurk a little spark of those same qualities of sense and loyalty which we treasure so highly in horses and dogs.

A LITTLE shooting back and forth, herewith, between two men who were both toting rifles in Canadian forests in their teens. The first letter is from a reader in Winnipeg, Manitoba, who asks that his name be omitted. The reply is by Samuel Alexander White, of Toronto, Ontario.

I was amused by Samuel Alexander White's ingenuous tale of the big bad men of the fur trails, in your issue of April 15th. I was further amazed, on reading through The Camp-Fire to find that he claims this to be an accurate and authentic tale of the region and times, and you agree with him. I am writing this for two reasons: First, because I do not like to see a magazine, which has usually stood for reliability of depiction in stories dealing with scenes and events as a rule foreign to its readers' experience, imposed on by writers who claim background and experience; second, there runs through Mr. White's letter in Camp-Fire that vein of thought whose constant publication fosters the opinion in other countries that Canada is a wild and backward place.

Mr. White says, "the H.B.C. is the Dominion"; The Hudson Bay Company's tale is Canada's tale". Might I point out that neither of these remarks is true? In regard to the first, the Company's activities were mainly in territory which even now is mainly unorganized. I know no record of it having ever been active in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, British Columbia, the Yukon, or the southern parts of Ontario and Quebec. This leaves a pretty small bit of this huge country for the H.B.C. to be! Regarding the second, Canada's tale began about 70 years before the organization of the Hudson's Bay Company, which has had little influence on its history. Thus you will see that Mr. White is greatly in error in assuming the destiny of the Dominion of Canada to be bound up with the past or present history of an organization formed for the primitive purpose of buying furs. The H.B.C. still exists. It is today a big and progressive company, with stores and trading posts dotting an immense area. Here in Winnipeg they have a department store covering a full block, six stores high, its equipment, service, and merchandise the equal of any in the world. And their stores on the height-of-land in Ontario are almost as far removed from the stockade and log-cabin days. They are smartly painted buildings, with display windows and hardwood floors, and one I know well has hot-water heating and electric lights, although it is on a small island twenty miles from steel. I make these remarks to show my admiration for the Company, and to correct the impression left by Mr. White's letter.

Now as to the "accurately descriptive and completely authentic" aspect of this story. Even a man who never stirred from a desk in New York should be able to see the fallacy in the following: Dunvegan meets a man whom he supposes to be in the service of the North-West Company. The period is not more than ten years after the War of Independence was concluded. The latter gentleman, at his companion's advice to "Show him the star" turns back his *suspender* band, and shows the *badge of a United States marshal!* Possibly I am wrong when I question the existence at that time of United States marshals, their badges, and those homely aids to pants-support, suspenders. You have given this yarn the editorial stamp of approval as "a carefully historic work", and you probably know what you are talking about. (?) But in a couple of minutes this questionable character pulls out a *photograph*. But my reference works show that Daguerre's experiments were not successful until 1833, and photography of a portable type was not in existence until close to the '70's!

Telling of the men crossing a beaver dam, Mr. White speaks of them sinking *to the armpits in the rubbish of the structure.* I wish to remark that a beaver dam will at times raise the water level six feet or more; can you imagine a pile of "rubbish" piled as loosely as this resisting the pressure of such a head of water? A chum and I once tried, with a long pointed pole, to pry loose a section of a dam sufficient to render passable a road flooded out by the beavers. After about two hours we gave it up as a hopeless job, for when we had got a bit loosened up it merely shifted an inch or two and settled down solidly again. You could have led a draft horse across the top of that dam with safety, and I'll bet that only with luck and a sledge-hammer could a man sink a piece of one-inch drill steel to the depth of his armpits in *any* beaver dam. As for a *man* sinking in one, I never did it, nor heard of anyone else doing it, and I have seen a lot of beaver dams in a lot of different types of ground. It takes an axe or dynamite to make an impression on them, for their bulk is a complicated interlacing of logs, twigs, and rocks, tightly packed and bound with mud and leaves.

