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Adventure

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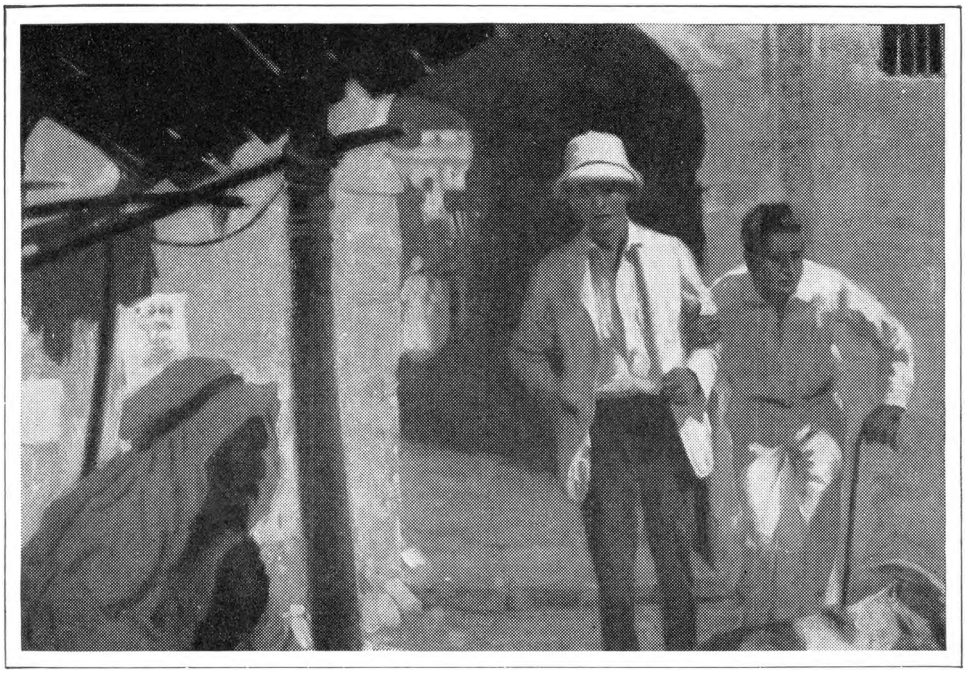

Hidden Treasure!

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With a band of international crooks at their heels, Hugh Chesby and his American chum seek a mysterious treasure hidden by the Emperor Andronicus centuries ago. Hugh's uncle, mortally wounded by the gang, tried to tell Hugh where the treasure was located before he died. Hugh decides to carry on, aided by a band of friendly gipsies, although in constant danger of torture. You will enjoy every move in this exciting treasure hunt. This story was written by Arthur D. Howden Smith and it starts in *Everybody's Magazine* for May. Get your copy today and read "The Treasure of the Bucoleon."

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Contents for May 20th, 1923, Issue

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(*Continued from preceding page*)

A New Serial and Three Novelettes

McGUIRE, who knew him best, said that *Williams* had a mad sense of justice; that he drove himself, appearing never to rest, never to sleep, until his sense of justice was appeased. When "*Slade*" *Willerby's* brutal followers impersonated *Williams* and murdered missionaries, "*Hurricane*" swept the South Seas in a manner well worthy of his name. "HURRICANE WILLIAMS' VENGEANCE," a four-part story by Gordon Young, begins in the next issue.

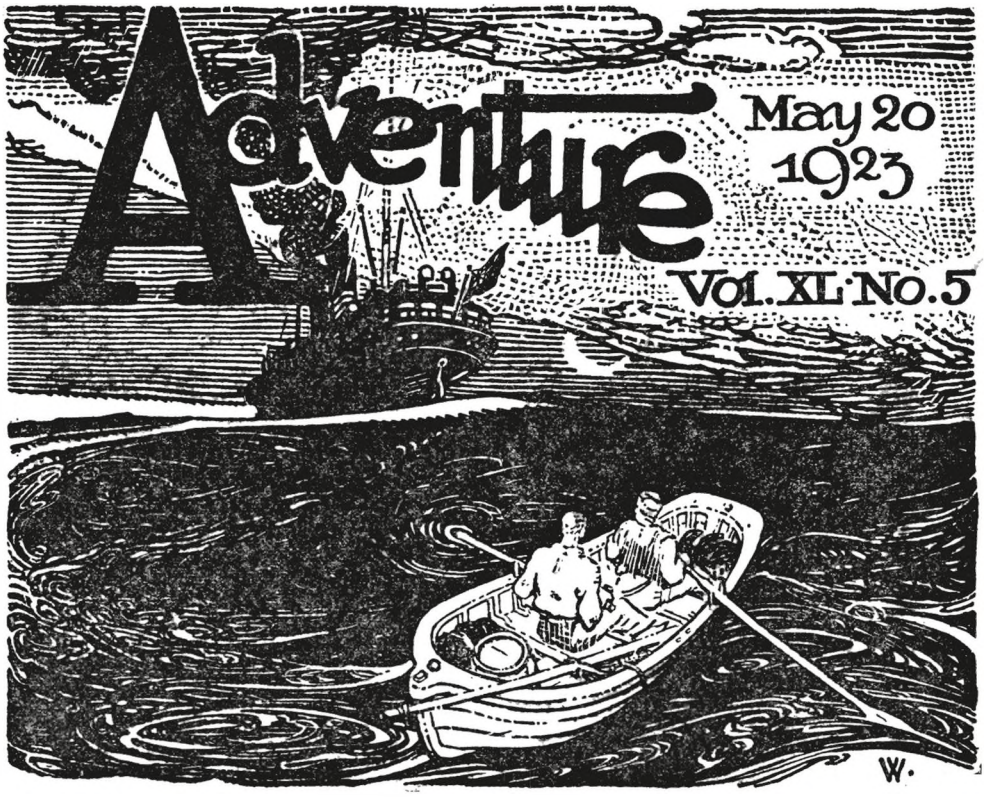
WITH his army career shattered at the beginning, *Paul Borel* is sent to a disciplinary camp in the Sudan. There, while men tried to break his spirit, he waited his opportunity in the Arab rebellion—the opportunity which offered him vengeance, or something else. "OUTSIDE THE WALLS," by Georges Surdez, a complete novelette in the next issue.

THE only white man in a Chinese city, and how he organized the defenses of the town against the rebels. But China is very old and its people are very wise, and *Colfax* met some surprizes—despite his perfect plans. "THE DEFENSE OF YANG-CHOU," a complete novelette by William Ashley Anderson in the next issue.

IT WAS a curious wind of the South Seas that blew *Peter* across *Rudd's* path. Tramp of five continents, he scented the danger at once, and when the time came for the sacrifice he didn't quaver. "DUST OF THE ROAD," a complete novelette, by Chester L. Saxby in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**



THE QUEST OF THE BLOOD-RED PEARLS

A Complete Novelette by Merlin Moore Taylor

Author of "Digger's Luck"

CHAPTER I

CURIOSITY

"SOMETHING'S bound to turn up."

Allen Stuart repeated the words for the hundredth time that morning. An empty feeling below the belt insistently reminded him that he had had no breakfast. Exploring fingers, thrust into the depths of his trousers pockets, found only a knife and keys to the battered luggage which his erstwhile landlord was holding for an unpaid bill.

These facts, however, were not uppermost in his thoughts. He had learned to accept emptiness of stomach and flatness of purse as part of the price one must pay if he deliberately follows the unbeaten tracks in the far corners of the world. The "something" in his mind was action, adventure, thrills—the paprika that gave zest and tang to life for him. They always are to be found if one seeks them long and hard enough—this was the belief to which he clung doggedly and had reduced to words.

Three weeks before he had returned to Sydney from a dash below the Antarctic rim in search of a derelict ship that promised much in the shape of salvage. He had found it—stripped of everything of value. Some one—he wondered who—had beaten him to it. It had made Stuart angry.

"*The Quest of the Blood-Red Pearls*," *copyright, 1923, by Merlin Moore Taylor.*

Primarily that anger was directed against the man who had told him of the derelict, in whispers and with a great show of secrecy. Stuart had thought he was buying exclusive information, but presumably the man had wagged a loose tongue in other quarters. Against his successful, and as yet unidentified, rival Stuart had harbored no ill-will because of that success. His resentment was due wholly to the fact that the other had left the hulk afloat, a menace to navigation in even those unfrequented waters. To Stuart, setting the charge which would destroy it, the derelict had the aspect of having been deliberately left to deride him.

It had left him a bad taste in the mouth, in addition to wiping out his bank-roll. Back in Australia industrial paralysis from a general strike had seemed to affect will-o'-the-wisp enterprises as well. In the places where such things are hatched he had not turned up a single prospect. He had begun to chafe at the inaction he saw staring him in the face.

"Oh, well."

He got up from the park bench and stretched to the full extent of his six feet.

"Something's bound to turn up."

"I never knew it to fail," said a brisk voice.

Stuart turned, irritated that he had voiced his confidence aloud and given a stranger the opportunity to comment. He had been aware in a vague sort of way that another man shared his bench, but had paid him scant heed. Now, however, taking him in from head to toe, he recalled that several days in succession he had seen the same man frequently. Was it pure coincidence—or something else?

The stranger's lean, tanned face bore a disengaging smile. About his pleasant eyes was a network of fine wrinkles that comes from much squinting at vast stretches of sand or water. Intuition told Stuart that this was one of his own kind. It also told him that the man's words had not been inspired altogether by the camaraderie which exists between gentlemen of fortune. They had been too prompt, as if the other had been waiting for an opportunity to address him.

"I hope you're right, brother," he said now.

If the man was deliberately trying to engage him in conversation with a motive back of it, Stuart would give him an opportunity to reveal it.

"Look here," said the stranger, abruptly. "You're broke, aren't you?"

The impertinence of it was galling.

"I like your cheek," snapped Stuart.

"You haven't answered my question," returned the man evenly. "You were thrown out of your hotel this morning, weren't you?"

Stuart started, and his fists clenched. Just in time he checked his anger. This man was treading on dangerous ground, but until he found out why he would not teach him manners.

"You seem to know a great deal about my business," he said icily.

"More than you suspect," agreed the other. "Including some things you'd like to know. Who arranged to let you hear of the derelict, then salvaged it ahead of you, for instance."

"That's the last straw," Stuart had been flicked where it was tender. "Quick now, before I wipe up the ground with you, who are you and what do you want?"

"Who am I?" The man seemed entirely unmoved by the threat. "I'm merely the agency the gods are using to turn up that 'something' you were wishing for. What do I want? Only to know if you're flat, broke, cleaned. Until I know I can't do another blessed thing."

"All right," said Stuart savagely. "I'm broke. Now get down to cases and be sure your reason for asking was a good one."

The man got up and smoothed down his coat.

"Keep your shirt on and sit on that bench for thirty minutes," he ordered. "At the end of that time you'll have learned whether you're to know any more about all this or not. It's not up to me to decide. But I'll tell you this much, Stuart. If you'd smashed me a minute ago you'd never have found out."

With a wave of his hand he was off, striding rapidly toward the park gates. Stuart could only stare after him. Then his fists relaxed and he laughed softly.

"Your nerve is tremendous, my friend," he said to that departing back, "but it won't save you the next time we meet if I'm still sitting here when the half-hour is up."

Stuart's watch just then was gracing the safe of a pawnbroker, but the sonorous chimes of the post-office clock, four blocks

away, did equally well. Half of the time his mysterious acquaintance had specified passed and Stuart was beginning to wonder if he had not been a fool to let the stranger get away unscathed. Perhaps the man had enjoyed the crude sport of baiting him because he was penniless. There were such men. His knowledge of Stuart's affairs, uncanny as it had seemed, was in no way remarkable. Stuart had expected the men who had accompanied him on that quest for salvage to talk upon their return and half a dozen guests had heard the landlord request him to give up his room—without baggage. Still the man had said that the salvage expedition was rigged up for his benefit——

"What's yer name, mister?" piped a shrill voice in his ear. A little street urchin stood before him.

"My name's Allen Stuart," he replied amusedly. "Are you another agent for the gods?"

The youngster sniffed.

"Naw. Fer a bloke wot told me to give yer dis."

He fished a soiled card from his pocket and tendered it. The next moment he had darted away and was lost among the passersby.

Stuart's eyes dropped to the card. It bore a single line, scrawled in pencil.

"Go to 48 Murgate Lane, Room 305," it said.

CHAPTER II

A MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS

THE uniformed bobby at the park gates never had heard of Murgate Lane. He was sorry, and apologetic.

"Try the G. P. O., sir," he advised. "If there is such a place it'll be listed there. No one man could keep in mind every little jog street that has a name here."

Stuart, who knew his downtown Sydney, smiled sympathetically, thanked him and sought the information counter of the general post-office. The clerk of whom he made inquiry was most accomodating. He pointed to one of the great doors fronting on Moore Place.

"It's over there behind those office and bank buildings across the street, sir," he said after a perusal of a ponderous guide-book. "It says here it can be reached from both Pitt and George Streets, but that's all. Luck to you, sir. It's a regular rabbit-hutch you're going into."

Stuart chose the first alleyway off George Street and plunged into the labyrinth of passageways which honeycombed the long block. The best directions he could obtain from those he questioned were vague. He found himself in first one *cul-de-sac*, then another. Returning from one of these, in which he had come up against the back end of some Pitt Street establishment, he paused for a moment at an intersection to get his bearings again.

A venerable Chinese in European dress accosted him.

"Your pardon, sir," he said in precise English. "I seek Murgate Lane, but find it elusive. Can you direct me?"

"Elusive?" Stuart's hearty laugh rang out. "I'll agree with you there. I've been hunting it for a good quarter of an hour. This jumble of passageways reminds me of one of those mystic mazes on paper where you try to get from one point to another without crossing your own trail. Murgate Lane's around here some place, though. Come along. We'll hunt it together."

It was he, however, who did all the questioning, obtained all the directions, did the leading. The wizened Oriental at his side seemed bewildered as he followed, his hand continuously caressing the wisp of a beard which dangled from his chin. Behind thick-lensed spectacles his eyes were alert, however, and discovered the faded street sign which pointed out Murgate Lane before Stuart saw it.

"At last, sir," he cried, a slender finger pointing to it. "Persistence is a great virtue and leads to success. I congratulate you upon its possession and many thanks for your kindness to an old man."

He bowed low and was gone without waiting for a reply. Stuart, watching for Number 48, paused before a grim, unprepossessing brick building and eyed with disfavor its single doorway, giving upon a dark and musty interior. A glance at the card received in the park decided him. He stepped inside and took the stairway at one side of the hall.

Upon the door panels of Room 305 appeared only the numerals, nothing to indicate the name or business of the tenant. The knob gave to his touch, and Stuart pushed open the door. The hopes he had been building that his feet had been placed

upon the trail of something worth while began to sink at his first sight of the dingy office. It was sordid, ill-furnished, bare-floored. Backed up against the wall a huge and ancient safe, a survivor of the days when keys were used to lock such things, gaped widely. A battered, flat-topped desk occupied the center of the floor and behind it a seedy overstuffed armchair faced the doorway in which he stood. Half a dozen rickety chairs of nondescript type were scattered around it. There was no one in the place.

Stuart's lip curled in disgust. This cheap and disappointing hole in the wall over which hung the smell of infrequent use promised nothing. Still——

"I'll see it through," he said aloud and, stepping over the threshhold, closed the door behind him. Then he picked out the least shaky of the chairs, placed it where he could look through the unwashed window and eased his hundred and ninety pounds upon it with his feet upon the sill. One coat pocket yielded his pipe, another some tobacco crums and a match. He lit up and settled himself to wait for whatever might develop.

The view of low, flat roofs beyond the window proved uninteresting and the chimes of the clock in the post-office tower, sounding the quarter-hours, told him much time was passing, but he continued to sit there, rocking back and forth upon the protesting legs of the creaky chair. He had no intention of leaving while the mystery of who had wished him to come here, and why, was unsolved.

It had been around one o'clock when he had entered the place. The clock had struck three before his ears told him that some one had paused beyond the door. Quietly he brought his feet down from the sill, rose and faced it. He was ready for whatever might happen. Then the door was flung open and his eyes rested upon the wizened Oriental he had met outside. He laughed and his tense feeling passed.

"Hello, it's you, is it?" he said. "Find your place all right?"

The Oriental bowed in his courtly manner, closed the door, stepped around the flat-topped desk and sank into the overstuffed chair with an attitude of possession.

"The place I sought is here," he said.

"Well," retorted Stuart, "you seem to be at home. What was the idea, then, of asking me to direct you to Murgate Lane?"

The old man fingered his straggly beard.

"Your company while you sought this hard-to-find address seemed preferable to following you from a distance," he replied with the ghost of a smile hovering over his thin lips. "I wished to ascertain if you yielded easily to obstacles."

Stuart planted a chair directly in front of the other with the desk between them and leaned over until his face was within a few inches of that of the yellow man.

"Well, let's have it," he snapped. "There have been a lot of funny goings-on in connection with me today and I've been sitting in this hole for the better part of two hours to find out what it's all about."

"And in one of your temperament, that speaks of will-power and patience. It seems that your many virtues are making themselves known today, Mr. Allen Stuart. Once more I congratulate you."

Stuart made an impatient gesture.

"Chuck the compliments," he said curtly. "The sooner you lay your cards upon the table the better I'll like it. What is this place and who has been playing upon my curiosity to get me here?"

"I have."

"You! What for?"

Behind the thick lenses, the eyes of the old Chinese twinkled.

"Would it clear up matters any, Mr. Stuart," he asked, "if I told you that I am Sun Kong?"

CHAPTER III

SUN KONG

STUART stared incredulously at the man, wondering if his ears were not playing him tricks. This man Sun Kong? This wizened old fellow, with the thick spectacles, plucking eternally at his scraggly beard? He was more fitted to sit on soft pillows, arrayed in the loose garments of his people and meditate upon his ancestors than to plan and carry out the daring coups of Sun Kong.

"You are Sun Kong?" he asked.

"I am Sun Kong."

It was ridiculous. It simply couldn't be. Why Sun Kong's name was mouthed by every adventurer in the South Seas. About it had grown up a thousand and one tales

of bold enterprises, of dangerous exploits, of treasures sought and won, of successes wrested where others had failed. Either these tales were false or he was being deceived now. This man was not Sun Kong, but anxious to make it appear so for Heaven only knew what reason. This musty little hole never could be the headquarters of the venturesome band Sun Kong was credited with commanding.

"Don't try to make a fool of me," he said sternly. "You're not Sun Kong."

"I am Sun Kong."

For the third time the old Chinese said it. He did not raise his voice as if ready to argue it. He stated it as one who states a fact. Stuart was beginning to believe him in spite of his unwillingness to do so.

He leaned across the desk once more.

"I'm beginning to see light, if you are really Sun Kong," he said harshly. "I know now that it was you who learned something that I believed I had sewed up and beat me to it on that salvage job. Why did you do it? It meant a lot to me, it couldn't mean much to you. And now that your clever man in the park has told you that I am broke, have you brought me here to gloat over me?"

A pained look chased across the Oriental's wrinkled face.

"I forgive you, Mr. Stuart," he said, speaking slowly. "You could not know that Sun Kong is not that kind. Here—" he tapped a long forefinger upon an envelop he had laid upon the desk—"are two thousand pounds in banknotes, the profits on that salvage job. They are yours, always in my mind have been yours. The race to beat you was undertaken with that intention."

Stuart eyed him through half-closed eyelids.

"Do you mean," he asked slowly, "that you deliberately set out to salvage the derelict in order to strip me of my bankroll?

"Yes. I will explain, Mr. Stuart. First, let me say that ever since you came to this part of the world I have had my men watching you. I had an idea that if you could be induced to join my organization you would prove a valuable ally. But I quickly became convinced that you preferred going it on your own, liked to take the risks of any enterprise in which you engaged and take the profits if it succeeded. I feared to approach you with a proposition. You disliked to work under another. Was it likely you would look favorably upon authority wielded by a Chinese? If I could talk to you once, I was certain I could interest you. With money in your pocket you would be less inclined to listen than if you were without funds, or thought so.

"So I arranged to break you. The derelict was left afloat to pique your curiosity. My agent's words and actions in the park were for the same purpose. Such mysterious methods were sure to make you want to follow up any clue given you. As for my accosting you in the lane and letting you wait in this unpleasant place, you understand that I wished to apply a few tests of my own as to your qualities."

"I see." Stuart considered carefully. "And if I take the two thousand pounds, what do I let myself in for?"

"You mean, do you commit yourself in any way? My answer is 'no.' When I have finished telling you of my organization, its purposes and what would be expected of you, any decision you may make will be of your own free will. You may accept or reject it. In either event, you take the two thousand pounds."

"I will hear you out, Sun Kong."

"Fair enough. I am not unaware of the stories with which my name is associated, Mr. Stuart. Most of them are untrue, hills of fiction built upon grains of fact. Tear away the veil of romance and mystery with which wagging tongues have surrounded me and underneath you will find a plain, hard-working business man. True, my business is an unusual one, the undertaking of difficult and adventurous tasks. The secrecy which of necessity is drawn around them has given rise to the belief that they are outside the pale of the law. Yet I assure you—" his voice grew earnest—"that not once in my whole life have I consciously violated the spirit of a law, much less its letter. And never have I countenanced in any of those who are associated with me anything illegal."

"Good for you," cried Stuart. "You have removed the greatest fear I might have had."

"The men—and women, too—who work with me must be loyal to myself and their fellows," continued Sun Kong. "They must have initiative, courage, ability to think and act quickly. They must see and hear much and say little. To those who

qualify the rewards are generous. That I am asking you to come in with us is the highest tribute I can pay you. Are you interested?"

"Greatly so."

"I have in mind a task that I would entrust only to one in whom I repose great confidence, Mr. Stuart. In this case I can only give such information as I possess, furnish the money to carry out the mission and let my representative play a lone hand. It should suit you down to the ground. Will you consider it? If you wish time to ponder over an alliance with me, take one, two, three days. If you decide against it I shall be extremely sorry, but I shall not endeavor to change that decision. If, on the other hand, you become one of us, I shall start you without delay upon your mission. It involves hardships and danger, perhaps, but to one of your tastes it should prove well worth-while."

Stuart sprang to his feet and, seizing Sun Kong's hand, gripped it in his own.

"I don't want any time in which to think it over," he declared. "I'm glad to join you, Sun Kong, and I'm glad you wanted me."

Gently the old man released his fingers from that vise-like clasp. "I can well believe it," he said, waggling his hand.

"Now, Mr. Stuart," he began, after a bit, "did you ever hear of blood-red pearls?"

CHAPTER IV

BLOOD-RED PEARLS

"NO." Stuart shook his head. "I never heard of blood-red pearls. Matter-of-fact, I know very little about pearls of any kind, Sun Kong."

"'Tis a pity." The old man's tones expressed regret. "They are the most ancient and most loved of all gems, and being perfected by Nature are beyond all human art to beautify. I love them, their luster and sheen. In pearls I see a great similarity to ourselves and it gives me courage to remember that such a thing of beauty and perfection had its beginning in a fault and an inward trouble."

He broke off with a short laugh.

"When I talk of pearls, I rhapsodize," he said. "You no doubt would prefer to get down to your mission. Very well. Nature chose to confine the colors of pearls mostly to black and white and the shades in between, Mr. Stuart—but sometimes she has departed from this tendency and red pearls have resulted. You probably could check off on your fingers all of the known ones. Yet until a very short time ago I was in a fair way of obtaining in one lot a dozen, a handful of glittering, dazzling blood-red baubles, wonderfully symmetrical and of a value that is incalculable. I'd hesitate even to try to put a price upon them, yet they would have been mine for the comparatively trifling sum of twenty thousand pounds but for one thing. The messenger who was bringing them to me disappeared."

For several moments he stroked his sparse beard thoughtfully.

"I'll begin at the beginning. Many years ago I learned from an authoritative source that such pearls existed, that they were the property of a mandarin in Annam, French Cochin China. No matter how the word reached me. I believed it reliable in spite of the fact that not even a hint of such a thing had been breathed in the jewel markets of the world. In only one way could I explain it. The pearls were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years old. The work of assembling them may have taken centuries. For some reason they had dropped from sight, hidden away, perhaps, in the strong-box of some one who could not appreciate them.

"There was, too, the possibility that they were only cultured pearls. The Chinese have been experimenting along that line for many generations. The Japanese have brought it to such perfection in recent years that experts were deceived, the market disrupted. My agents approached the mandarin. He readily admitted ownership of the blood-red pearls, swore they had been in the family for untold years and expressed himself as willing to part with them. Apparently they had no sentimental value in his eyes. There was little dickering over the price. He agreed to accept twenty thousand pounds, although I was prepared to pay double, perhaps three times, as much.

"Still suspicious, I made it a condition that I was to have the pearls placed in my hands before the purchase money was turned over. I know pearls, Mr. Stuart. One glance and I would tell whether they were genuine or cultured. To this the mandarin agreed without quibbling. The pearls would be sent to me by a messenger of his

own choosing, who would take back the purchase price.

"That was almost a year ago. Several months later I received a cabled inquiry from the mandarin. He had heard nothing from his messenger after the latter had boarded the steamer *London Castle* at Singapore, bound for Sydney, within a few weeks after the details of our agreement had been made. Would I let him know how the transaction was coming along?

"I was astounded. I hadn't been informed even that the messenger was on his way. I had a trusted agent in Annam call on the mandarin. He is an old man, very old, and his thoughts and methods are of another, a quieter and more leisurely, generation. He had picked out as his envoy one Leong Ton, a blood relative and bound by every tie of tradition and honor to carry out his mission faithfully. Having delivered the pearls to him and sent him on his way, the mandarin had not seen fit to worry over the matter, not even when months had passed without a word from Leong Ton. It was only when something came up that would have made payment of the twenty thousand pounds acceptable that he cabled me at all.

"When he was told, however, that Leong Ton never had arrived here he developed a streak of activity that was remarkable. Strangely, his concern was not so much for the pearls as for his kinsman. It was with difficulty that he was persuaded to let me direct the investigation. My agent was thorough. He made certain that Leong Ton had made the cross-country trip to Bangkok, thence to the Malay Peninsula and Singapore in safety and actually boarded the *London Castle.*

"A radio message to the ship, now at sea, brought back the reply that the cabin reserved for Leong Ton had been occupied up to the time that the vessel reached Thursday Island, in Torres Strait, its only port of call between Singapore and Sydney. The following day it was learned the cabin was untenanted. Believing the passenger who had occupied it had left the ship at Thursday Island without the formality of notifying any one, no report had been made of the matter by the captain.

"That is all the information I have, Mr. Stuart. The *London Castle* will arrive here again tomorrow. Further investigations are in your hands. Of only one more thing must I tell you, and it should prove of great value. Leong Ton was dumb. Several years ago he proved his devotion to the mandarin by permitting bandits to cut out his tongue rather than reveal the hiding-place of certain treasures on the mandarin's estate.

"I am not going to hamper you with detailed instructions, plans or theories. Some possibilities are so obvious we need not discuss them. I wish the fate of Leong Ton ascertained and, if possible, the blood-red pearls recovered. How you shall go about doing this is for you to decide. I care only for the results."

Deep in thought, Stuart did not speak for several minutes. Then he asked how many persons knew of the negotiations for the pearls.

"The mandarin, my agent in Annam and myself and, later, Leong Ton must have been told. The mandarin, however, assured my agent that he alone knew why Leong Ton was leaving, that he gave him the pearls with his own hands and that no other person was informed."

"Very well," said Stuart, rising. "I shall begin my search at once."

"Just a moment."

From his pocket Sun Kong drew a ring and handed it to the other. It was of silver, made to represent a coil of rope with its ends loosely entwined. Inside were the numerals 545.

"That ring identifies you to my agents everywhere. The number is yours in my organization. Whenever you see a similar ring you are entitled to call upon its wearer for such assistance as you may need, giving him only your identifying number and obtaining his. But you are not to tell him or any one the full mission upon which you are engaged. The existence of the pearls must be kept absolutely secret, Mr. Stuart. Do you understand? Absolutely secret."

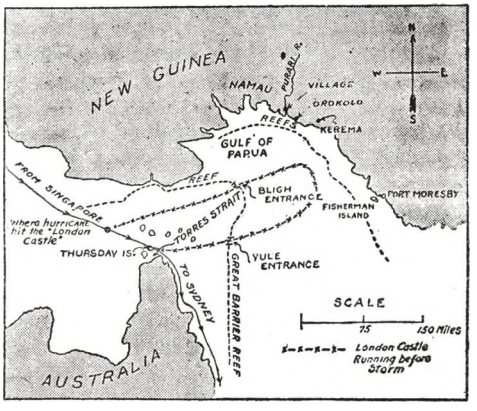
CHAPTER V

THE STRANGE PASSENGERS

CAPTAIN BANKS, of the *London Castle*, was inclined to be irritated when he learned the nature of Stuart's business with him.

"Will I never hear the end of that —— voyage?" he demanded bruskly. "Man and boy, I've been at sea for going on thirty

years and I never saw another like it, nor want to, either. Blow, blow, blow from the day we leave Singapore until we hit Torres Strait with a howling sou'wester to cap it off. What with being on the bridge night and day I was fair done up before ever we made Thursday Island. Off my course, running before the blow; among the reefs, steering mostly by guess and by ——, having a boat stolen off the tub right under my blinking nose, raked over the coals by the owners for being behind schedule and Heaven only knows what else. Then on top of it, this —— chink of a passenger changes his mind about going on to Sydney, or so the stewards tell me, and now there's a hullabaloo about it because he doesn't show



up where he's supposed to. Oh, I'm fair fed up on that trip."

Abruptly, however, his manner changed. Having vented his annoyance at having a distasteful subject brought up, he became again the polite, affable commander of a passenger vessel. Evidently he had remembered that Stuart had booked passage to Thursday Island with him.

"I guess I'm forgetting myself a bit, Mr. Stuart," he resumed, his good nature restored. "I suppose you know that after sailing from Singapore on this trip I received by radio an inquiry about this Leong Ton. I hardly recalled the incident of his leaving the ship. It's not unusual for a passenger to change his mind and go ashore at some other port than the one for which he has booked. It's not often that one does it without notifying his steward at least, or getting help with his luggage, but it happens once in a while. As for this man, no one recalled seeing him go, and his cabin-steward made no report of it until the day after we left T. I.

"He's still with us, and, you can believe me, I gave him a raking, although he pretty well convinced me the other day that he wasn't to blame. Seems like this Leong Ton was dumb and, being a chink, was sensitive about it. Stuck pretty close to his cabin all the time, had his meals brought there and went on deck only at night when the passengers had retired and there was nobody about except the members of the crew that were on watch. Then he'd walk up and down for a half-hour or so and go back to his cabin. The steward says—but you can talk to the man yourself. I'll send for him."

The steward when he came was inclined to be sullen and uncommunicative. Stuart sensed that he still was smarting from the raking of which Captain Banks had spoken. He thawed out a bit, however, when he discovered that he was not to be bullyragged again for reporting a passenger as leaving the ship when he should have reported him missing.

He confirmed what the skipper had said about Leong Ton sticking close to his cabin. Moreover the passenger, the first in his experience, had chosen to dispense with his services except to bring him his meals. He had cleaned up the cabin himself, made his own bunk and kept his door locked. When he needed anything he rang his call-bell, put the door on the hook so that it stood open only a few inches and conveyed his wishes by means of notes which he thrust through the aperture. The notes were in good English and the man understood readily what was said to him in that tongue. If a question required a simple "No" or "Yes" he answered by shaking or nodding his head. If further words were necessary he wrote another note.

"Was there anything else that struck your notice particularly?" Stuart wanted to know.

"There was, sir. The man always had on gloves. Leastways, the hand that used to shove the notes through the door or take in the linens or water was gloved. When his meals were ready I'd set them down outside the door in the little passageway between his cabin and the one across from him, knock and go away. That was the way he wanted it done. He had told me in a note the first day out. And another thing, sir.

I got a goodish look at him one day and his face was very black, more so than the skin of any Chinaman I ever seen. Looked more like a nigger than a Chinaman to me, unless you looked at his eyes; not a black nigger, you understand, but saddle-colored."

"You reported that he had left the ship at Thursday Island, I understand," said Stuart. "Why?"

The steward flushed.

"I didn't like to admit that I didn't know what had become of him, sir. When I went to his cabin the morning after we left T. I. nobody answered when I knocked. I opened the door. The cabin was empty. The man was gone, bag and baggage."

"There you are, Mr. Stuart. Isn't it evident that Leong Ton quit the ship of his own accord?" asked the skipper.

"It looks like it," admitted Stuart. "Suppose, though, some one had kidnaped him. What better way to hide the fact than to take his luggage along? You accept that as conclusive."

"Kidnaped! By Godfrey, you detectives are all alike," Captain Banks snorted. "Why in Tophet should you suspect that? Barring the fact this chink was a queer cove, keeping to himself and all that, what other reason to think anything was wrong? But—" suspicion dawned in his eyes—"you may know something I don't!"

Stuart shrugged his shoulders non-committally. He had told the skipper that he represented Leong Ton's relatives. Before he could speak, however, the steward broke in.

"There was one thing more," he said excitedly. "It may not have anything to do with the matter, and I never gave it a thought afterwards. One night this man rang for me and handed me a note asking who occupied the cabin on the other side of the partition. They were talking rather late in there and I thought it disturbed him. Leastways, he signaled me to go after I told him."

Stuart leaned forward expectantly.

"And who did occupy that other cabin?" he asked.

"A Dr. Curtis and a Mr. Knox, sir."

The captain broke into loud laughter.

"They, at least, aren't kidnapers, Mr. Stuart," he cried. "Dr. Curtis is an old friend of mine and head of the Australian health department. Mr. Knox is his secretary."

Stuart nodded dismissal to the steward, and rose.

"I suppose you can tell me nothing further, captain," he said. "No doubt you are right and Leong Ton left your ship of his own accord. But didn't you mention that you lost a boat on that trip?"

The skipper eyed him quizzically.

"Steady on, Mr. Stuart. The boat and your Chinaman are not connected. The boat was recovered from a double-dashed thief of a luggerman. Took advantage of the fact I had only one man doing deck-watch at T. I. the night we arrived there, while the rest made up their lost sleep. Came aboard and cut the boat loose from the falls and tossed her over the side with the help of his rascally crew, I think. Anyhow he had her alongside his lugger when I came by on the return passage. Hadn't even painted the ship's name out. I had him taken in custody, of course. He gave up the boat readily enough. Said he had found it adrift and salvaged it. Thin, but he had to say something. The magistrate let him go as I wasn't for pressing the charge."

"Oh," said Stuart, disappointed.

He made up his mind, however, that he was not going to let the matter be disposed of so easily. The "double-dashed thief of a luggerman" might have been telling the truth.

CHAPTER VI

IN SEARCH OF A CLUE

THE *London Castle* rounded a headland upon which stood a solitary shack surrounded by a single lantana clump and came in sight of the beginning of the settlement of Thursday Island, sprawling along the foreshore. Even before they had drawn up to the little jetty where the big liners pause briefly Stuart knew what he was going to see. He had never been there before, but he had been in other little South Seas ports and mostly they all are alike, these tiny misnamed paradises of the tropics.