You may wonder about my credentials as an authority on Canadian wild-life, frontier history, and terrain. Well, from the age of 13 I carried a rifle on long excursions into various parts of the Ottawa River Valley. I have lived in tents in December, on the height of land above Lake Superior, where a man could stand at one point and almost throw stones into the headwaters of two river systems flowing in opposite directions. I have worked for lumber companies and boat companies in the Cobalt district, and hunted ducks a hundred miles further north than that. From my youth I have been a student of wild life, and a keen listener to the tales and conversation of hundreds of men whose lives had been spent in what is considered the wilderness.

This letter is not prompted by a spirit of captiousness. I have always enjoyed and admired your magazine, using its stories to further my knowledge of parts of the earth I have not seen. Therefore it is something of a shock to find that in dealing with my own country you permit such flagrant inaccuracies to bear your stamp of approval. It makes one prone to question the authenticity of the tales of the sea, the jungle, the Foreign Legion, etc. So I advise you to check up on these self-styled experts who write of the fur-trails and the lumber-camps. Their ignor-

ance has annoyed me for a long time, but it remained for Mr. White to force me into remonstrance. Trusting you will appreciate this expression of interest in your magazine which is unique in its field, I remain.———

WHITE cites the score of stories, including several books, he has written for *Adventure* (the first appeared in 1914) and says:

My critic has waited a long time to get riled about fur company stories. "The Making Of Louis Lavergne", "The Spoilsman", "The Posts Of Pillage", "Ambush" and "The Trail Of The Rabiscaws" were all long novels of the northern fur country and the last ten of my yarns, from "Blended Brigades" to "The Gauntlet Runners" were a series of tales of the H.B.C., the N.W.F.C., the Arctic Fur Company, the Little Company, X.Y., Astor's concern and all the other organizations of independents.

Why have none of these been challenged? And why did so able an editor as Arthur Sullivant Hoffman print such unauthentic tales?

As I stated in Camp-Fire, I was born here in Canada and know whereof I write. The complaint is the old irritation against the U.S. publishing the impression that Canada is a land of snow, ice, Indians, fur traders and Eskimos. Likewise he confuses the present with the past. I do not paint Canada as a wild and woolly place today. I said "the H.B.C. *is* the Dominion" in an historical sense. I said "the H.B.C.'s tale is *Canada's* tale", meaning that it belongs peculiarly to Canada's history and to nowhere else.

One could hardly call the territory covered by the fur conquest small, since the N.W.F.C.'s brigades routed from Montreal to Grande Portage at the head of Lake Superior and on to very remote points in the West beyond. We must not forget, too, that the N.W.F.C. and all the other companies were eventually merged into the Great Company. Their activities extended from Labrador to the Rockies and the territory embraced by the journeys of such men as David Thompson, Alexander MacKenzie, Hearne and a long list of others would not be termed meager. B.C. comes into the picture with the ramifications of Astor's activities, and even southern Ontario felt the moccasin march from Lake Ontario via the Lake Simcoe and Severn River on the fur trail, which is now paved and heavily-trafficked Yonge Street. Quebec's St. Lawrence shore boasts many a H.B.C. post and Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona, wrote H.B.C. history at Mingan on the Gulf and at Rigolet on the Labrador.

Of course we all know—readers, editors, writers—that the picturesque phase of the fur trade passed when the H.B.C. surrendered its charter, that the company changed to a modern trading, land-holding, real estate-developing concern, a veritable de luxe chain-store affair with all the trimmings, electric bulbs and oak floors that my critic speaks of. That is gone, but the spirit of the dead company remains, no matter what any critic says. It's a vanished phase, like Zane Grey's U. P. gangs, like Emerson Hough's covered wagons, like Stewart Edward White's long rifle barrels. They weren't the *whole* of the U.S. either, but who will say that they did not mould history and that their inspiration is not felt in 1935?

With regard to U.S. "marshals", these were not the pioneer sheriffs but hard-bitten military officers, sometimes deserters, turned law enforcers, nicknamed "star wanderers" by the traders and bearing for a badge anything from a button to a number or insignia.

"Suspender band" was neither suspenders nor belt but a thong lace on the thigh of the buckskin trousers, antedating both belt and police braces.

I did not say that the men went "to the armpits" in the beaver *dam* but in the *rubbish*, (floating rubbish—driftwood, branches, reeds, backwatered there). My critic must have seen just this, grounded there against the lip, especially in the freshets of spring. The men were fleeing in the dark, and why would they carry poles to recover themselves if they weren't falling into the *pond?*

The strength of beaver dams, proper, is proverbial. They can build up in a night what good axemen cut out by day, so there is no use arguing that point. Also the mechanics of their control dams, used in series on occasion, is a feat of engineering.