Down in Sydney he had been told that Thursday Island was decadent; its businesses of pearling, fishing for bêche-de-mer and diving for trochas-shell at a standstill; its population decreased by all those who had been able to get away. For Thursday Island, like the less important bits of land, volcanic rock and coral which dot Torres

Strait, depends for its very life upon what is dragged from the depths of the sea. Hence, as the seasons are good or bad, the hurricanes violent or mild, the fishing heavy or light, the pearling excellent or a failure and the demand for shell large or small—so Thursday Island prospers or suffers.

On the beaches near by and jammed upon the jetty Stuart saw those who had stayed because they couldn't get away. Black men, brown men, yellow men, white men—yes, and women, too—the despair-ridden, drink-besotted flotsam and jetsam of humanity that is washed up on to these South Seas atolls from every corner of the earth. During the busy and prosperous seasons they find work to do, enough to feed them and leave over something for the gin shandy jamborees in which they seek to forget. How they eke out an existence at other times only God knows.

Leaning over the rail while he waited for the port doctor to come aboard and make his casual inspection of those who were going on and slightly more rigid examination of those who were stopping over, Stuart recognized many faces among the beachcombers—poor devils he had met in other places. Already some were shouting at him by name, inspired by the hope that when he came ashore they might wangle from him the price of a meal or a drink. Stuart's heart was gripped by pity. At thirty one is not yet calloused to human misery.

But when he came down the gang-plank he had throttled his sympathy and one and all he ignored them—brown, black, yellow and white—and shouldered them out of his way. Later he might find a selected one or two useful. He knew that among these dregs things often are matters of common knowledge days before they get to the ears of the upper strata, if ever. If he were to pick up any clue to Leong Ton here it was far more likely that it would come from one of these than from one of his more prosperous brethren. But to get even a hint he knew he must withhold largess except as a bribe.

As he strode up the sandy road between the shacks and makeshift buildings to the hotel, so-called, he was pondering upon his course of action. Captain Banks' belief that Leong Ton had landed at Thursday Island had been pretty well shattered by the official who perfunctorily glanced at the passport which Stuart, as an American, had obtained before leaving Sydney.

"No fear," the man had said when Stuart inquired if he could recall passing a dumb Chinese about a year before. "Government's too set against the yellow boys. I wouldn't have forgotten one who couldn't talk. But he might have been smuggled in. It's done often enough. Let a man once get ashore and, unless we learn of it, he could stay here in this mixed crowd for several days. Then some dark night he'd be run down into Queensland, in spite of the fact that down at Melbourne they insist it couldn't be done."

The possibility didn't interest Stuart. Leong Ton's presence aboard the *London Castle*, bound for Australia, was in itself proof that he had been equipped with a passport when he left Singapore. There had been no occasion for him to try to enter illegally a country which he could enter legally so long as he proposed to stay only a short time on business. He didn't believe Leong Ton had quit the *London Castle* at Thursday Island unless something had come up which had convinced him that the blood-red pearls were in danger. Still, he might have come ashore for some reason. If he could establish that Leong Ton had been there at all, the mystery of how his luggage had followed him could be explained in a dozen ways.

Resolutely, Stuart set out to learn if any one had seen the tongueless man. At the hotel where he registered and was given a room the proprietor could tell him nothing. He suggested that sooner or later everybody visits one of the stores, an idea which already had occurred to Stuart and which he proceeded to follow up. The half-dozen shops operated by white men yielded nothing. No one recalled a dumb Chinese. Stuart turned to the establishments operated by Orientals. He knew the yellow man's racial dislike for telling a white man anything about another yellow man, but he was leaving no stone unturned.

He had a fair working knowledge of the jargon English which is the Esperanto of the South Seas and reaches its repulsive culmination in Torres Strait, where there must be some common tongue between Malay, aboriginal, Oriental and white. But at the end of two hours of asking questions of the bland Chinese and Japanese storekeepers he had learned nothing. Either

they knew nothing of Leong Ton or, if they had seen him, would not admit it. Stuart was satisfied that they were telling the truth.

That night he strolled down to the beach and mingled with the down-and-outs, sprawled on the sand around tiny fires in preference to occupying the dilapidated shacks which were theirs for the taking. He was seeking some one he might question with some expectation of getting the truth. He found him in a hobo seaman he once had befriended in Sydney and who logically might be expected to feel under slight obligations.

"No, sir, Mr. Stuart, there's been no talk of a tongueless chink." Beachy Bill was positive of that and equally positive that he would have heard it if there had been. "I'll sound around a bit for you in case I missed anything. Quiet-like. I understand you wouldn't want it foghorned any."

"Come up to the hotel and have a drink," invited Stuart, knowing the man's weakness.

The other shook his head. He would rather have the price of one. It would solve the question of food on the morrow. Stuart gave him twice what he asked.

"I'll make it a pound if you can dig up anything about the chink," he promised and went off to the hotel alone. In the bar, where he entered to get a box of matches, a man nodded to him. Stuart recognized the port doctor. Instantly a thought flashed into his mind. He drew him aside.

"Doctor," he said. "I am trying to trace a man, a Chinese, who was aboard the *London Castle*, Sydney bound, about a year ago. I believe that you line up all the passengers of the vessels that stop here, look at their tongues, feel their pulses and so on? Yes? Then you would recall this man. He had no tongue."

"No such man ever—" began the doctor. Then he paused, his brow corrugated in thought.

"Just a minute. The *London Castle*. A year ago. Yes, I'm right. I'm sorry, but on that particular occasion I did not inspect the passengers. The ship came in two days late. I was called to a near-by island for an emergency operation. I deputized Magistrate Connors to serve for me. He's not a physician, probably wouldn't know a case of disease if he saw it, but the law strictly says that some one in an official capacity must release the ship from quarantine. No doubt Connors took the ship's doctor's word for it that there was no illness aboard. Probably didn't even look at the passengers."

CHAPTER VII

A FRIENDLY TIP

MAGISTRATE CONNORS, when Stuart sought him out at his office the next day, confirmed what the port doctor had said. He had not lined up the passengers before granting pratique to the *London Castle* on that voyage when Leong Ton had been a passenger. Dr. Curtis, the Australian health head, had seemed quite put out because the port doctor was away, but had dropped the subject when he learned why.

"Apparently Captain Banks of the *London Castle* was not the only one who had cause to remember that particular trip," commented Stuart, deliberately leading up to the matter of the stolen boat.

During his meditations in a secluded corner of the hotel veranda the night before he had come to the conclusion that Leong Ton never had reached Thursday Island at all. More and more he was leaning to the belief that the man had somehow managed to leave the ship beforehand, and that the stolen boat figured in it somewhere. That very morning Beachy Bill had strengthened that belief. Eager as he had been to win the promised reward of a pound, the beachcomber had reported that he had been unable to find any trace of the man Stuart sought.

At mention of Captain Banks' name a frown, dissipated almost instantly, showed on the magistrate's face.

"Probably both of us remember it for the same reason," he said slowly. "Did he mention causing the arrest, upon his return from Sydney, of a luggerman whom he accused of stealing a boat off the *London Castle?* He did? Well, Captain Banks did not play exactly fair with me in that matter."

"Tell me about it," Stuart urged.

Magistrate Connors pursed his lips thoughtfully. Then he straightened in his chair and leaned forward.

"Mr. Stuart," he said, "I am not asking you any questions, but you may feel perfectly free to ask me any you wish and I shall answer them to the best of my ability.

You have come to me asking about a tongueless Chinese, presumably a passenger on the *London Castle* a year ago, who disappeared. At the same time you display interest in a boat stolen from that ship about the same time. I shall not attempt to connect these two things in words, but I am quite sure I am not far wrong in thinking I can be of assistance to you. If I *am* wrong, stop me at any time. No explanations will be necessary."

His eyes fell significantly upon Stuart's left hand and that inconspicuous ring which Sun Kong had given him. In a flash Stuart understood. This magistrate, too, owed allegiance to that wizened Chinese back in Sydney.

"Go ahead," he said.

"At his hearing before me the luggerman, one Bunting, better known as 'Hurricane Harry,' swore he had picked up the boat in the Gulf of Papua, near the coast of British New Guinea. On the face of it that seemed a lie. The place he mentioned is a full two hundred miles from here and the course of the *London Castle* from Singapore lies nowhere near it."

"Captain Banks said something about running before a sou'wester," said Stuart.

"He merely sneered at Bunting's statement in court," Connors went on. "However, when the luggerman offered to bring his crew to add their words to his, Captain Banks made it easy to dispose of the matter by offering to drop his charges if the boat were returned. Bunting was willing. There was nothing I could do but agree. But here is what I meant by saying the skipper didn't play fair with me. He *was* in the Gulf of Papua on that trip and that was why he was two days late arriving here. Probably he didn't like to admit the reckless thing he did, risking his ship and the lives aboard. I didn't think at the time that Hurricane Harry told the truth. I do now, partly at least."

He got up and went to a wall upon which hung a large map.

"If you will examine this for a moment I think you will understand, Mr. Stuart. Whether it has any bearing upon the matter in which you are interested is for you to decide. Here—" he pointed with his finger—"is Thursday Island. Here to the northeast is the Gulf of Papua. Between it and Torres Strait is an almost unbroken stretch of reefs running from west to east, then dropping south to form the Great Barrier Reef that parallels the Australian coast. There are two entrances through the reef from the Gulf of Papua. One, Bligh Entrance, lies to the north. The other, Yule Entrance, lies almost due east of Thursday Island.

"Mr. Stuart, when the *London Castle* came here on that memorable trip she had come from the east, through Yule Entrance, I heard later. What was she doing in that direction, when Singapore is northwest? I have solved it to my own satisfaction, merely for the fun of it. A skipper is entitled to use his own judgment in emergencies, but if Captain Banks did what I think he did, he was one of two things—one of the bravest men who ever commanded a ship or the biggest fool.

"He must have been headed southeast when the storm struck him. It was terrific. That I know. He told you he ran before it. That means he turned northeast into comparatively reef-free waters. But he ran the terrible risk of ending up on the great west to east reef unless the storm abated before he got there or he was so fortunate as to strike it squarely at Bligh Entrance. One or the other must have happened. At any rate he evidently got into the Gulf of Papua safely, circled south and came back into Torres Strait through Yule Entrance, thus approaching Thursday Island from the east.

"I judge you are not concerned with whether his judgment was good or bad. The probability that he did it and somewhere in the Gulf of Papua lost the boat he accused Hurricane Harry of stealing may be of importance to you. Incidentally, I might mention that Hurricane Harry and his lugger are now somewhere in New Guinea waters. I presume if a man went to Port Moresby and hung around there a while he would find both the man and his lugger in a short time."

"Thank you," said Stuart gravely, his eyes fixed upon the map. "What kind of a man is this Hurricane Harry?"

"As cruel and unscrupulous a brute as one ever met. He's a jackal of the sea, suspected of many things, convicted of none. Ostensibly he makes a living by fishing for bêche-de-mer, by pearling, by carrying copra or hiring out his lugger. He does these things, too, on occasion but I have no doubt that in other days the black

flag with the skull and crossbones would have flown from his masthead."

"I see." Stuart's tones were thoughtful. "Now, Mr. Connors how do I get to Port Moresby?"

CHAPTER VIII

HURRICANE HARRY

NO ONE seeing Allen Stuart as he sauntered out upon the hotel veranda and took a chair would have guessed that he was seething with impatience. For seven days now he had been sitting around Port Moresby, waiting for Hurricane Harry Bunting to put in an appearance. Under the guise of a prospective plantation owner, he had made inquiry concerning a boat which he might hire to run him along the coast on an inspection trip and introduced the name of the luggerman. Bunting, he was told, was loading copra sixty miles west and might show up any day.

A week had passed with no sign of him. Quickly Stuart had exhausted the amusement possibilities of Port Moresby. The native village built on piles at the far end of the bay had taken up a half-day; an eighteen-mile ride over the hills in an ancient flivver, the only motor vehicle in New Guinea, had proved more bumpy than exhilarating; he had seen the week's bill at the tiny motion-picture theater, a western thriller that only accentuated his own boredom. Remained only billiards on the moth-riddled tables at the hotel, at which he was a dub and knew it; poker-games marked by wrangling that disgusted him or drinking bouts—and he did not drink.

Outwardly he was calm and unruffled, as befitted one who has grown languid from long sojourn in the tropics. His rôle of planter had brought no annoyance. He had been told on the boat that had brought him from Thursday Island that no plantations in New Guinea were for sale. The ordinary curiosity of dwellers in small places concerning a stranger had been allayed by a squib in the weekly newspaper, inspired by the clerk from whom he had bought garments of cool, white duck. So far as the Port Moresbyites were concerned, Stuart was unhampered.

Now, as his eyes sought the entrance to the bay and beheld a lugger coming in, he felt his interest quicken. It might not be that of Hurricane Harry and the end of his waiting, but there was that possibility. He did not quit his chair immediately, however. The dirty sail, spread to catch any vagrant breeze, hung in folds. The lugger was propelled only by its auxiliary gasoline-motor and its progress was slow. When it had rounded the buoy which marked a small reef and turned toward the long wharf jutting out into deep water, he rose, settled his pith-helmet firmly upon his head and stepped out into the hot, sandy street.

He had misjudged the lugger's speed, however. When he turned the corner of the big, galvanized-iron warehouse at the shore end of the wharf, the boat already was tied up to the wooden bitts. Upon the wharf an argument was in progress. A giant in faded dungarees truculently faced two smaller men. Billingsgate filled the air.

Stuart increased his pace. He would get no particular enjoyment from a fight of which he knew not the merits, but he might as well see it from the very start. He elbowed his way through the bushy-haired, whooping natives who had sped down the wharf ahead of him and was just in time to see the two smaller men launch themselves upon the other. In spite of the odds, the giant seemed to welcome the attack. His lips beneath a shaggy black mustache were parted in a savage smile. He made no effort to parry the flying fists of his antagonists and his own blows were awkward, but they landed with a smacking impact that told of tremendous force behind them.

A wicked left caught one of his foes upon the ear and sent him crashing upon the wharf planking. The big man aimed a vicious kick at his prostrate form, then leaped over it to finish off the other.

The man who was down was far from done. He fumbled in his pockets, produced a Barlow knife, opened it with a horny thumbnail and sprang to his feet. Stuart met his charge half-way. There had been no thought of interference on his part so long as the fight appeared as fair as a roughhouse can be. But his code did not include standing by while a man was knifed from behind.

His fingers seized the wrist of the man with the knife and clamped down upon it. Then he brought the arm behind the man's

back and inserted a thumb between his knuckles. He was rewarded by an agonized howl and the knife clattered to the planking. Stuart planted a foot upon it and immediately released its owner. Then he stooped to recover the knife.

Instantly the man he had disarmed was upon his back, clawing and kicking. Stuart threw him over his head and when the man arose and charged him again, feinted with his left and drove home upon the point of the chin with his right. The man did a backward arc off the wharf and disappeared beneath the waters. Stuart's eyes followed him and watched for him to emerge. He seemed to stay under unreasonably long and, without shifting his gaze, Stuart peeled off his coat and got ready to dive.

But it was unnecessary. His victim broke water, shook the bedraggled mop of hair out of his eyes and struck out strongly for a small ladder nailed to the piling. With a sigh of relief Stuart picked up his coat and turned to watch the others.

The big man had just scored a knockdown and was planting savage kicks into the ribs of his vanquished opponent, who was howling that he had enough and shielding his features with his bent arms. Either the giant was satisfied or he sensed the hostility of the white men among the spectators, for with a final kick he turned his back upon the other and faced Stuart.

Instead of the gratitude that might have been expected Stuart saw only rage depicted in his features. Beady eyes glittered venomously from behind mere slits and the distended nostrils of his vulture-like nose were dangerously white. His blood-smeared lips were open, disclosing stained teeth between which whistled the panting breath. He stood with clenched fists, his hairy chest rising and falling rapidly from his recent exertions.

"Wot do yer mean, putting yer oar into me affairs without so much as a 'by yer leave'?" he bellowed.

"They'd be carrying you off with a knife in your back if I hadn't," replied Stuart pleasantly.

"Wot of it? 'Twere my fight, not yers."

Until then Stuart had not been sure that the giant knew the full danger he had run. Apparently, however, he had seen the knife and understood Stuart's interference, but was determined to resent it anyhow.

Stuart measured the distance to the other's chin with an appraising eye. One uppercut, starting from the hip and catching the other coming in, would go far toward overcoming the handicap of weight and strength.

He shrugged.

"Sorry," he said. "I had no idea you'd object."

"Well, I do object. I've got a mind to bash ye."

"I wouldn't advise you to try it," icily.

"Why not?"

It dawned upon Stuart that the other was purposely bandying words, prolonging the argument until he should have recovered his wind. Determined to force the issue and have it done with, he laughed sarcastically.

"Because," he said, "I've seen you fight and I'd cut you to ribbons."

The big man lunged just as a white-clad figure thrust itself between them.

"That will be all," said the town policeman evenly. "You, sir," addressing Stuart, "had best go to the hotel and wash up. and you, Bunting, get aboard your lugger and cool off. That is, unless some one wishes to prefer charges."

Stuart already had surmised that the big man was Hurricane Harry. The policeman's words confirmed this. He turned to the luggerman.

"We'd best drop the argument," he said. "I've got something I want to talk over with you."

Bunting eyed him questioningly from head to toe.

"Come aboard," he invited curtly and started for the lugger.

CHAPTER IX

A SURPRIZING DISCOVERY

"GO BELOW," said Bunting indicating a small companionway aft. "I'll start the niggers unloading."

Stuart descended to a foul little cabin, located in the stern of the craft almost over the propeller, and sat down upon an upended box. There were two bunks, one on each side of the cabin, the soiled blankets disarranged as they had been left when the occupants tossed them aside upon arising. Against the forward partition, beyond which Stuart could hear

Bunting profanely showing which part of the hold should be emptied first, was fastened a rough pine-table. Upon it stood tin dishes and cups, scraps of food from a recent meal, glasses and a half-emptied whisky-bottle. From nails driven into the wall above one of the bunks hung shapeless garments and weatherbeaten hats. The narrow shelf at the head of the bunk contained a motley collection—a couple of knives, greasy playing-cards, a comb with many teeth missing, a wicked-looking revolver, buttons, spools of thread and so on. The scent of raw gasoline competed with the odor of a stale pipe somewhere in the cabin.

Stuart shuddered. He was an old hand at roughing it, at sea and afloat, but his stomach revolted at sight and scent of this home of Hurricane Harry. He was glad when he heard the sound of the man's boots upon the companionway.

"Drink?"

Bunting filled one of the glasses and drained it at a gulp. He shoved the bottle toward Stuart and wiped his dripping mustache upon his hairy forearm. Then he picked up a pipe from the floor beneath the table, stuffed it with black trade-tobacco whittled into his palm with one of the knives from the shelf, struck a match with one swipe against his khaki trousers and lighted the pipe. When he was satisfied that it was going properly, he dropped upon the bunk over which the clothes were hung and stretched out upon his back.

"I'm knocked up," he explained. "Me and the mate give up our bunks last night ter those blighters I had the ruckus with. They'd agreed to pay a pound apiece fer passage from Kerema. When we get here they only had ten bob between 'em. That was what the fight were about. Now wot was it yer wanted to say ter me?"

"I want to ask you about a boat."

"Yer mean yer want ter hire the lugger?"

"No. The boat I refer to is a lifeboat, one from the steamer *London Castle*."

Hurricane Harry's feet hit the floor with a thud as he swung himself up to a sitting position.

"Wot about it?" he demanded.

"You told Magistrate Connors down at Thursday Island that you salvaged it from the Gulf of Papua," Stuart went on, pretending he had noticed nothing unusual in Bunting's demeanor. "He didn't believe it then. He does now. It has been learned the *London Castle* passed through the reefs into the gulf during a hurricane about that time. I want to know all you can tell me about finding the boat."

Bunting burst into guffaws.

"That's it, eh. Old Banks has got hisself into hot water. Serves him right fer what he done ter me. Passes me going inter T. I. and has a bobby waiting when I land. Didn't wait ter find out whether I aimed ter give up the boat er not. Lays a charge I hooked it. Old fool. Wouldn't I have painted out the ship's name if I'd swiped it? I hope he loses his ticket."

He leaned back against the wall, chuckling vindictively.

"He may get bounced. He may not. That's up to the owners. What I want to know is about the boat," prompted Stuart.

"The boat, young felly me lad, were floating keel up, down Namau way about a half-mile offshore. Right about the mouth of the Purari."

Stuart nodded.

"That seems to prove he was in the gulf, all right," he said. "Bad luck for him that the hurricane washed it overboard."

He hoped that sounded as careless as he tried to make it.

Another guffaw from Bunting.

"The boat weren't washed over," he said. "She were launched from the davits. Didn't the old —— mention that?"

"No." Stuart simulated surprize. "How do you know?"

"The one who done it were no sailor. He didn't know enough to cast off the tackle. He cut the ropes fore and aft with a knife."

"You don't say so."

Plainly Bunting was enjoying himself.

"I do say so," he mocked.

Then a crafty look came into his face.

"And I've got a —— good idea who it was, too."

He puffed heavily upon his pipe, drawing the rank smoke deep into his lungs and expelling it slowly through his beak-like nose. Stuart sensed that the man was deliberately withholding further words, trying to tantalize him, revelling in the cat-and-mouse situation.

"Who was it?" he asked, playing up. "I can't guess."

"Tompkins. Mebbe you know him.

Holding down a nigger's job, swabbing out the pub. And him a white man."

"And what makes you think he ever was on the *London Castle* or had a hand in stealing the boat?"

"I'm no —— fool. I can add two and two. Course I don't *know* this cove done it, but it stands ter reason. About a week after I picks up the boat off Namau, Tompkins shows up at Orokolo, twenty miles east, burning up with fever and out of his head. The natives turn him over ter the magistrate at Kerema and he sent him on ter the hospital here. Nobody ever heard of him before and white men ain't so plentiful but what every one of 'em in New Guinea knows all the rest. Where did this Tompkins come from if he wasn't in that boat, I'd like to know?"

"You think then the boat capsized and he swam or was washed ashore? It's a good guess, all right. I'll see him and see what he has to say."

" 'Tain't likely it'll do much good. He's balmy. His mind ain't right."

"I'll have a go at him anyhow. By the way, do you know of any plantations for sale? While I'm up here I might want to look them over. I've asked around town, but nobody seems to know."

Then he added pointedly—

"I haven't mentioned the other thing that brought me up here."

Whatever answer Bunting might have made was prevented by the sounds of dissention from above. Cursing, the man leaped to his feet. One shoulder, catching the edge of the shelf, tore it from the wall.

"Leave it lay," roared Bunting and charged up the companionway.

Stuart, amusedly watching the articles from the shelf sliding across the floor, made a discovery that wiped the smile from his face. He got up to retrieve the object that interested him but before he could do so, Bunting was clattering down the steps again. Stuart again declined a drink and nodded when the other profanely adjured him to see that old Banks "got his."

But as he clambered over the rail to the wharf, Stuart's mind was a riot of speculations. How did a man of the caliber of Hurricane Harry happen to possess that object he had seen upon the floor—a silver ring in the shape of a rope with the ends loosely entwined, the insignia of those who served Sun Kong?

CHAPTER X

STUART PLAYS A HUNCH

STUART'S hopes that he might obtain from the man Tompkins some clue that would help in the search for Leong Ton and the recovery of the blood-red pearls vanished with his first close scrutiny of the man that evening.

Tompkins was engaged with his menial duties around the barroom. He mopped the floor, washed glasses, brought full bottles from the storeroom in the rear, took empty ones back. But he did them mechanically. His only speech seemed to consist of "Yes, sir," or "No, sir" when he was addressed. An automaton would have displayed an equal intelligence.

Yet Stuart's eyes told him neither the man's personal habits nor his features went with the brain of a dolt. His face had been carefully shaved, his neck and ears were clean, his fingernails free from grime. The mouth was firm, the forehead high, the width between his eyes ample. It was only when one gazed into his eyes and saw there neither life nor sparkle but only a vacant stare that the clouded reason behind was sensed.

As Hurricane Harry had said, Tompkins was "balmy," but there had been a time when he had been neither stupid nor idiotic. Some great misfortune had robbed him of his God-given intellect.

Stuart, seizing a moment when the barmaid had stepped out and left them alone, spoke sharply.

"Tompkins," he said.

"Yes, sir."

The man, shuffling across the floor with an armful of empty bottles, paused and raised lack-lustre eyes.

"Were you ever on the *London Castle*, Tompkins?"

Tompkins appeared to be trying to remember. His brow corrugated violently. He stood with downcast head in an attitude of concentration, or rather the bearing of a small boy caught unprepared in class. But there was no inward reaction.

"The *London Castle*, Tompkins. The ship. You left it in a boat which capsized," prompted Stuart.

"Yes, sir."

"You do remember, then?"

"No, sir."

Stuart let him go then. Watching the man shuffle away, his face once more placid, he realized that it was no use. In the clouded brain mention of things with which he would be familiar if Bunting's guess were correct had found no response. Stuart shook his head in pity and turned to go upon the veranda.

A native stood in the doorway, leaning against the jamb. Evidently he had been an interested auditor of what had happened. He stepped aside to let the white man pass, followed him out to the veranda and disappeared down the street in the growing darkness. He had not spoken, but Stuart felt a growing suspicion that the black man had been spying upon him. It was not permitted natives to drink. The man apparently had no other business in the barroom.

Why, then, had he been there in the doorway? Suddenly he recalled where he had seen the man before—a few hours previously aboard the lugger, one of the crew apparently. Neither that nor the man's presence in the barroom doorway was specially significant. Taken in conjunction with the discovery that Bunting possessed one of Sun Kong's rings, it was disturbing.

Yet there had been nothing in the interview aboard the lugger to indicate that Hurricane Harry had any interest in Stuart except as an instrument through which he might get back at the skipper of the *London Castle* for causing his arrest. His story of finding the boat had rung true in Stuart's ears. His theory concerning Tompkins had not been borne out by the man himself. Neither had he disproved it. Suppose, though, that Bunting was wrong, that Tompkins had no connection with the *London Castle?* Might not the boat, with its telltale cut ropes, have been used by Leong Ton in getting away from the steamer? If so, what had become of him?

Beyond a conviction that the custodian of the blood-red pearls never had reached Thursday Island Stuart did not feel that he had made much progress in his investigations. Still somebody had quit the *London Castle* in the lifeboat, evidently. There was a possibility it was the missing Chinese. Stuart would not be satisfied until he had searched the coast down by Namau for some trace of Leong Ton.

First, however, he must get some information about that part of the country. That very morning he had met a man who might be in a position to give it, Patrol Officer Lipscombe. The lean, tanned man with grayish hair and close-cropped mustache was a veteran of the country, and of the Government service. Just back from a furlough, he was awaiting assignment to duty. Stuart found him stretched out in a steamer-chair at the other end of the veranda.

"Namau? Sure I know it," said Lipscombe. "Served two years at Kerema, the Government station from which it is controled, or supposed to be. But you're not thinking of a plantation down there, are you, Mr. Stuart?"

"Why not?" Stuart declined to quit his rôle of prospective planter.

"You don't know anything about Namau or you wouldn't ask," retorted the patrol officer. "Gloomy, repulsive country, mostly mud-banks and swamps and covered with mangrove, nipa and sago. The monotony and depression alone would drive you insane—if you lived long enough."

"If I lived long enough?"

"Cannibals. A white man who tackles Namau without an armed force at his back is inviting death. The chair-warmers up here at Moresby will tell you Namau's under thorough control. But tell them you're thinking of going down there alone and see what happens? They know as well as I do, Namau's the one danger-spot in New Guinea; dangerous, that is, so far as organized opposition is concerned. There are twenty thousand natives down there in the Purari Delta, all bound together by traditions, language and customs, which you won't find anywhere else in the country. One tiny spark on our part down there and the result might easily be a blaze that would virtually wipe out the prestige of the white man in New Guinea. There'd only be a handful of whites and around three hundred native armed constables to cope with them. I wouldn't have been surprized if the situation had arisen a couple of years ago. A new patrol officer, a bit of an ass by the way, found one of the villages suffering from an epidemic of some sort and burned all the huts. He got away with his men after a fight, but it was a miracle."

"That fellow Bunting spoke of being down there quite casually," Stuart remarked.

"Oh, Bunting. He's the one white man

who could do it with safety. His mate's a Namau nigger and enjoys some prestige because he's been in jail for murder. Bunting's safe enough, even in Namau. But I hope you haven't any idea of entrusting yourself to Bunting, Mr. Stuart. It isn't safe."

Stuart laughed.

"I have a keen desire to visit Namau and even what you have said about the country and the people isn't going to stop me, Mr. Lipscombe. But I'll not do it with Hurricane Harry. I'm not afraid of him or his cutthroat mate, but I was in the cabin of his lugger today and I don't believe I could stick it more than an hour or two at a stretch."

For a moment the silence was unbroken. In the dim light of a hurricane-lamp hanging beside the door to the hallway Stuart could see that his companion was tugging at the lobe of one ear.

"I believe I can be of help to you, Mr. Stuart," said Lipscombe slowly. "Understand I'm not trying to pry into your affairs and I don't care what your real purpose is in wanting to go to Namau. I'm quite sure it's neither cocoanuts nor curiosity. But if you are prepared to put up a little expense money, a hundred pounds or so, I think I can fix it."

"Go on," said Stuart.

"The governor's keen on patroling a district like Namau. But patrols cost money, and the Government here hasn't very much. I happen to know the governor would like to have some official look in down there and if it wasn't going to cost anything, he'd be tickled pink. If your reason for going to Namau would fit in with such a plan, it won't hurt you to suggest it to the government secretary and have him take it up with his Excellency."

CHAPTER XI

SHADOWED

"YOU don't suppose that blighter, Hurricane Harry Bunting, is interested in our movements?" Patrol Officer Lipscombe eyed Stuart questioningly, and twitched gently at his ear. Stuart had come to regard that as a sign of concentration on the other's part.

Six days before they had left Port Moresby, bound for the Purari Delta and Namau, in a powerboat with a detachment of twelve armed native constables. Lipscombe's idea of interesting the governor by offering to finance a patrol of Namau had worked out to perfection. His Excellency had been frankly doubtful that Stuart would find any clue to the missing passenger of the *London Castle*, but not at all averse to ordering the patrol at his expense. If he suspected that anything was being held back from him he did not voice it, but contented himself with warning against anything that might embroil the Government.

On the way down the patrol had paused at Kerema to inquire of the magistrate there concerning the circumstances under which Tompkins had come into his hands and to pay him the courtesy of notifying him of the patrol in his district. Of the latter he was frankly glad. Concerning Tompkins he knew no more than Bunting had told Stuart.

"Word reached me about the time Tompkins showed up that the Namau had rescued a white man from the sea," he said. "I suppose it was Tompkins and that later they had started him along the coast alone rather than bring him themselves. But there's not been even a rumor of a Chinese in these parts."

It had been after leaving Kerema that, rounding a headland, they had first sighted the lugger, circling aimlessly farther out from shore, then suddenly heading west as if in flight before them. During the night it had not been seen, but here it was again, loafing along ahead of them. Already it seemed to be drawing ahead more rapidly and the next quarter of an hour saw it hidden entirely by a point of land.

Hurricane Harry's lugger, Lipscombe said, was similar to a great many other luggers in this part of the world and none of the patrol knew any distinguishing mark by which it might be identified. There was no proof that the craft they had seen was Bunting's or, if it was, that its presence there had anything to do with them.

"I know of no reason why he should care where we go or what we do," Stuart replied to Lipscombe's question.

He already had mentioned to the patrol officer Bunting's connection with the boat from the *London Castle*.

"I never mentioned Leong Ton to him, tried, in fact, to let him think I wasn't so much interested in the boat as I was in a plantation. Made it a point to impress it

on him one night in the pub. Nobody knows we left together except the officials, do they?"

"You can't keep a secret in Moresby," returned Lipscombe pessimistically. "How's the sunburn now?"

Stuart's reply was pointed. Only a few short weeks before he had been facing the Antarctic cold cheerfully, but the jump into the baking heat of the tropics, almost on top of the equator, had been torture, to both body and nerves. The thin awning over their heads had been but poor protection against the rays of an almost vertical sun. Since leaving Kerema sandy beaches had given way to low-lying shores whose dense vegetation came down to the very edge of the water, it seemed. It was fully as depressing as Lipscombe had pictured it.

Stuart shook himself to get rid of his gloomy thoughts and forget the pangs of sunburn, rendered acute by frequent dashes of salt spray. He compelled himself to listen with understanding to what Lipscombe was saying.

"Back over there —" the patrol officer indicated with a wave of the hand shoreward —"it's all one vast swamp, criss-crossed by water-lanes a few feet deep. Travel afoot is impossible. The villages are built on ridges which run through the swamp and the natives get about in canoe. It puzzles me how they find their way at all. If a stranger to the country should get lost in there he'd die before he could find himself on the road out."

"And we force our way through it?" asked Stuart.

"No. There's a big village a few miles up the Purari. It was opposite one of its mouths Bunting found the boat, you said. Well, if any of the Namau know anything about your Chinese it'll be the people of that village. They come down to the sea frequently. Wonder where that lugger's bound?"

He seemed disappointed when he saw no trace of it after they had turned into the Purari and the tang of fresh salt-air had given way to the heavy odor of rank vegetation lining the mud-banks on either hand.

"No crocodiles in sight," he said.

"Many of them in the river?" asked Stuart.

"It's full of them. It's —— funny we don't see them."

Stuart knew what was in his mind. He was wondering if that unexplained lugger had not passed along ahead of them. That would account for the absence of the crocodiles. Frightened by it, they still would be in the mud at the bottom of the river.

Lipscombe evidently attached importance to the matter. He went up into the bow and each time they crept around a bend he held up his hand, ready to signal the man at the motor to shut it off if he saw the lugger.

But when they had bucked their way upstream and come in sight of the village, there was no sign that any one had come that way ahead of them. The man at the wheel deftly brought the launch about and ran it into the landing-place with its bow down-stream. The police, with rifles under one arm, leaped ashore and made it fast to a tree.

Stuart jumped across the shallow water to land and gazed about him anxiously. Tenderfoot as he was to New Guinea, he was surprized that no curious natives had gathered to watch them. All savage peoples he knew were child-like in this respect and even if the Namau were unfriendly it seemed strange that none of them had been dodging about, even at a distance. The village was not deserted if the thin wisps of smoke he could see rising above the thatched roofs beyond the high grass and the pigs industriously rooting only a few yards away were to be believed.

He heard Lipscombe detailing two men to guard the launch and ordering the rest to come with him and, without any thought of assuming a leadership that properly belonged to the patrol officer, he started up the winding path that seemed to lead to the village. Spurred by a desire to see what lay around the bend twenty-five yards away, he walked rapidly.