As to the "photograph"—well, an author has to have some poetic license, has to advance the time some place in his tales. I have some pretty old tin-types, but not that old, so I used the snapshot. It didn't seem right to have the "star wanderer" lugging along an oil painting or a pen-and-ink sketch.

The critic presents his credientials, starting out at 13 years of age with a rifle in the Ottawa Valley. Along about that time or later perhaps, I did something similar, between Lake Ontario and the Ottawa, rifling through the Moira Lake country and the Moira River, famed for its vanished lumbering days, and the forgotten Eldorado gold field boomed by

no less a person than historic Cariboo Cameron. What a wild and woolly time there would have been if the two of us had met and he had said the things he's saying now.

Please note that the editor said expressly, at the beginning of my Camp-Fire letter, that "Canoemen of the Crimson Star" was an *historic* tale, not of the present day in Canada.

No hard feelings, though! It is almost impossible to build a perfect story, any more than to build a perfect house, without a knothole—or, in this case, a loophole.

GROWING out of a discussion of bullet proof vests in the April First issue by Francis H. Bent, *Ask Adventure* expert, comes this letter from Beda von Berchem, another of our experts, who believes there's no such animal.

Regarding your answer in April 1st issue, about bullet-proof vests, do you mind my passing on to a colleague a little dope I picked up?

Judging from the subjects I cover, you probably can surmise that I did a great deal of military research work (I'm still a "Reverse" Officer, G.S.-Res. with a G-2 assignment) abroad, and in the course of my investigations, I naturally ran across the technical data about bullet-proof armors and vests.

Now, just between you and me, "there ain't no such animal". I mean that against high-powered rifles, or against machine guns, or even automatics and revolvers of a certain calibre, there is no protection, because the weight of the required armor cannot be possibly borne by a mere man.

During the war, some of the powers introduced body armor. Foreign Staff Officers have since then admitted to me that these armors were issued for the sake of morale, not for protection. I can easily understand why, for instance, Italian storm troops were outfitted with these clumsy armors. I shall come to their construction a bit later. The Italians were up against the best shooting riflemen in Europe, bar none, i.e., the Tyrolese Emperor's Rifles. They had to be given some protection. But alas—I saw captured body armors in the Vienna Arsenal, with neat little holes drilled through, just where the heart beat underneath. Cleanly drilled by Mannlicher .30 calibre bullets!

I've seen pieces which were ripped open by hand grenades, filled with holes by machine guns. No protection whatever.

Incidentally, they seem to have been designed for protection against ricochetting shots, which made dents, true, and did not penetrate.

Some of these body armors were worn outside the uniform, some had the form of vests, worn under the tunic. They were thin, but strong steel vests of Tungsten Steel, not pliable at all. Had a vertical ridge, same as the French trench helmets had on top.

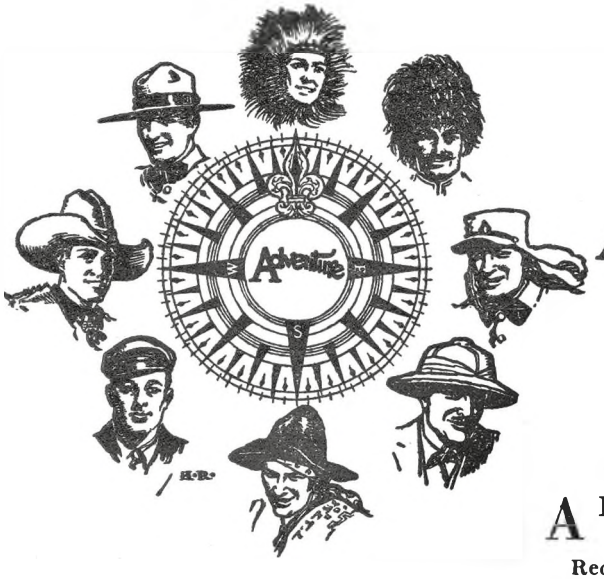
German steel manufacturers have tried to introduce a vest made from flexible, that is interlocking, steel squares. They were made at Solingen, but not by the Henckell firm.