The path curved to avoid a thick clump of bushes. Rounding them, Stuart came to an abrupt stop. Just beyond, the path widened suddenly into the main street of the village and massed in it stood a hundred naked blacks, their spear-points barring the way!

At sight of him they began to yell, horribly loud and threatening. Unintelligible as were their words, there was no mistaking the hostility and menace of their attitude!

CHAPTER XII

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

A QUICK backward glance showed the patrol racing up and Stuart did not draw his weapon. The police brushed past him and, at Lipscombe's barked-out command, spread out in a thin shirmish-line facing the villagers. Another command and their hands swept to their belts. The rattle of steel on steel told they were fixing bayonets.

"Now," said Lipscombe coolly, "we'll try and find out what it's all about. Gubiam—" to the man with the corporal's stripes—"what talk they make?"

The corporal shouted at the Namau, listened intently to the babel of voices that answered him, then without turning his head replied to Lipscombe—

"They talk, master, that we come burn village."

"Rot," snorted Lipscombe. "Tell them we no burn village."

The Namau received this in sullen silence. But Stuart saw a wavering in their ranks, a lowering of the spears. Evidently Lipscombe noticed the same thing and, like a good tactician, he passed from the defensive to offense.

"Forward!" he ordered and the line of constabulary advanced.

The savages retreated before the shining bayonets, slowly at first, then increasing their pace until finally they turned and ran.

"And that's that," said Lipscombe, calling a halt before the hut on stilts which was proclaimed a rest-house by the broad arrow daubed in red clay above the door.

"It never would do to let the beggars think they can scare us off," he added as the patrol dropped its blanket rolls and, with rifles in one hand, the constables set about building fires in front of the rest-house. "I hope, Stuart, you don't mind mosquitoes, for they're thick here and we'll probably be sticking around several days. Perhaps after the villages get used to us, we can get some clue to your Chinaman."

He designated a couple of men to walk beats as sentinels and see that none of the villagers came too close. Already night, as it does in the tropics, was descending rapidly. Supplies were brought up from the boat, supper cooked and cots set up with mosquito nets around them in the rest-house.

"The police will sleep on the platform," explained Lipscombe, covering a yawn with his hand. "It isn't absolutely necessary, old man, but it would be best if we took turns about keeping watch. The men down at the boat will relieve each other and the sentinels here will do two-hour turns. But if a white man is awake in case of emergency it will be safer. Do you mind taking the first watch? Call me at two. Here's a whistle. One blast and the police will be on the job, and I'll not be far behind. I don't think you'll need it, though. Good night."

Stuart seated himself on the edge of the platform, with his legs dangling over the side. A gentle wind stirred the fronds of the village palms, sharply outlined against a brilliant moon. The river plashed and gurgled on its way to the sea. From the rest-house came the sound of Lipscombe's gentle snoring. The police upon the platform slept with their rifles clasped to their bosoms.

The patrol's fires had been extinguished lest the sentinels be silhouetted against them, furnishing tempting targets in case the villages were inclined toward sniping with arrows or spears. There had been no sign of the Namau since darkness had fallen. They had lighted no fires and long since the hum of voices at the far end of the village had died out. Stuart wondered if they slept or were up to mischief.

In spite of the mosquitoes Stuart would have found it easy to have fallen asleep. He dropped silently off the platform and began pacing up and down. His eyelids lost their heaviness and his thoughts turned upon Hurricane Harry Bunting. If that lugger which appeared to be stalking them was his, what was the object?

Had the man suspected that more lay behind Stuart's interest in the salvaged boat than he had said? Might he not think, perhaps, that Stuart was seeking something to which he had obtained a clue from Tompkins and, his predatory instincts aroused, was hoping to declare himself in on it? As Lipscombe had said, it was hard to keep a secret in Port Moresby. If Bunting had heard that Stuart had come away with the patrol he would know it was not for the purpose of looking at plantations.

There was one other possibility and it never would have entered Stuart's mind

if he had not seen that silver ring rolling across the floor of Hurricane Harry's cabin. Even now he felt a sense of shame that for a moment he could entertain it. To do so meant a shattering of his belief that he knew a square man when he saw him. It meant that never again would he be able to pledge his loyalty unreservedly to any man.

Resolutely he cast the disturbing thoughts from his mind. He felt for his pipe, loaded it and struck a match. But he never touched flame to tobacco.

From the direction where the boat lay had come a cry, apparently choked off in mid-utterance!

Instantly Stuart smothered the match in the palm of his hand as he cocked his head to await a repetition of that cry. A glance had shown him that the sentinels had paused and were listening, too. Apparently, then, they did not recognize it as having been made by a night-bird.

The cry was repeated, unmistakably human to his ears. One hand dropped to the butt of his revolver, the other toyed with the whistle Lipscombe had given him. He hesitated only an instant, then the whistle went back into his pocket and he was walking toward the spot from which that cry had come, the revolver in his hand.

At the very spot where that afternoon he had stood rooted upon discovering the massed villagers in the street, he stopped, tense and still. The next instant, actuated partly by an intuitive sense of danger and partly because some indefinable sound of movement had reached his ears, he leaped nimbly to one side. There was a swishing in the air and something which he identified as a loop of rope grazed his arm and fell to the ground. Instinctively he had thrown up the hand which held the revolver and now he pressed the trigger as three figures materialized in front of him and rushed.

Instantly he knew he had missed and would not have time to fire again. When his three assailants leaped upon him he struck at them with the weapon, but it was wrenched from his grasp and he found himself fighting with his bare fists. He knew by their grunts of pain that he was landing hard and often in spite of the darkness. For a moment it puzzled him that he felt no blows in return, that his antagonists seemed to content themselves with trying to smother his guard and bear him to the ground. Were they trying to capture him alive?

He began to circle warily, keeping them at arm's length as best he could. Sounds from the village he interpreted as indications that the police were coming to his aid. Then he became aware that the number of those opposing him had been doubled. Suddenly he whirled and began running along the path.

Almost at once he discovered that he had erred dangerously. He had thought the village lay at his back but now he found that in that circling he had lost his bearings. At the spot where he had been attacked he had noticed that afternoon that the path forked. The right hand went to the river. The left led in the direction of the swamp.

He had taken the left and the patter of feet behind him told he was pursued!

CHAPTER XIII

PURSUED IN THE NIGHT

WITH a very definite plan in mind, Stuart forced his legs to greater speed. If he could not shake off his pursuers entirely he might put sufficient distance between them and him to enable him to hide without the noise of his passage through the vegetation along the path betraying him. Failing that, they might be strung out behind him at such intervals that when he did make a stand he would not have them all to deal with at once. One at a time, he had no doubt he could overcome them. Together, their numbers would be a tremendous handicap.

All at once the ground under his feet became soft and yielding, the path vanished and a moment later he found himself floundering in stinking mud and water. Tugging desperately to free his boots from the sucking ooze convinced him of the folly and uselessness of further efforts to flee. He worked himself around to face the direction from which he had come and waited.

A splash told him that the first of his pursuers had arrived. Then there was silence. Evidently the man was listening for some betraying sound that would reveal the whereabouts of the quarry. Stuart compelled himself to remain motionless. It puzzled him that he had not heard the others arriving. He could not believe they had turned back so soon.

The man was moving again, revealing his position by the swirl of the water about his body, the crashing of the vegetation as he pushed his way through it. Apparently he was making no effort toward concealment. He seemed to be drawing nearer. Was it just accident that he was coming directly to where the white man stood or could he follow the trail, despite the darkness, by the trampled plants which Stuart had left in his wake?

Again there was silence. Then the man called, cautiously it seemed to Stuart. He smiled grimly. If he revealed his whereabouts it would be through no act of his own. If the man found him the advantage of surprise would be on the side of the white man. Again came the call. Again that hushed, strained waiting. Once more his seeker was moving.

He was only a few yards away now. Stuart slowly leaned forward from the waist, his muscles taut like a tight bowstring, his nerves keyed up for the instant when the man's head appeared and he would clutch for his throat.

Only a few feet away the man stopped to call again. Stuart wondered if the tumultuous beating of his heart carried that far. Then the tall saw-edged grass was pushed aside and Stuart's arms darted out, his fingers fastened about the other's neck and, calling upon all his strength, he dragged that dark figure toward him.

He sensed the immediate stiffening of the other's body in resistance and felt his hands clawing at that vise-like clamp about his neck. He increased his pressure and slowly, determinedly, began forcing the bushy head toward the water.

The man's body relaxed suddenly and Stuart eased up the pressure about his throat, ready to apply it again if the other was tricking him. There was a gurgling sound in his victim's throat as the air rushed in and Stuart knew that he still lived, and was glad. The very thought of throttling a man, even a man-eating savage, was repugnant to him. He would kill only to save his own life.

"*Taubada!*"

Stuart started. Who was this that addressed him as master? His hands came loose and, sliding down across the other's body, found cloth. Instantly he knew that this was no savage but one of the armed constables.

"You a policeman?" he asked needlessly.

"*Io, taubada*" (Yes, master) confirmed the other. "Me Gubiam."

"Oh, the corporal. I'm sorry. About your neck, you know. I thought you were a Namau."

"*Io taubada,*" said the other again and hurried on, as if to avoid further apologies which, coming from a white man, were incomprehensible. "When sun come topside we go."

It was a statement, not a question. Chilled as he was, Stuart had no thought of disputing the black man's decision. True, they were not many yards away from that path down which they had come, but in which direction did it lie? He did not know. Apparently the constable did not. To try and find it might only plunge them deeper into the swamp and every foot in the wrong direction would lessen their chances of finding the way out again.

"Yes, Gubiam," he said. "When sun come topside we go. Tonight we stop here."

"*Io.*"

Stuart's knowledge of Motuan, the native dialect in which white men and black get together in New Guinea, was limited to a dozen words he had picked up on the way down from Port Moresby. Gubiam's understanding of English was far better than his ability to speak it, but during the long hours until dawn the two of them managed to bridge the difficulty considerably.

Thus Stuart learned how it was that the man who had pursued him was not one of his assailants but a constable. Had he been a trifle slower about turning and fleeing there would have been no need for Stuart to have run at all. The patrol had come up at almost the same moment and the men with whom he had battled had fled down the path to the river.

Lipscombe had guessed where Stuart had gone and had sent two men after him. When it developed that the chase was likely to last long Gubiam had sent his companion back in case he were needed and had kept on alone. Gubiam did not know who the attackers had been or whether the Namau were involved. Lipscombe had sent him after Stuart the moment they reached the fork in the path.

Speech deserted them in the long last hour before dawn, that blackest hour of all when the earth is wrapped in mystery and

silence. Then, in a twinkling the darkness vanished, the dawn peeped through.

"Day, he come," said Gubiam. "We go."

Stuart dragged his benumbed legs out of the slime and slowly, painfully, forced them to move in the wake of the black man. His clothes were sodden, his boots lead-heavy, his flesh chilled to the marrow of his bones and the languor he had fought off for hours was creeping upon him again. When the constable paused after only a few yards and stared perplexedly about at the vegetation which already had sprung back into place, the eyes which Stuart raised beneath heavy lids were dull and lackluster. But the brain behind grasped their predicament.

"Climb on my shoulders. Look for village. Go that way," he muttered thickly and stooped to give the man a leg up. "Hurry. We must find village quick."

Gubiam, reluctant as he may have been to place his muddy feet upon a white man, obeyed. But when he sought to descend he found it necessary to reach down and unclasp Stuart's fingers from around his ankles.

"Village that side," he said briefly. "Tree house that side," waving a hand in the opposite direction.

He shook Stuart into wakefulness and dragged and pulled him the few yards that separated them from the path that ran, ribbon-like between the dense growths, to the village. Half an hour later they staggered down the lane between the palm-trees and collapsed upon the steps of the rest-house.

CHAPTER XIV

DANGEROUS CRAFT

STUART came back to full consciousness to find himself on a cot in the rest-house and Lipscombe peering at him through the mosquito-netting. He grinned at the patrol officer, stretched hugely and threw back the netting. The swamp and those torturing hours he had spent in it were like some nightmare, horrifying while it lasted but leaving no permanent ill-effects so far as he could tell.

"I feel like a two-year-old," he said in answer to the other's question. "That's what youth does for a fellow."

"To say nothing of twenty grains of quinine, a jolt or two from my flask and thirty hours sleep," retorted Lipscombe.

"Thirty hours! You mean to say I've been here that long?"

"Since yesterday morning," the patrol officer assured him. "You're awake just in time. In about thirty minutes, if you can be ready and feel like it, we leave for the tree-house in the swamp. I'm leaving a guard behind, in case you'd prefer to remain."

"Try and leave me." Stuart reached for his clothing and boots and found them dry. "I don't know what you're talking about, but it sounds like something was doing. Tell me."

"While you dress I'll order food. While you eat I'll talk," and Lipscombe departed.

"Now," said the patrol officer when the meal was under way, "have you the slightest idea who you were fighting night before last?"

"The Namau, of course."

Lipscombe shook his head.

"They left and went to another village hours before. Two or three, only, remained here. One's Gubiam's brother. Gubiam's a Namau, you know. Came from this very village, in fact. That's the reason they did not go, they say. Stayed to see him. More likely they were left to spy on us. But that has nothing to do with the fight. They took no part.

"Here's what happened. The constables on the launch were captured quietly first. The beggars deny it, but I think both were asleep. The men who did it were natives. The constables swear they were not Namau, that the scent of their bodies was different. Anyhow, after trussing up my two men they must have laid a trap for you at the forks of the road, tolled you into it by their cries and tried to make a prisoner of you. The fight you put up stood them off until we arrived. Then they fled back to the river. They escaped in a dingey. A lugger was waiting for them a few hundred yards downstream."

"Bunting!" exclaimed Stuart.

Lipscombe tugged at his ear.

"Perhaps. We didn't pursue them. By the time we released the constables, who were lying in the bottom of our power-boat, it would have been too late. Whoever that lugger belongs to, it did come up the river ahead of us; sailed on past the village, most likely, and came back after nightfall. Why

should any one want to capture you, Bunting particularly?"

Stuart shook his head in perplexity.

"I don't know," he said, but into his mind had flashed that scene in the cabin on the lugger of Hurricane Harry when he had discovered the ring of Sun Kong rolling across the floor.

Again the suspicion that two nights before he had sought to vanquish as insupportable burst into flame.

"I wish I did know," he added and there was more to the words than Lipscombe possibly could guess.

The patrol officer shrugged.

"No use wasting our time in speculations," he said. "When you were in the swamp did Gubiam say anything about a tree-house?"

"I dimly recall that he did. I had him on my shoulders to look for the village. He said, 'Village that side. Tree house that side.' I was too done up to care what he said, just so we got out of there. But what's so strange about a tree-house among savages? They're not uncommon."

"They are among the Namau. Gubiam's a Namau. He never heard of one being built by his people before. He asked his brother about this one. The blighter had an explanation on the tip of his tongue, a good one. According to his story, the house was built in the trees to please the Koairi, a tribe that lives in the hills near Port Moresby. Every year they come down here in *lakatois*, big canoes fastened together and propelled by sails of grass. They bring pottery, which can't be made here, and take back sago, which won't grow in their hills. Gubiam's brother says the Koairi were homesick. So they and the Namau got together and built the tree-house for them to occupy while the sago-gathering was on, on the other side of the swamp."

"I don't know New Guinea, of course," Stuart said slowly. "But on the face of it, that seems to account for the tree-house. The story's plausible enough."

"Plausible, yes. Except for one thing. Somebody's living in the tree-house now. And there's no ladder by which he can leave it."

He smiled at Stuart's astonished cry, and went on:

"This morning I sent Gubiam and another man to see if they could find a way through the swamp to the tree-house. They came back and reported that it stands in the middle of a small lake. Through field-glasses they could see a human figure moving about the platform outside. They could detect nothing by which it could be reached. They came back to tell me. I propose to investigate it—today."

Stuart tossed aside his tin plate and got to his feet.

"Let's be on our way, then," he said briskly.

"Here."

Lipscombe held out a revolver.

"This is yours. One of the men picked it up where you lost it in the fight. It may come in handy," he added significantly.

Then he shouted for the patrol to assemble, picked the men he wanted to stay behind and turned to Gubiam.

"I want your brother to go," he said.

But neither the corporal's brother nor his companions could be found, although they searched everywhere.

At the edge of the swamp two canoes were in waiting. Stuart checked an exclamation of dismay at sight of them. Crude and fearsome craft they were—logs hollowed by fire, their open ends plugged with mud and without outriggers to give them balance.

He set his lips, however, and took the place assigned him, sitting flat upon the bottom with his hands grasping the sides. Lipscombe climbed in and sat down facing him.

"It will roll a bit," he warned. "Let your body relax and bend to counteract it and bring it back on an even keel. The only danger is that it will roll over. The natives get out into the sea with them. All right, Gubiam. You and Bilibo and Maikili get in with us."

Then he gave the signal to push off from the bank.

Stuart felt a sickening clutch at the pit of his stomach as the constables pushed upon their long poles and turned the shaky craft into the nearest water-lane. In the bow Gubiam knelt, his hands patting the mud-plug continually to prevent it from being washed away by the water that battered against it as the canoe was forced through the swamp.

Stuart's eyes, staring past Lipscombe in fascination, saw that the inboard side of the earthern plug remained dry.

CHAPTER XV

THE TREE-HOUSE MAN

EVENTUALLY the two canoes were pushed out of the nipa, sago and water-grass into a placid stretch of water, a lake almost. Near its center stood the three trees with the house among their branches.

"Why there's a fence around it," cried Stuart, pointing.

Lipscombe trained his field glasses.

"M-m-m, so there is," he agreed. "But why?"