During the Dardanelles campaign, some Turkish soldiers of the Redif formations, i.e., second line, wore old Saracene chain armors, and believe it or not, there are irrevocable records to the effect that they gave protection against rifle bullets. A soldier of the 26th Anatolian Infantry was hit three times and the bullets did not penetrate. I believe these were spent bullets. The Lee Enfield has quite a muzzle velocity and I cannot bring myself to believe that at, say 800 yards, it would not penetrate old chain armor.

A NEW department of *Ask Adventure* service has been started by Robert D. Spiers-Benjamin—"Globe-trotting and Vagabonding." It will interest readers who want to go long distances as cheaply as possible. He has been round the world on a "shoestring" as well as making similar shorter trips to South America, etc.; is the author of "Call to Adventure" and another book soon to appear "Where Now?"; is associated with the Adventurers Club, the Explorers Club, and a member of the Adventure Society.

IN the next Camp-Fire I'm going to publish some of the best-liked *Adventure* story suggestions for the November first issue, our twenty-fifth anniversary. I'd particularly like to hear more about the favorite short stories. If you don't remember both author and title, either will do. In fact, we're trying to run down a couple like this: "There was a story, maybe six or eight years ago, about a man in China who, etc."

H. B.



ASK ADVENTURE

Information from all over the world.

THE Dakotan blacksmith should try the methods of the Malayan forge.

Request:—I am a sort of blacksmith and I've learned to make knives. I have been using old files for them. I would like to know where I could obtain some Swedish steel or some other steel that is as good. Do you think files are just as good? I have never made them out of anything else but files but have heard they are better out of cutlery steel or Swedish steel.

—CHARLES CVANCARA, Ross, No. Dakota.

Reply by Capt. R. E. Gardner:—I have never worked in metal and perhaps am not qualified to treat with the matter of knife making but I'll tell you what I do know about the material used by some.

The Malay prized highly the spring steel from old wagon springs and from it made many fine weapons. Old Spanish pieces are met with which are inscribed as being made of horseshoe metal and from wheel-rim steel, both of which had been in use. These people were of the opinion that the hard usage to which these items had been subjected had properly proved the material. Such metal is not difficult to work, takes and retains a good edge and has the virtue of not being too highly carbonized.

You probably have some such odd pieces about your shop and I believe you will find them better fitted for knife making than the old files, which are totally lacking in flexibility and are too highly carbonized.

A HARD life, chasing whales—but a man's life.

Request:—I am very keen to go whaling in the Antarctic and I would be grateful if you would give me some information on the subject.

Do whalers operate from a base down South or use a factory ship with the small boats for chasing? Could you also tell me what firms operate down there and the address of some to whom I could apply for a job as seaman?

I also believe that quite a lot of sealing goes on down there. What are the prospects for a job and what money can be earned?

—JOHN A. PARK, London, Eng.

Reply by Mr. F. Leonard Marsland:—Whalers in the Antarctic operate both from shore bases and also from factory ships. The principal shore bases are those at South Georgia, the Falkland Islands, Kerguelen Island, and from various ports in the South Island, New Zealand. There is also a shore base at Durban, Natal, South Africa, but the chasers work out of here in a comparatively small radius, bringing their catches into the slip at Durban for flensing, etc.

The factory ships are mostly Norwegian, and sail from Norwegian ports, but I believe there is a French company operating from Marseilles and an English one from Hull, England. I regret that I am unable to give you the addresses of these firms, but if you were to write to the Harbor Masters at Oslo, Marseilles and Hull they would no doubt supply this information.

You do not state if you have had previous experience at sea, and if not I am afraid your chances are pretty slim. There are too many seamen of long experience out of work at the moment for the companies to employ amateurs. Possibly the best thing for you

to do would be to try the Hull firm, as this would be the most convenient for you.

There is a little sealing done in the Antarctic, chiefly by one or two vessels out of Capetown, employing colored crews. These seals are taken for their blubber, as they are not fur seals. However, this is done only on a very small scale, although a certain amount of poaching of sea elephants, which are protected by law, goes on. The only way to get a job in these ships is to be on the spot when they are signing on. The money, for an A.B., averages about £7 (South African) per month, with food and quarters supplied. You would need bedding, eating utensils, and lots of warm and waterproof clothes.

Employment in the French whalers is not available to any but Frenchmen. The Norwegians take the best seamen they can get—and Norwegians are the best seamen in the world. Possibly you may get on one of the Hull ships if you are on the spot, but the wages in the factory ships—and the men in the chasers are taken only for long whaling experience—as an A.B. are £8.10 a month. The men in the chasers get a bonus on catches.

Why not try for a job on one of the Scotch ships operating around the Orkneys? Then, if you liked the life you would at least have some experience behind you if you wished to continue. But it's a hard life, and a most uncomfortable one. In the chasers a run of bad luck means bad tempers all round; they are small ships and in dirty weather resemble submarines in the amount of water they ship; frequently there is no hot food for days; and, in the Antarctic, that means plenty. The factory ships, when they are working, are nothing but a mixture of blubber and blood. That sounds discouraging, but the other side of the picture is brighter. If you stay at it long enough and get command of a chaser, with a run of luck you may make enough in three trips to retire for life, and, above all things, it's a man's life.

Sorry I have not been able to answer your questions more specifically, but I am writing to several old shipmates who have been at the game for years for some details on the subject and I will pass on any information to you.

MAKE the butt fit the hand—so the revolver won't slip.

Request:—Can plastic wood be used to enlarge the butt of a revolver? If so, what method is best employed?

This was brought to mind by some article I saw which suggested fashioning a revolver grip to fit the hand.

—J. TRUTOR, Altoona, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—Yes, one can use plastic wood to alter the grip of a revolver with ease and even a considerable amount of success. I made a comfortable fit on my Smith & Wesson .22-32 revolver at any rate.

I make my own material, by rasping a sufficient quantity of fine wood dust off an old piece of gunstock, rasping across the grain. Then I mix this with a liberal dose of DuPont Household cement, and apply it to the part of the grip I wish to enlarge. This with me is the space twixt guard and butt, to enable my middle finger to have something to rest against. Makes the little gun hold about as well as does the Frontier Colt, which I don't believe has ever been equaled for a comfortable grip. This will apply to enlarging the sides and rear of grip, as well as front.

After the material is a bit hardened, say a couple of hours later, I take the gun in hand, and grip it naturally, thus conforming the soft material to the hand. Then allow it to harden, and I think you will find this process a very good one. After you have gotten a perfect fit, you can make a pair of grips from walnut or some other wood, patterning them on the one you doctored up with the plastic material.

THE lost tribe of Israel and the Falashas of Abyssinia—the same?

Request:—Would Gordon MacCreagh mind if you asked him to drop me a bit of information about the lost tribe of Jews, in the mountains of Haile Selassie's country?

You will recall he based a story on the same—with King Buana-Barrumgo—the Hottentot and King's Jewish friend.

—L. E. SCHOTTLAND, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—The Abyssinians, as you probably know, are Christians. It is a fascinating story in itself that this corner of Darkest Africa was converted to Christianity while the Vandals were hammering at the gates of Rome; while the people of Britain still wore blue paint and skins.

Amongst these Christian people lived the Falasha, the "strangers", a sect that already believed in the Christian God before Christianity came; but didn't believe that his Son had yet come.

Nobody knows how they got there. There remains a vast field for research by scientific people interested in the wide wanderings of the Hebrew people.

A theory is that in Solomon's time—when there was considerable communication with him and the Queen of Sheba, (whom the Abyssinians claim for the founder of their royal line with Solomon and their son, Menelek)—Hebrews settled in Abyssinia and were later marooned by the recession of Hebrew power.

Another interesting theory grows out of an actual record in Egyptian history that states that certain Jews fled out of the captivity and headed southeastward; that Egyptian soldiers were sent after them; and that none of them ever came back. It is supposed that both parties, arriving at the salubrious mountain climate of Abyssinia, came to a logical conclusion that it would be foolish to go back to the tyranny of Egyptian masters.

Anyhow, there the Falasha stayed; and as contact with the Hebrew and Egyptian civilization died away, they forgot, through the generations, that there ever had been any such contact.

The Falasha don't know their own history. But with the astounding persistence of the Hebrew people under difficulties, they clung to their religious faith. Clung to it so fiercely that they preserved it almost intact through two thousand years. A small group of less than fifty thousand of them.