He turned his head to snap our orders to the police to pole more rapidly.

"*Taubada!*" Bilibo, at the forward pole, spoke. "Plenty New Guinea boys in canoe."

"Where?" Lipscombe, his back to the bow, twisted his body to look.

"I see them," said Stuart. "A dozen men, at least. Over there, Lipscombe. To the left. Ah, they've seen us. They're turning back. In a hurry, too. They were headed toward the tree-house."

"And the sooner we get there and away again, the better, I'm thinking," muttered Lipscombe and again cried out for more speed.

Upon the platform of the tree-house a figure had made its appearance and stood there gazing in their direction. But when their canoes had been brought to rest against the encircling fence it had disappeared.

"The fence puzzles me," said Lipscombe, steadying himself against the top rail, as he looked upon the smooth water, undisturbed by so much as a ripple, on the other side. "Ah!"

The surface of the water had been broken in an angry swirl, two long, ferocious snouts emerged and two pairs of wicked little eyes glared at them.

"Crocodiles," breathed Stuart. "I see it now, man. That chap above is a prisoner, marooned here. The crocodiles, fenced in, are his guards. In case he got down from the trees. There's a ladder over there, lying on the fence. Up with it and let's have a look at him."

"Better let the police do it, Stuart. It's more in their line." The patrol officer called out to the men in the other canoe. They poled their craft to the fence, maneuvered the crude ladder into an upright position and rested it against the platform. Two men began to mount.

Absorbed in watching them, Stuart and Lipscombe were startled by a cry from Bilibo. There was no need for him to speak. His pointing finger indicated half a dozen canoes emerging from the vegetation and coming rapidly toward them. Their naked black occupants were armed. The tips of their spears and arrows formed clusters above their heads.

The constables on the ladder had reached the platform. The next moment they had vanished over its edge. There was the sound of a struggle and they reappeared, another man with them. Lipscombe called to his men in Motuan. The descent began, a constable first.

A ragged figure followed him. His back to the men below revealed a long topcoat that extended to his bare ankles as his toes felt for the rungs. It was surmounted by a cap. Hands encased in the remnants of gloves grasped the uprights. His face was not visible.

"I believe it's Leong Ton," whispered Stuart, recalling that the mysterious passenger on the *London Castle* had attracted the steward's attention by showing an ungloved hand.

Lipscombe nodded and carefully resumed his seat as he signaled his men to pole away from the fence.

"They'll take him in the other canoe," he said. "We've got a race on our hands, Stuart. We can't stand off that mob out here in the open. We've got to get under cover of the vegetation and in one of the water-lanes."

"Tell the other canoe to go first," urged Stuart. "We'll act as a rear-guard."

He took out his revolver and laid it across his lap.

"Oh, I'm not planning to shoot," as Lipscombe eyed him questioningly. "But there may come a moment when a few bullets spattered about those canoes yonder will decide this thing. I've come a long ways to get this man. I don't propose to give him up to any naked savage."

The rescued man was in the canoe now. Lipscombe ordered it away. The other followed closely. The pursuing Namau had burst into shrill cries. These died away as the police bent to their poles and across the water from the craft of the savages floated a sing-song "*Hoia, hoia, hoia*" that was plainly a spur to the men at the poles, as a coxswain's words spur his men.

As the other canoe shot past Stuart craned his neck for a look at the man for whose sake this struggle was being made. He was lying at full-length in the charred bottom of the canoe, his gloved hands holding the tattered topcoat together at his breast, his face still invisible under the brim of his shapeless and faded cap. There was no sign that he was alive. His body rolled gently from side to side in unison with the movements of the canoe.

A fresh burst of cries from the savages told that they had guessed the plans of their quarry. Their canoes swerved sharply to point directly at the water-lane, possession of which spelled safety to the patrol. Their poles rose, were thrust forward and downward, curved under the pressure of sturdy arms, sprang back, were lifted again. The blunt noses of their craft pushed the water aside in great curling waves. The men at the mud-plugs worked like beavers.

Stuart eyed them critically.

"Bloodthirsty beggars, aren't they? Look at that chap at the front pole of the first canoe. What a splendid man!"

Corporal Gubiam looked up from his task.

"Him my proper brother," he said proudly, and went back to patting mud.

"I think," said Lipscombe, "we'd better let fly a few shots at them."

Gubiam reached for his rifle.

"I kill my proper brother," he muttered and took aim.

"No," cried Lipscombe. "Stop, Gubiam. What talk you make?" he chided. "No kill. Drop that rifle."

Grumbling, the old corporal complied.

"Now, Stuart, let's give them a shower-bath."

Their revolvers cracked simultaneously.

The Namau polers faltered, their craft lost headway. The next instant they realized they had been tricked and bent to their tasks again. But that momentary delay had been enough. The canoe carrying the police shot into the water-lane, and was hidden from sight.

Twenty yards still separated the other canoe from safety. Bilibo and Maikili redoubled their efforts. Stuart and Lipscombe had reloaded.

"Once more," said the patrol officer and pressed the trigger.

But this time the trick did not work. The Namau jeered and Stuart could see their arms drawn back to hurl their spears. The next instant the missiles were speeding toward them.

Stuart ducked. He heard the hiss as the spears flew past, then the rasp of the water-grass upon the sides of the canoe. They were safe!

He raised his eyes. Angrily Gubiam was plucking out a spear that had pierced the blouse of his uniform.

"More better I kill my brother," he said and dropped it overboard.

CHAPTER XVI

VANISHING MEN

"GUBIAM!"

Twice now Patrol Officer Lipscombe had sent his call for the corporal ringing out from the rest-house platform. The black constables, gathered about their fire in the village street, had promptly relayed it without bringing the missing man into sight. Peevishly Lipscombe blew his whistle. If the corporal were anywhere within a half-mile the blast would bring him running, his snappy "Yes, sir," an apology for the delay.

Fifteen minutes passed. Corporal Gubiam had not appeared.

"Have you seen him since we left the canoes?" asked Stuart, suddenly.

They had sent the canoe with the rescued man through the swamp ahead of them, giving it several minutes start while they remained behind to keep the Namau under observation. But the savages had seemed content to let their canoes drift on the lake. Evidently they had had no stomach for an encounter amid the water-lanes where the rifles of the constabulary gave the patrol a tremendous advantage, as it could be approached by only one canoe at a time.

"No, by Jove, I don't remember laying eyes on him since," replied Lipscombe, frowning. "He dropped in behind us as we came up the path. I didn't give it a thought. I'll ask the men."

But the constables had not seen him. Bilibo and Maikili had trailed the white men closely, paying no attention to their superior. Lipscombe stared thoughtfully at the fire. Stuart knew what was running through his mind—the picture of Gubiam plucking that spear from his blouse and muttering—

"More better I kill my brother."

"The —— fool," snapped the patrol

officer. "Still I don't believe he'd dare. Well, it's too dark to send any one to look for him tonight. He'll show up all right, no doubt."

Then he turned to make inquiry concerning the man they had rescued.

In the absence of specific orders the constables who had half-carried him to the village from the canoe had made him comfortable in one of the huts. The cook had taken him food.

"We don't disturb him tonight," said Stuart. "He couldn't tell us anything without pencil and paper, and I imagine he'd be too done up to do it even then."

He was glad that Lipscombe evinced no eagerness to question Leong Ton. If possible, he wanted a word with the man alone first, to reveal his own identity as a representative of Sun Kong and ask about the blood-red pearls. So far as Stuart knew, no one suspected that he was interested in anything but the man himself. He had taken pains to give the impression that the search for Leong Ton was on behalf of his relatives alone.

Lipscombe had not sought to probe any deeper, although he must have had his own thoughts as a result of the mysterious attempt to capture Stuart, presumably by Hurricane Harry Bunting. His question as to whether Stuart knew of any motive for the attack upon him had been perfectly natural, coming from one charged with the safety of the patrol and desirous of establishing the identity of those opposing it.

"He's a man in a thousand to let it go with my denial," thought Stuart, gratefully.

Aloud, he said:

"What are your plans now, Lipscombe? Having found my man, I'm naturally ready to take him out of this, particularly as I'm of the opinion that a few days in a hospital are coming to him. He must have been through hell up in that tree-house, for months, no doubt, with those vicious brutes always waiting below in case he tried to escape. In his place I believe I'd felt tempted to jump and have it over with."

Lipscombe shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't believe it," he retorted. "Life's sweet, hope springs eternal and all the rest of it, you know, particularly if one has something to live for and even a chink may have that. I'm more interested in why the Namau made him a prisoner and kept him alive all this time. I fancy I won't be satisfied until I pry the truth out of them. Then I'm under orders to extend the patrol to all the Namau district, you know. It will take me some weeks at the shortest. But there's no reason why you should stay. I was thinking of sending the launch back to Kerema station, anyhow, and making my way overland. The launch draws too much water for the swamp. From Kerema you can catch one of the plantation boats going in to Moresby."

Stuart hesitated. If Leong Ton had the pearls or even if he had lost them in the capsizing of the boat there would be no occasion for either of them to stay in the district any longer. If, however, the Namau had taken the pearls he, Stuart, intended to stick on their trail until he found them or became convinced they couldn't be found. Until he had something from Leong Ton to go on, however, he couldn't decide.

"Suppose we drop it until tomorrow," he suggested. "I'm not so fed up on my first experiences in New Guinea that I wouldn't enjoy going clear through with you, if there's any way of insuring Leong Ton has proper care meanwhile."

Lipscombe nodded.

"It can be done if you decide to stick with me. Meanwhile, I vote for a good night's sleep and I'd have it, too, if I could shake that fool Gubiam out of my thoughts."

Hours later Stuart was awakened by a disturbance outside the rest-house. He was confusedly aware that he had heard a sentry's sharp challenge, his alarmed "Guardy, turn outee," the sound of the police tumbling off the platform and Lipscombe's startled "*Daka, daka*" (what is it?)

Then his sleep-befogged brain cleared and he snatched his revolver from under a makeshift pillow, freed himself of the clinging mosquito-net and ran out to the platform to join Lipscombe.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"I don't know yet," said Lipscombe and barked out a command in the direction of a knot of dark figures in the village street.

Two shadows detached themselves and came toward the rest-house. One, Stuart saw as they drew near, was a constable; the other appeared to be a naked man. The constable halted a few paces distant.

"*Taubada*," he said.

"Yes. Who is it?" snapped Lipscombe.

"Me. Gubiam."

"Gubiam!" Stuart and Lipscombe echoed it together.

"And prisoner," supplemented the corporal.

"Prisoner?" quizzed Lipscombe and bent over to peer at them. "What prisoner? Who is he?"

"My proper brother, *taubada*. Him make good talk. I knock his —— black head off."

"Well, I'm blowed. Stuart, did you ever? He went back into the swamp alone and captured his brother. We'll put the thumbscrews on him—in the morning."

He spoke to the corporal, evidently concerning the disposition of the prisoner, and turned back into the rest-house, vilifying the mosquitoes.

"You never can tell about a New Guinea native," he said admiringly, turning a flashlight on the inside of his net in quest of a mosquito that eluded his slapping hands. "Gubiam knew we'd want an explanation from the Namau, so he goes out and captures one single-handed. That's courage for you—and foolhardiness."

"*Taubada! Taubada!*"

The rest-house shook as some one bounded on to the platform and the doorway framed the silhouette of a constable, excitedly reeling off something in Motuan.

"Great heavens, Stuart!" There was perturbation in the patrol officer's tones. "The Chinaman has disappeared!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE *RAVI* OF HORRORS

"DO YOU hear me, Stuart? Your Chinaman is gone."

"I heard you," Stuart replied.

For the second time that night he got up from his cot. Now he reached in the dark for his clothing and began to dress.

"Where are you going?" he heard Lipscombe asking.

"To see for myself and, if it's true, to find him. You heard me say that I had come too far to give him up to any savage. That meant white or black. Give me that flashlight."

"Wait. I'll go with you. If there's any clue we'll take the police."

But Stuart did not answer. He took the flashlight when his groping hand had located it, extended to him by the patrol officer, and strode through the doorway.

In front of the hut where the rescued man had been he pushed his way through the gathered constables and, with one prodigious leap, was upon the platform. From the doorway he played the beam of the flashlight upon the interior. In one corner a couple of empty sacks, in which rice for the police had been brought, marked the spot where the rescued man had lain. Near it, on the side fartherest away from the rest-house and out of sight of the sentinels, there was a gaping hole in the dried grass wall of the hut. Except for the pallet of sacks the hut was empty.

Stuart kicked the sacks aside. Then he whirled and left the hut. Outside he turned the ray of light upon the ground beneath the hole, saw that it was too hard to have received and retained the impression of bare feet, considered the matter for a moment, then made for the next hut.

Methodically he inspected one after another, flashing the light inside each doorway, assuring himself that no one was concealed there and passing on to the next. He had reached the end of the street which ran the full length of the village between the twin rows of huts and crossed over to start up the other side when he saw that the constables, having made torches of lengths of dry wood, were coming to meet him, examining all of the huts as they came.

But they came no farther than a huge structure, dwarfing all the others flanking it. The broad platform before it would have held a hundred men. Beside it the constables had stopped, their torches held high, to await his coming. His quick glance told him that for some reason they hesitated to enter. Only Corporal Gubiam had mounted the steps. Stuart joined him.

"What name this place?" he asked.

"*Ravi, taubada.*"

"*Ravi?* What's that?"

"It's the village club-house," said Lipscombe's voice behind him. "The gathering-place of the men."

"Some men I know seem to prefer gathering outside it," retorted Stuart pointedly, but his grin as revealed by Gubiam's torch, precluded the sting of the words.

"So would you, if you were a native and knew what is inside a *ravi*," countered Lipscombe.

"So? Well, all —— couldn't keep me out of this one now."

He started for the entrance. Lipscombe's detaining hand fell upon his arm. "I say,

old man, you're looking for the Chinaman, I take it. Would even a native be such a blithering ass as to hide him here in the village after kidnaping him?"

Again Stuart grinned. "I'd say you were the ass if I didn't know you haven't examined the hut where he was put. Listen. The hole by which he got out was made by plucking the grass from the wall. That grass was inside the hut. Get it? Inside. He wasn't kidnaped. He left of his own free will."

"I see. And you think he was not strong enough to have gone far, eh? Might be hiding right here on the theory it would be the last place we'd look for him? Come ahead."

The entrance to the *ravi*, fifty feet from floor to ridge-pole, gaped widely at them from the other side of the platform. From the side-poles supporting the roof curved and sharpened sticks several feet long pointed downward. In the reddish glare of the torches they resembled discolored tusks.

"Like stepping into the mouth of some prehistoric monster," said Stuart to himself as he followed the patrol officer.

Just inside the *ravi* he stopped and looked about him curiously. The rounded roof of palm-leaves upon a framework of wood sloped abruptly toward the rear. Upon the walls hung heavy crocodile-spears, unstrung bows, a profusion of arrows and war-clubs, dancing-masks of fantastic shape and design and daggers of cassowary bones. From the floor hundreds of skulls leered at him. Skulls of human beings, of enemies slain in battle and afterwards eaten, no doubt; skulls of pigs, of dogs, of crocodiles. Representations of human faces and bodies and of animals, drawn upon the floor with some enduring pigment, stood out in bold relief against a background of rough-hewn timbers.

The sound of their boots upon the floor echoed weirdly back into his ears from the cavernous depths. No wonder the police, with generations of savagery and superstition back of them, entered this chamber of horrors reluctantly. Stuart himself felt that he was in the grip of a nightmare.

"It's no place for touchy nerves or a weak heart," he heard Lipscombe saying and was conscious that the patrol officer's voice, flung back from the walls and roof, sounded jerky and quavering. "If your Chinaman is in here, he must have a cast-iron will to face it alone. There's only one place more to look."

He paused before a palm-leaf curtain which cut off the rear of the club-house, then laid his hands upon it and flung it back. Stuart promptly stepped past it and flashed his light about. With difficulty he restrained a gasp. Hideous, grotesque figures, something like a cross between a gigantic pig and a crocodile, surrounded him, standing upon flimsy stick legs at the height of a man, against the walls, each more horrible than the next. He saw that they were of wickerwork and hollow.

"What are these things?" he asked, Leong Ton forgotten for the moment.

"*Kaiamunu*, they're called," replied Lipscombe. "A sort of god, I imagine. At least they're held sacred, each has its own name and women are forbidden to gaze upon them. The Namau say that if ever one moves of its own accord dire things will happen. But you're overlooking the drums. The bodies are of hollowed tree-trunks, the heads of human skin."

"Quite interesting," said Stuart and made to tap one with his knuckles.

"No." Gubiam had seized his wrist in a grip like steel. "No touch, *taubada*. Plenty quick we die."

"All right, old fellow." Stuart laughed shortly. "Far be it from me to trample on your pet beliefs. Let's be going. Our man——"

He broke off, his head cocked to listen. In the village street outside a man's stentorian voice was bellowing.

"It's only Gubiam's brother, trying to save his life," laughed Lipscombe. "The corporal told him he would be shot if he didn't persuade the village leaders to meet us here today. We're in a fair way to get the truth about the Chinaman out of them now."

"Look here, Lipscombe. You continually refer to the man we rescued as a Chinese. Why?"

"Mean to say you have any doubts?" There was bewilderment in the patrol officer's tones. "I distinctly recall that when you first clapped eyes on him you said it was Leong Ton, all right."