Abyssinia itself, being a quite isolated country until very recent years, was in no position to speculate about this obscure sect in their midst. There the "strangers" stayed unnoticed, forgotten. And they themselves were convinced that they were just a small sect, alone in their restricted world. They had no idea that any other Jews existed anywhere.

Rumors of these people came to a Hebrew scholar in Europe. He went to Abyssinia, back into the hinterland, and was astounded to find a people who prayed and ate and lived exactly as did his own people.

The Falasha had no sacred books; no written record at all; only tradition. But the tradition and all the ceremonies and rites were almost pure Hebrew.

Figuratively their discoverer fell upon their necks and embraced them as brothers. But they refused to believe that any brothers could exist. It was actually a matter of considerable difficulty to prove to them that a widespread and prosperous brotherhood of their faith covered the world.

The pity of it remains that, the prosperous brotherhood in the rest of the world seem astoundingly little interested in their backward brothers in Abyssinia.

Dr. Faitlovitch, who has devoted his life to the Falasha and their uplift, has toured Europe and America, lecturing before Hebrew societies, endeavoring to raise funds for the ameliorization of their lot. He has organized in America the "American Falasha Committee", upon the list of whose directors appear some of the most prominent Jewish names in this country.

The Committee labors hard enough; but seems to find response very poor. Hebrews in America will pour out their millions for the relief of Hebrews all over the world. But, for some strange reason, they refuse to become interested in the Falasha Jews of Abyssinia.

Dr. Faitlovitch has organized a school for them in Addis Abeba, which he conducts with pitiful inadequacy of supplies and equipment. Pitiful, because groups of Falasha young men, eager with their racial urge for education, will walk a journey of a month over impossible roads to come to school. They respond with racial quickness to teaching. They are today, as a group, the most intelligent people in Abyssinia. And their school, the only place in their country where they can receive teaching, is a shabby collection of wattle and mud huts where insufficient funds necessitate sleeping upon mud floors and going hungry much of the time.

Don't ask me why the Jews of America don't jump to help. It is beyond my guessing. I have written articles, printed in Hebrew papers, I have lectured before Hebrew societies. Leaders of the Falasha Committee have thought that my evidence, as a non-Jew, would be useful in stimulating interest. But response has remained incredibly small—to my thinking, disgracefully small.

HERE is a valuable outline of treatment for poisonous snake bites.

Request:—There seems to be a lot of contradictory information as to what to do in case of snake bite down here. I notice Sunday's *New York American* says "no ligature. Incision of bites only irritates. Let alone and get serum." Natives here carry small lancet and breast pump for sucking, C_2H_5OH still administered.

There is better than a remote chance that we will have reason to know as we plan to make some explorations of the swamps for photographs and I heard a story the other day

of a moccasin that climbed into a fisherman's boat.

If you planned to drag your trembling carcass through some of that swampy undergrowth, what would you take with you? Snakes *are* out now, cold weather or no cold weather. I'm skinning a Coral tonight killed at Longwood yesterday.

—A. H. PHELPS, Orlando, Florida.

Reply by Dr. Claude P. Fordyce:—I advise a rational use of the tourniquet, incisions and body rest to keep the venom from getting over the system. I would take a tube of serum with me if going far from the help of a doctor. Most small town doctors do not have the serum and may have some delay in getting it. If you are traveling much in the swamps, take serum with you.

The treatment outlined is for two classes of cases: First, where you apply only first aid and can get to a competent doctor within a few hours and who can give you serum; second, where you travel on your own and have to do some doctoring along with first aid.

First Aid Treatment

a. *Tourniquet.* Start treatment at once. Tie a tourniquet around the limb just above the bite to increase the congestion of the veins and increase the bleeding. This may be a necktie, handkerchief, or bandage. It should be tight enough to prevent the blood flowing through the veins but not tight enough to prevent the blood flowing through the deeper arteries. Do not leave the tourniquet on longer than one hour. The advice about releasing the tourniquet every fifteen minutes is for those cases where it has been applied too tightly. Release plays save.

b. *Incision.* A cross incision, one-half by one inch, should be made with a sharp knife or razor blade over each fang bite or preferably to connect the two fang punctures. The cut must be from ⅛ to ¼ of an inch deep—deep enough to insure free bleeding 'through the rind'. If a vein is cut, control the bleeding by pressure with a finger on a gauze pad over the cut or better on side of cuts opposite the tourniquet.

c. *Suction.* Apply suction for at least a half an hour. Suction may be applied by the mouth, by a glass breast pump, or by a small funnel attached to a rubber bulb which is now found in some snake bite outfits. Heating a bottle or small glass in hot water or over a flame or by burning a small piece of paper in it and then applying the mouth of the bottle tightly over the wound, affords considerable suction as the bottle cools.

d. *Quiet.* Keep the patient quiet and give the usual treatment for shock (heat—wrap in blanket; reclining position; aromatic spirits of ammonia—teaspoonful to a half glass of water—repeat every 30 minutes. Or coffee or tea. Whisky is no good.

e. *Physician.* Get to a physician as soon as possible but don't walk and so speed up circulation. Get to him by some sort of conveyance or have him come to you. He should give serum—antivenin (now unreasonably expensive) for bites other than for the coral snake.

Complete Treatment By The Patient

If a physician's services cannot be secured for several hours, as sometime happens in regions where poisonous snakes are common, then further treatment should be given by the first aider.

a. *Additional incisions.* As the swelling spreads, make more cross incisions about ¼ by ¼ inch and be sure each goes through the skin. These cross incisions are made in a ring around the bite two inches from the first two incisions, chiefly above the bite and just inside the swollen area. As these cuts are made in the swollen area not much blood will be obtained by sucking them but instead a rather clear fluid slightly blood tinged. In fact one does not want to obtain much pure blood. If a blood vessel is cut control the bleeding by applying pressure with the finger.

b. *Suction.* Apply suction to each cut continuing this routine for fifteen minutes out of each hour until a doctor's services is obtained or for ten to fifteen hours. A second ring of cuts can be made later if needed up to a total of thirty in number.

c. *Aseptic dressings.* Keep the cuts covered with hot compresses of strong Epsom salts solution between suction periods. Keep the limb slightly below the level of the body.

d. *Internal treatment.* Give a dose of Epsom salts to act as a purgative. If possible, the patient should be taken to a hospital and the doctor may advise that a blood transfusion be given. At least he can give antivenin. While it is advisable to obtain as much fluid from the cuts as possible guard against the loss of any large amount of blood. The patient needs all he can keep. Give plenty of water to drink and continue the treatment for shock. If antivenin is available (and everyone going for a long period into known snake infested country should have a tube as a part of his outfit) give not less than fifty cubic centimeters in the tissues around the bite or follow the directions which come with the serum.

Outfit

1. Where only first aid is given and a doctor can be seen soon—

Non-elastic tourniquet. 3½ percent tincture of iodine or mercurochrome (to paint on skin where cuts are to be made). Lancet or razor blade. Suction cup. Aromatic spirits of ammonia, ½ ounce. Aseptic gauze pads. Bandages, 2 inch.

2. Where physician cannot be secured and patient must continue treatment—

Epsom salts, 1 pound. Antivenin. Additional guaze pads and bandages.

The makers of antivenin do not recommend incisions but they do recommend the tourniquet. I favor incisions to get rid of the blood laden venom even if neutralized by antivenin injected near the fang punctures.

A ROD and reel sport that gives the *fish* a vacation—

Request:—I should like to ask a few questions in tournament fly casting as it seems to be becoming quite a sport.

1. How many different forms of fly casting does tournament fly casting cover?

2. What do you consider the most beneficial form in the matter of real fishing?

3. Can any kind of a fly rod and line be used to practice with?

4. Are there any health benefits derived from tournament fly casting?

5. How long a period of time has fly casting been known?

6. Do they have national tournaments each year and can anyone cast in them?

7. What is the longest fly cast that has ever been known in the United States?

8. Is bait casting any easier than fly casting?

—FRANK J. BROWN, Hartford, Conn.

Reply by "Chief" Stanwood:—Tournament fly and bait casting has rapidly worked from the West to the East in the past few years. In fact so many are interested now that they think the 1936 National Tournament will be held in Washington, D. C. This year it will be held in Baltimore, Md.