"I admit it. But couldn't I have gone off, half-cocked, misled by the fact that he wore European clothes? I've been thinking it over. I never saw his face at all. Neither did you. I doubt if the police did. His cap

was pulled down, his coat-collar up. Why did we think he was a Chinese? Because we were expecting to find a Chinese, we jumped at the conclusion that this chap was Leong Ton. Didn't that magistrate at Kerema say he had got a report that the Namau had rescued a *white* man from the sea? He thought, and you thought, and I thought that the report concerned that fellow Tompkins. Jumped at conclusions again, you see. But this chap in the tree-house might not have been Leong Ton at all, not even a Chinese, for all we know. He might have been a white man."

"And dumb, too, like Leong Ton?" Lipscombe was inclined to argue the matter. "Oh, come, Stuart, that's stretching coincidence a little too far. He didn't say a word, didn't utter a sound that we heard. Wouldn't a white man, saved from a place like that, have plenty to say to his own kind?"

"Not if he wanted to hide the fact that he *was* a white man," retorted Stuart crisply and turned to lead the way out into the gray dawn.

CHAPTER XVIII

PANIC!

NOW why, Stuart was wondering as he walked silently toward the rest-house, had he chosen to advance such a theory? Was it just because Lipscombe's assurance that the rescued man was a Chinese irritated him, or did he have any real reason for believing otherwise?

Marshaling the facts in his mind, he could see that it had not been altogether irritation that had influenced him. The suspicion that the rescued man might turn out to be white went farther back than that. The steward on the *London Castle* had remarked that his strange passenger looked more like a saddle-colored negro than a Chinese. The passenger's own retiring habits, the fact that he wouldn't let the steward in his cabin, that he went on deck only late at night when he could reasonably expect to find it deserted, that he had chosen for some mysterious reason to quit the ship secretly had been strange. Leong Ton would have had no reason to do these things. Neither would he have any reason to conceal his face from his rescuers, as the man in the tree-house had done; or, later, to flee from those rescuers.

It dawned upon Stuart that subconsciously he had been harboring a suspicion that the man who occupied the cabin taken for Leong Ton had not been him at all, that there had been a substitution of a white man for the Oriental. And why? To obtain the blood-red pearls, of course. Their existence might not have been such a secret as Sun Kong had said. A daring, clever plot to make away with Leong Ton and steal the pearls had resulted. Only it had been upset by the capsizing of the lifeboat and the fact that the thief had fallen into the hands of the Namau. Such a man would have wanted to conceal his features, would have fled from those who, presumably, would have sought Leong Ton only with friendly motives.

And Tompkins, where did he fit into this? Was Hurricane Harry Bunting right in his theory that the man with the unbalanced mind had come off the *London Castle?* Or had Tompkins landed in New Guinea in some other way and been in no way connected with the pearls?

How about Bunting himself? Did he know about the man in the tree-house? Was he back of the attempt to capture Stuart? What was his object? Did he know anything about the pearls? He had no answer, based on logic, for any of these questions. But again had flashed into his mind that ring on the floor of Bunting's lugger. The man's possession of that token by which the agents of Sun Kong knew each other offered a clue to the solution that Stuart was after. Once more he refused to follow it to its inevitable conclusion. He could not suspect Sun Kong of double-dealing.

He still was mulling the thing over when Lipscombe called him to breakfast. By mutual, though unvoiced, agreement they did not discuss the thing uppermost in their minds. Once again Stuart was grateful for the restraint the patrol officer exhibited in not prying into the thing.

Gubiam's brother evidently had been most persuasive in that early morning bellowing. Before noon the Namau were to be seen coming into the village from the far end. Gubiam was sent to interview them. He reported that they were willing to discuss matters if the white men would meet them in the club-house.

"Don't turn your back on them," warned Lipscombe as, flanked by the police, they

walked to the club-house. "Keep your revolver handy—and don't sit down."

The Namau awaited them on the platform. Their chiefs shook hands with the white men and invited them behind the curtain. The other savages crowded in after them, but remained in the main hall. The police took up positions of vantage among them. Gubiam was to act as interpreter.

"He'll translate into Motuan for me and I'll pass it on to you so you can get the sense of things," said Lipscombe.

Stuart, looking about the place that had seemed so eerie by the light of torches, was thinking how much less gruesome it was by day. He nodded and went on with his scrutiny.

"They don't seem able to forget the burning of their village two years ago," the patrol officer remarked after a bit. "I'll give them a harangue and assure them we have no intention of repeating the dose."

Stuart, not deeply interested in the preliminaries, had let his eyes rove over the faces of the Namau; long, heavy, brutish faces not unmixed with cunning. Thus it was that he surprized on the face of one a malevolent glare directed at himself. The man turned away his head immediately, but not before Stuart had recognized him—the black mate of Hurricane Harry Bunting's lugger, the man who had spied upon him in the barroom at Port Moresby. He had discarded his woolen singlet and calico loincloth for the broad bark belt and gee-string of his fellows, but Stuart knew him. For a moment he debated whether he should precipitate things by announcing the fact, but decided against it. He would give the luggerman plenty of rope, now that he was positive that Bunting was involved in this affair.

Lipscombe was speaking to him.

"Here's where you come in, Stuart. It's about our man. They had gone down to the sea to fish—they saw a man on the shore—thought he was dead—he wore white man's clothes—but they thought he was one of the Koairi, their friends—until they opened up his coat—then they saw he was a white man, although his face was black—they discovered he was alive—brought him here in a canoe—into this very room—argued what should be done with him—decided to ask one of their friends, a white man—yes, it was Bunting—he told them——"

Abruptly the corporal stopped translating. His eyes were fixed on one of the *kaiaimunu*. They were dilated with terror. The Namau had turned to look. Stuart was just in time to see the wickerwork figure sway uncertainly as if off balance. Then a flimsy leg gave with a crash and it toppled to the floor!

With a concerted howl of terror the Namau were upon their feet, scrambling for the palm-leaf curtain, tearing it down in their rush to get out. Their panic communicated itself to their fellows on the other side. Screams filled the air in ever increasing volume and beat back down upon the mob from the walls and the roof. Stuart felt himself caught up by the human wave and borne with it the full length of the *ravi*, out of its cavernous interior to the platform and swept over the edge into the street. He felt scores of naked feet trampling him into the ground, or stumbling over his prostrate body and he curled himself up, knees to chin, threw his arms about his head and waited for them to pass on.

Then he became conscious, too, that there was a thrumming in his ears, a loud, pulsating boom that issued from the *ravi* like the burst of drumfire from a machine-gun. For perhaps the first time in all its history one of the sacred drums of the Namau was being sounded!

Stuart shot to his feet like a spring that is uncoiled, snatched the revolver from his holster and fairly threw himself at the *ravi* platform. The drumming had ceased, but its echo had not fully died away as he raced down the hall, cleared the fallen curtain and stood again among the *kaiaimunu*. The wickerwork idol lay upon the floor where he had last seen it and for a moment he almost persuaded himself that the thing had fallen by accident.

Then, upon the head of the very drum which Gubiam had prevented him from tapping, he caught sight of a dagger of cassowary bone like those on the wall of the main room and, caught on a splinter of the body of the drum, a strip of dirty gray cloth which he knew had come from the topcoat of the man who had been in the tree-house.

A trap-door in the *ravi* floor showed how he had escaped from the place.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HIDDEN MENACE

"HANG it all, the beggars took me to the village fence before I could shake loose." Lipscombe gazed ruefully at his disarranged clothing. "When they went over I stopped this side."

"Looked to me as if you were not entirely unwilling to go along," chaffed Stuart. "It *was* startling for a minute, that god toppling over that way and then the drum. I can imagine what the Namau thought. They're still going strong, I suppose."

"Legging it for their lives when I last saw them," affirmed the other. "Nothing short of a regiment could round them up again, I fancy. Didn't I see you coming from the *ravi?* What luck?"

Stuart told him.

"Our man, of course. He must have been hiding in there last night and gotten his idea from what you were telling me about the gods and the drums."

"Well, I don't envy him, spending the better part of a night in there. It would be the last place I'd pick. Turned a —— clever trick, too. Wish he'd postponed it a bit. We were just about to hear what Bunting— Say, Stuart, you don't suppose Bunting——"

"He hasn't the brains to think of a trick like that, if that's what you mean. Still I saw that mate of his among the Namau. But, no, it couldn't have been Bunting. Like you, I'd have appreciated it more——"

He broke off to stare at two approaching figures.

"Perhaps we'll find out yet what it was Bunting told them. One of the Namau, at least, didn't get away. Here comes Gubiam with his brother still in tow."

"And both of them in a blue funk," commented Lipscombe, eying the pair. "Look at the blighters shake."

"Well, I take off my hat to the corporal," said Stuart. "He hung on to his brother and he's come back, which seems to be more than the other police have done."

Lipscombe shrugged. "They'll be toddling along shortly, if I know natives. There's none of them Namau except Gubiam and one tribe is not inclined to respect the superstitions of another. Quick as they find out they don't know why they're on the run, they'll come slinking back. I'll have a rod in pickle for them, too."

"Meanwhile, it would be useless to try and get anything out of Gubiam's brother until he gets over his scare," said Stuart. "I'm going to see if I can trace up our prankish friend. Another quite useless thing, I suppose, but I might learn something."

He returned to the trap-door in the clubhouse, this time under the building, bending his head to avoid the beams which supported the floor. The Namau, in setting their huts above the ground to avoid the high waters of the rainy season, had not taken it any higher than necessary. Several feet from where the trap-door stood open, Stuart paused, scanning the hard ground before his own booted feet destroyed any impressions that might have been left by any one dropping through the trap. There were none.

Emerging at the rear of the building, Stuart remembered that the river lay that way. The ground would be damper. If his man had gone that way he might have left footprints to betray the fact. Following a path through the undergrowth, Stuart came suddenly upon a wet spot and there, freshly made, were the imprints of bare feet. Stuart nodded his head in satisfaction. Evidently he had been right. The man who had been hidden in the *ravi* was the man of the tree-house. Bunting would have worn boots.

He pushed on to the river and was rewarded by finding more tracks and in the mud of the bank, at the very edge of the water, a jagged indentation.

"A canoe," he surmised, remembering the crude, blunt-nosed craft in the swamp.

He raised his head for a swift scrutiny of the river in both directions. Down-stream, a quarter of a mile away, he caught a movement which, when his eyes adjusted themselves to the distance, resolved itself into a man poling a canoe.

Immediately Stuart was off down the bank. Vines and concealed logs tripped him, the brush clutched at his clothing, the mire held back his feet but he would not turn aside to seek easier going lest he lose sight of that canoe. When at last he stumbled out of the vegetation he was, as he had intended, at the landing-place below the village.

The constables detailed to guard the

launch were not in evidence. Doubtless they were up in the village by now, tasting of that rod in pickle which Lipscombe had threatened. There was no time to go after any one to join him. Anyhow, he had but one man to handle. It was the work of but a moment to untie the ropes that held the launch to the bank. Then Stuart clambered over the side, made his way to the stern, threw the ignition switch and spun the flywheel of the motor.

At the third try it coughed, sputtered as if about to die, then with a roar caught on all cylinders. With one hand Stuart steered the boat out into the stream while with the other he adjusted spark and gas, after throwing the propeller-shaft into gear. There was no need to hurry now. The race was won before it was well started. The man in the canoe was foredoomed to failure.

Apparently, however, he refused to admit it. The exhaust of the motor evidently had told him of pursuit for suddenly he began to pole more rapidly, thrusting his long pole into the water and bending far over until his hands almost touched the side of his unwieldy craft, threatening at every moment to capsize it.

Stuart was able to pick out his ragged topcoat and cap now. It *was* the man rescued from the tree-house. In a few minutes now the launch would be alongside and no longer would there be any question as to whether he was Leong Ton or another. Stuart throttled down the motor as he prepared to swerve in close. He would not add to the other's perils by the waves which the launch's bow kicked up, but would cut his own speed down to bare steerage way and drift in slowly.

Suddenly the man in the canoe stopped poling. As if realizing the uselessness of further efforts he let the pole slide out of his hands and balanced himself as if to plunge overboard.

"Hullo, there," cried Stuart. "Hold on a bit now and wait for me."

The ragged man did not turn his head. He went over the side head foremost just as Stuart jerked open the throttle and the launch leaped across the few separating yards.

But he was too late. The man had gone under the surface, and Stuart's horrified eyes caught a vision of a dark and sinister form rushing upon him, of horrible gaping jaws. Then the tip of a scaly tail flipped above the water, churning it into foam, mingled with a dash of crimson, bubbles came to the surface and the whole was whisked away by the current.

Sick with horror, Stuart brought the launch about and came back to the spot. He saw then that the canoe was low in the water, that the mud plug in the bow had been washed away. He saw something else, too—a small package of some kind near its stern—and, bending far over the side of the launch, snatched it as the two craft passed.

"Snappy stuff," bellowed a loud voice. "And now, young felly me lad, I'll take charge of that."

Up near the bow of the launch, his legs still covered by the tarpaulin under which he had been lying among the supplies of the patrol, stood Hurricane Harry Bunting! There was a sardonic smile upon his lips and the revolver in his hand pointed straight at Allen Stuart's heart.

CHAPTER XX

CAPTURED!

STARTLED as he was by the unexpectedness of the other's appearance, Stuart's hand flashed to the butt of his revolver.

"None o' that now," warned Bunting. "Keep that hand above yer head and shut off the petrol with the other."

His voice carried loud and menacing above the roar of the motor and there was no mistaking his attitude. Stuart obeyed.

"Now pick up the little parcel and toss it ter me."

For the moment Stuart had forgotten it. It lay at his feet. He had scooped, rather than lifted, it out of the canoe and let it drop to the floor of the launch. It had been in his hand but a few seconds during its journey through the air, but he knew that it was a pouch-like affair of leather, bound with a thong of the same material. Unless he were badly mistaken, during those few seconds he had held the things he had come through so much to get—the blood-red pearls. Never would he cravenly hand them over to any one just because he was menaced by a revolver.

"If you want it, Bunting," he said quietly, "come and try to get it."

"If I do, you won't see me," snarled the luggerman. "You'll be dead."

Stuart would not have been greatly surprized if his defiance had brought a bullet from Bunting's weapon. He had sized up the other as that kind. Seeing it had brought only threats, he took heart.

"That's the only way you'll ever get it, by killing me first," he assured Bunting. "And then they'll hang you down at Moresby, instead of clapping you in jail for your part in keeping that chap marooned in the tree-house."

"Yer're so —— wise, aren't yer?" sneered the other. "There was a good reason for keeping him there."

"I'm betting it wasn't the reason you told the Namau."

"It's good enough that the judge would take it. Nobody excepting yer knows that there was another, and I'm going to shoot yer."

Stuart's lip curled in contempt.

"Go ahead and shoot then," he said. "That's what one would expect of a bird that fights as foul as you do. And don't forget that you'll hang for it, Bunting. Hang, do you understand?"

It was plain that Hurricane Harry did not like that word "hang." He ran an uneasy forefinger around the collar of his shirt as if already he felt the noose tightening.

"I'll do it in me own good time," he snarled with a return of his bluster.

"Meanwhile I'm putting my hands down," said Stuart, suiting the action to the words. "Oh, I'm not reaching for a gun," he added hastily as the other's face revealed alarm. "My arms are tired, that's all. From battering those niggers you set on me the other night."

"If I'd been there somebody else would've got battered," grated Bunting.

"You, probably," agreed Stuart cheerfully. "I'd hate to soil my hands on you, at that."

Bunting ripped out an oath.

"Blow yer lily-white hands," he grated. "I'm through fooling with yer."

Stuart laughed aloud.

"You've fooled too long as it is, Bunting," he said. "In about another twenty seconds if you don't lower that gun Lipscombe is going to drill a hole right through your back. I mean it," he snapped. "He's aiming at you right now. Duck, man, duck!"

"Ho, ho, ho," roared Bunting. "That's good, young felly, me lad. Ho, ho. 'Duck,' says he, 'there's Lipscombe going to drill ye.' Wanted me ter turn me head, didn't yer? It's no go, me fine bird."

"I warned you," said Stuart and threw himself down beside the motor of the launch.

There were two reports of firearms, one close at hand, the other more removed, but so close together that they might have been one. Stuart heard one bullet bury itself in the planking of the launch. Then he heard Bunting's yell of alarm and rage and came to his feet again, his own revolver in hand, its hammer drawn back.

"Hands up, Bunting! Quick!" he shouted. "Drop that gun overboard or you're a dead man!"

He was tempted to laugh at the ludicrous haste with which the luggerman complied.

"That's better," he said, and seated himself upon a box of canned stuff. "All right, Lipscombe. I've got him," he shouted to the patrol officer who, with a policeman, was rowing rapidly toward the launch in a dingey, evidently Bunting's own.

"The trouble with you," he added, turning to the sullen, glowering captive, "is two things. One is you're such a liar yourself you don't believe any one else. The other is that you like to play cat to another fellow's mouse. I noticed that the other day when we were talking on the lugger, and it stood me in good stead today. You see, Bunting, about the time that you popped out from under that canvas I saw that dingey with Lipscombe and the constable coming down-stream. I knew that if you were encouraged the least bit you'd enjoy talking over my approaching death with me, would gloat over it if you could make me show the least sign of fear. I taunted you instead and, like all bullies and braggarts, you were determined to make me show the white feather before you shot me. As long as I didn't I knew I was safe. And every minute those other fellows were slipping up behind you and you didn't suspect it.

"I don't like you, Bunting. You're a brute and a coward and about everything else that I despise in a man. But I couldn't see you shot in the back and that was just what Lipscombe was fixing to do. He'd have done it in a minute, too, if he hadn't seen me dive behind that engine. As it

was, it looks as if he had only punctured your hat."

Bunting vented his feelings toward Lipscombe profanely.

"Tell it to him," advised Stuart. "He's coming aboard now. But if I were you, Bunting, I'd talk pretty to him. He's the chap who'll say what charge will be preferred against you."