1. The Fly Events, are Accuracy Fly, 5¾ ounce rod; Dry Fly Accuracy, 5¾ ounce rod; Dry Fly Accuracy at unknown distance, 5¾ ounce rod; Distance Fly, 4¾ ounce rod; Distance Fly, 5¾ ounce rod, and Salmon Fly.

2. Really all of the events help you out in the way of real fishing. Perhaps of all the Accuracy events, Dry Fly, at unknown distance, is nearer real fishing than any of them, as the five fly rings are scattered at random but no ring is at a greater distance than fifty feet or nearer than twenty feet. The caster has to start with fly in hand, cast at first target designated by the captain, then each of others as directed until fifth ring is reached and then reversed back to first target, this casting has to be done with fly in the air, and the stripping and retrieving the same.

3. Any kind of a fly rod can be used to practice with and if you have not any water near you can use your lawn or back yard. It is a good plan to cut the barb off of your hook in all kinds of practice, even a bit of rag tied on the end of your leader will answer the purpose. In tournament fly events the rod can't be a greater weight than 5¾ ounces.

4. Fly casting not only takes you out in the air, but develops the arms and chest. Learn to be ambidextrous, that is, learn to cast with either hand as in real fishing. This relieves the strain on one hand and arm.

5. Fly casting has been known as far back as the second century. The Romans cast flies on some of the Macedonian rivers at that time.

6. A national tournament is held each year. For the past twenty-nine years they have been held in the western States, in some of the large cities. To cast in the National Tournament, one has to belong to some casting club that is affiliated with the National Association governing the same.

7. Marvin K. Hedge, the winner of the long distance event averaged 141 feet with best of his three casts, 147 feet. This broke the eleven year old record. In practice, Mr. Hedge has made much longer casts.

8. Bait casting is really harder than fly casting as the reel has to be controlled by the thumb and it takes a lot of practice to get just the right feel in thumbing so that the reel will not go faster than the line is paying out. In the bait events covered by the national rules there are four accuracy from quarter ounce weight to five-eighths, and in distance four cover the same weights. Usually tournament bait casting is done on the ground on account of measuring the distance although it can be done on water.

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Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

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Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

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Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Coast Guard—COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U.S.N. (ret.), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Florida.

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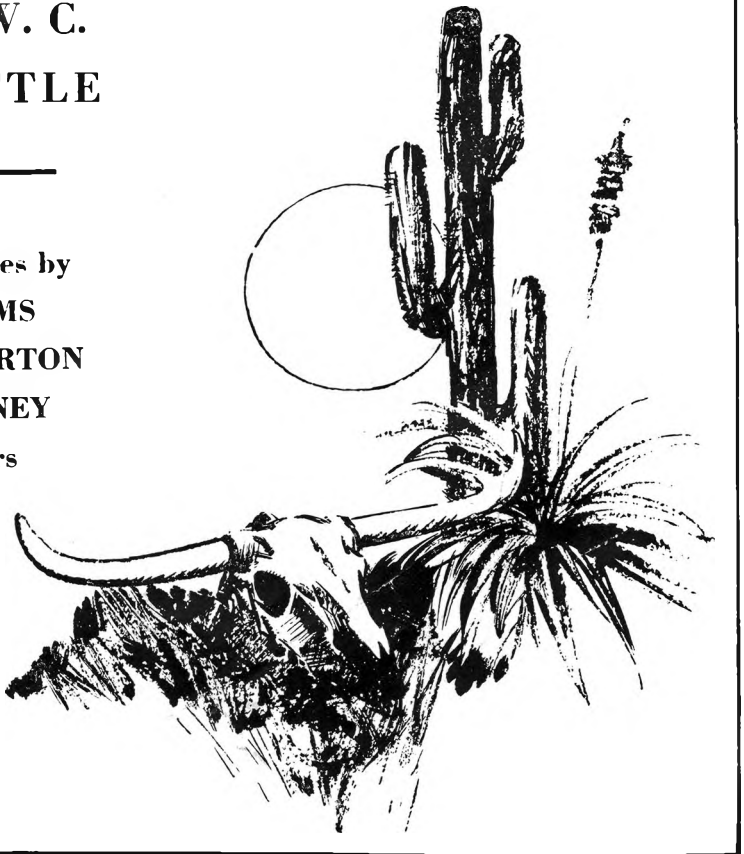

The July 15th Issue Is Out June 28th

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