Lipscombe climbed over the rail, and Stuart met him with a grin.

"Welcome," he said. "I imagine Bunting here is getting quite tired of hearing me talk."

"You're all right?" queried the patrol officer, laying a hand upon his shoulder.

Then he turned to the prisoner and his lips tightened grimly.

"You're lucky you're alive. Tie that dingey to the side, Bilibo, and come put the handcuffs on this man. I wouldn't soil my hands on him for all the gold in New Guinea."

Stuart chuckled.

"If I was Bilibo I'd be tempted to refuse and make unanimous the opinion of himself that Bunting's heard today," he said and turned to start up the motor.

Then, under cover of the snapping of the handcuffs upon the luggerman's wrists, he stopped and picked up the leather parcel he had taken from the canoe and slipped it into his pocket.

CHAPTER XXI

THE THUNDERS OF SILENCE

"OF ALL the aggravating, obstinate, pig-headed limbs of ——"

Lipscombe tweaked viciously at his ear and left the sentence unfinished.

"Bunting?" asked Stuart.

He had just returned from down-river after an unsuccessful search in the launch for Hurricane Harry's lugger and found the patrol officer in a state of high indignation.

"Yes, Bunting. After you had dropped us at the landing and gone off to look for the lugger I started in asking him questions about the tree-house man and the reasons of the Namau for marooning him. Not a word could I get out of him. He just sat there, blinking insolently and sneering. He knows blasted well I can't give him the hiding he deserves. His Excellency sees red if an officer so much as lays his hand on a native, much less a white man. So I've talked myself hoarse, threatening, pleading, cajoling—and to no purpose. The blighter might be dumb."

Stuart laughed sympathetically. "Give him a dose of his own medicine," he suggested.

"Explain," snapped Lipscombe.

"Let him listen to the thunders of silence awhile."

"The thunders of silence?" The patrol officer frowned perplexedly. "That sounds like something that can't be—in the same class as the white-black man or the black-white man that Gubiam's brother insists upon calling the chap that the crocodile got this afternoon."

"I want to hear more about that, but let's dispose of Bunting first. What I mean is this. I took advantage of him today and no doubt it's still rankling in him. He has a cruel streak that delights in torturing others, even if it's only by word of mouth. If he hadn't indulged in so much talk he wouldn't be a prisoner now, and I'd probably have gone to join that poor —— at the bottom of the river. So now he's sulking, gone to the other extreme, isn't going to say a word. Very well. We'll give him all of the silence he wants. Neither you nor I nor any one else will say anything to him. Just ignore him. If he starts talking, pay no attention to him. Let him talk to himself. He won't like that. He's the kind that must have an audience. After a bit he'll be only too glad to do anything if somebody will just pay attention to him. Where have you got him?"

Lipscombe turned and sang out an order to the nearest policeman before he answered.

"He's in one of those huts, under guard and handcuffed. I've grasped your idea, Stuart. I've a lot to learn about human nature. We'll do just what you say. I've passed the word along for Maikili. He's just the man to put over that surly brute. Maikili's a Kiwai Islander, one of the most lugubrious and melancholy of all Papuans. If its's silence Bunting's after, Maikili will be only too glad to give it and be grateful for plenty of the same in return. Here he comes now."

"*Io taubada.* I sarbee," the constable said when Lipscombe had given him his orders and, with a snappy salute, he was

off to relieve the man guarding Hurricane Harry.

"They make —— good constables, those Kiwai," commented the patrol officer, letting his eyes follow the man. "Good laborers, good servants, good everything from a white man's standpoint. If you find a native foreman, or one who sticks out above his fellows, it's odds he's a Kiwai. Not like these Namau, at all. But you're waiting to hear about Gubiam's brother.

"He got down to earth after his scare when I told him it was the tree-house man who had made the image fall and who had beat on the sacred drum. I guessed he'd want to tell all about him then, to get even for the sacrilege. Oh, he was gabby enough, between my questions and Gubiam's veiled threats to clout him again like he did when he captured him. That's an elder brother's privilege with them, you know. Even his Excellency wouldn't jump the corporal for it. But I didn't get much out of him.

"Seems like they consulted Bunting, who'd shown up in the lugger about the time they were trying to decide what to do with the man. Bunting was all for turning him over to the magistrate down at Kerema until some one mentioned that the chap's pockets had turned up a little bag with a lot of red somethings, stones or shells or something, when they searched him while he was still unconscious from his plunge."

The patrol officer broke off and looked away from Stuart for a moment. Stuart hoped he hadn't seen his own involuntary movement toward that hip-pocket where nestled the leather pouch. Stewart was confident the Namau had no knowledge of pearls. If the Gulf of Papua, the only salt water they knew, had been oyster-producing, pearlers would have frequented that part of the coast, and Lipscombe would have mentioned the fact in describing the country, no doubt. Stuart was glad the Namau had apparently not identified the "somethings" for what they were. The pouch he was assured did indeed hold the blood-red pearls. For he had untied the thong that afternoon, during the trip in search of the lugger while Bilibo was busy with the launch's motor. His stealthy peep had revealed the pearls, snuggled between two thick layers of cotton. Alone, he might have taken them out, examined them, enjoyed the beauty and brilliance of which he had caught a glimpse. But he had not done so. Sun Kong had been insistent that the very existence of the pearls must be kept from every one. Resolutely, then, Stuart had retied the thong and returned the pouch to his pocket.

If Lipscombe had seen that betraying movement, he gave no sign of it now. Neither did he seem inclined to speculate upon the character of the "somethings" of which he had learned from Gubiam's brother. His face, when he resumed his story, displayed no indication that he attached any importance to them.

"Right then and there Bunting began to get excited. He insisted upon seeing the red 'somethings.' The Namau said they had returned them to the pockets of the chink and——"

He chuckled at Stuart's annoyed toss of the head at the emphasis he had laid upon the word.

"Of the chink," he repeated firmly. "Wait, you'll see I'm right. Then Bunting said that unless he saw them he wouldn't be able to advise them. They took him into the *ravi*, back behind the curtain, where Leong Ton—oh, yes, it must have been him—was waiting for them to do something. They went through the man's pockets, but could find nothing. Bunting insisted upon making the search himself. He didn't find what he was looking for. He spoke to the man. Of course he got no answer. Leong Ton pointed to his open mouth.

"Bunting had been standing right close to him. Suddenly he gave a yell and backed off. He was very much excited. He told the Namau that the man belonged to the Koairi tribe, as they had suspected. His eyes proved that. Come to think of it, the Koairi do have slant eyes. Look like Chinese to some extent. Anyhow, Bunting went on to say that this man had offended the crocodiles and they had cut out his tongue.

"If you knew how the Namau look upon crocodiles you'd appreciate his cleverness there. They think the crocodiles are sorcerers' familiars, can bewitch a man and so on, and they are afraid of offending them, that is, certain ones. How they tell the difference I don't know, but they'll cheerfully spear some of them and wouldn't touch others under any circumstances. At any rate, they swallowed Bunting's yarn whole.

Apparently it never crossed their minds to inquire how he knew, just took it for granted or thought it was *puri-puri* (magic) white man's fashion, I suppose.

"The upshot was he persuaded them to keep Leong Ton a prisoner. Hoping he'd give up the hiding-place of the red somethings, I fancy. The rest of the story is like they told us in the *ravi*. They thought, being a Koairi, he'd appreciate the tree-house more than one of their huts. Used to take him food every day or so, and water to drink. Bunting's been back once or twice and gone with them to the tree-house and tried to make Leong Ton understand that he could gain his freedom if he'd tell what he'd done with the somethings."

He paused and his fingers strayed to the ear from which he seemed to derive inspiration.

"I'm thinking, Stuart, that our friend, Hurricane Harry, would go into a tantrum proper if we told him that Leong Ton understood English. Near as I can get at things, he never discovered the fact. Leong Ton always shook his head and pretended he couldn't grasp his meaning when Bunting raved at him."

Stuart nodded thoughtfully.

"I don't think, though, that Bunting would be much surprized if he heard what I'm going to say now. I caught a glimpse of Leong Ton's body just before he went over the side today, Lipscombe, and the Namau told the truth. It was white, not like your skin or mine, but in patches. His topcoat was open and he didn't have on a shirt. I couldn't have been mistaken. Do you see what I mean?"

Lipscombe's startled eyes dilated.

"Not that he was a—a——"

Again Stuart nodded.

"Yes, I mean just that," he said. "Leong Ton was a leper."

CHAPTER XXII

REVELATIONS

"WHAT a blind ass I've been," burst out Lipscombe after a few moments of tugging at his ear. "I should have guessed it. Hang it all, the fact they thought we had come to burn their village would have suggested it. The only time such a thing ever was done was because some contagious disease was found here. Still, when we were getting that story from them in the *ravi* before the Chinaman upset the idol, they were frank enough about saying the man's body was white and his face black——"

He paused and when he spoke again it was more to himself than to Stuart.

"They wouldn't have done that if they had known the man was diseased. And Gubiam's brother didn't say anything about it——"

He got up and sang out for the corporal and his kinsman.

"I'll get the straight of it this time," he predicted. Half an hour later he dismissed them and turned to Stuart, who had been an interested, if not understanding, listener to the colloquy.

"It's just as I suspected," he said. "Bunting's fine hand again. He told them the difference between the man's body and his face was a sign of the crocodiles' anger against him and that, while he must be treated kindly, he must be kept a prisoner. That was when they first got him. Later, just before we showed up, Bunting appeared to tell them we were coming and that if we found out about the man in the tree-house we would not understand that he had been bewitched by the crocodiles but would say he was sick and we must burn the village.

"They didn't know he had escaped when we were talking to them in the *ravi* before the idol fell. Thought we knew all about the man and understood he was under a spell. So they were fixing to tell us all about him. Gubiam's brother was surprized to discover just now that I hadn't understood. I had not made him think so in our previous talk."

"Mean to say his reference to a black-white man or a white-black man didn't puzzle you?" Stuart demanded.

"Frankly, no. Oh, blow you, Stuart! You know my weak point, don't you? I did jump at conclusions again, after I'd been convinced it was Leong Ton. A native doesn't know many colors. White and black and red would just about cover the words for them. When I was told his body was white I thought that was as near as they could come to yellow. The black face meant only to me a darker complexion due to exposure to the sun and wind and so on. Just like any man's body is lighter than his face. I was just spoofing you

along, waiting for a chance to refer to him as a Chinaman again, knowing you'd pitch into me. I didn't think you'd seen his face before he went into the river."

"I hadn't," admitted Stuart. "Even when I saw those telltale white patches on his body I still thought him a white man, a leper—but a white man. You needn't feel disgruntled because you jumped at conclusions, Lipscombe. I'm in the same boat. Unless you'd told me he was undoubtedly Leong Ton I'd still be thinking he was a white man, whose face had been dyed to make him appear an Oriental."

"Well—" He got up, smothered a yawn with his hand and stretched—"it's about bed-time. Guess I'll turn in. It's been a strenuous day."

He slapped at a mosquito buzzing by his ear. Then his hand paused in mid-air.

"I say, Lipscombe," he said slowly. "I'll be taking you up on that proposition to send me on down to Kerema with the launch, that is if you're staying on to finish the patrol."

"I'm staying," replied the patrol officer. "I'm going to turn Gubiam's brother loose and see if he can't induce his fellows to come home after he's explained. I told him that the tree-house man was dead, taken by a crocodile. He'll infer that the gods have taken revenge for that image falling and the beating of the sacred drum. I want to be here when they return. They've got an entirely erroneous idea of the Government that I want to correct. Then I'll be in a position to visit the other villages. I'm afraid, though, that I'll have to ask you to take Bunting along to Kerema. The magistrate there will send him on to Moresby."

"It's about Bunting that I want to speak," returned Stuart. "He's a dog and a beast and he was ready to kill me today but—" he slapped at another mosquito—"he's a white man. I don't think I'd sleep well tonight if I thought he was being tortured by these infernal mosquitoes. Can't we get him a net?"

"You soft-hearted beggar." Lipscombe plainly was amused by the suggestion. "They don't bother him any. When I was trying to get something out of him today they were thick on him and he scarcely noticed it. I suppose some men get used to them after a time, just like the natives. I never have. But I hardly think you need worry about Bunting."

"I'm glad of that," Stuart said quickly. "And I hope you get the information you're after when he gets ready to talk."

"That *I'm* after," echoed the patrol officer. "Why, dash it, Stuart, I was hoping he'd tell what you wanted to know."

Stuart shook his head.

"I know what I came to New Guinea after," he said. "Bunting couldn't tell me anything more."

"Well, it might help me out some if Bunting does make any admissions," said the other. "I've got charges enough now to hold him on for some time. Interfering with a Government patrol, inciting the natives, not reporting a contagious disease, illegal detainer of Leong Ton and so on. I'll get statements from the Namau, perhaps take one or two down to Moresby as witnesses against him. I'll keep him under 'the silence' until you're ready to leave with him."

He hesitated, then he faced the other abruptly.

"Stuart," he asked, "are you sure I can be of no more help to you? Have you got *everything* that you came to New Guinea to get?"

Startled, Stuart was grateful that he was able to maintain composure under the unexpected questions.

"What do you mean, Lipscombe?" he asked, hoping that curiosity had not been too great for the other, that he was not to be called upon to evade questions about those "red somethings" Gubiam's brother had mentioned.

"Just this," was the reply. "If your mission here is ended, well and good. If not, command me. You see I, too, belong."

Between his thumb and forefinger he displayed for a moment a silver ring in the form of a rope with the ends loosely entwined.

"My number," he added, "is four, sixteen."

"Mine," Stuart informed him, "is five, forty-five. And I have no other call to make upon you, old man. I have got *all* I came to New Guinea to get."

He watched the other walk away to give some orders for the night.

"You blessed rascal," he added softly under his breath. "I understand a good deal better now why you've laid off questions. And I wish I could only tell you what you're dying to know, but will not ask."

He was asleep still when some one shook him and he awoke with a start to find Lipscombe beside him in the early dawn.

"Maikili has a message for you," the patrol officer said. "I'll send him in."

"*Taubada,*" said the constable. "Mist' Bunting he talk suppose you come along him he plenty talk along you."

CHAPTER XXIII

A DESPERATE ATTEMPT

"WELL." Stuart snapped the word at Hurricane Harry Bunting.

He had been in no haste to visit the prisoner for the purpose of hearing the "plenty talk" which Constable Maikili had said the luggerman was desirous of making. Already he had come to the conclusion that Bunting's connection with Leong Ton and the pearls had been purely accidental, that the Chinese had left the *London Castle* of his own accord and not as the result of a kidnaping plot in which Hurricane Harry was involved. If Bunting's idea in sending for him was to make a confession in an effort to get off lightly for his misdeeds he didn't intend letting the man waste his time.

"Well," he repeated. "What do you want?"

Hurricane Harry got up from the corner of the hut where he had been lying.

"Send the nigger away," he said and jerked his thumb toward the impassive Maikili, on guard with fixed bayonet in the doorway.

At a nod from Stuart the constable stepped outside and sat down on the platform. But his rifle still commanded the door.

"I wants me share o' them things yer got from the yeller-belly," said Bunting. "I know yer got them and wot I know I ain't told ter nobody. I ain't telling, neither, not if yer does the right thing. Lipscombe kin gab his —— head off. He don't get nothing from me, unless yer tries to hog it all. Twig wot I mean?"

"I twig," said Stuart. "You're a dirty blackmailer in addition to your other accomplishments. Well, you can't blackmail me."

He started for the door, ready to crook his finger at Maikili to resume his guard.

"Wait." Bunting's voice became a whine. "I ain't asking fer nothing that ain't mine. If 'tweren't fer me the —— chink'd been in the river these many months and his little red stones still hidden where he put them. Where'd yer been then? Twiddling yer thumbs and wondering what had become o' him and them. I saves them fer yer and now wot? Yer goes off with them safe in yer pocket, and I kin go hang. By rights they're mine, but yer've got them and I ain't. I'm willing to go halvers and no more said."

"Just what are you talking about?" demanded Stuart.

"Blast yer, wot's the use of beating about the bush?" snarled the other. "Yer knows —— well wot I'm talking about. Rubies, that's wot. Rubies."

"Rubies," echoed Stuart, his surprize real.

"Yes, rubies. 'Red somethings,' the niggers said. Stones, they said. I ain't no —— fool. I know what they are. Rubies, that's wot."

Stuart could not help smiling as he turned away for the second time. "Bunting, you never were more mistaken in your life," he said. "You won't believe me, of course, but the chink had no rubies, never had had any and I've got none now."

"Wait," urged the luggerman again. "Yer went down-river looking fer me lugger. Yer didn't find it. No. Because it weren't there." A crafty look came into his face. "But if yer had found it, yer might have found something that would have changed yer mind about not divvying on them rubies. Oh, I ain't believing yer none about yer not having them. I know. So does me mate. Yer'll never get out o' New Guinea with them, me fine bird. Me mate's got his orders."

"Bluff," said Stuart, disgustedly. "Your mate's miles back in the swamp by now with the rest of the Namau. Oh, I saw him in the club-house yesterday, Bunting. Sent him to spy around and see what we were doing, didn't you? Well, the rest of them took to their heels and so did your mate."

"Bluff, is it?" A triumphant gleam came into the prisoner's beady eyes. "Me mate's gone, is he? Well, listen ter me. He came back. Last night, see. Give me the signal from outside the hut. I told him what I wanted him ter know. Made believe I was trying to talk to the constable. Yelling me head off like I was angry because he won't gab with me. Him sitting there wishing he'd dare stick his knife inter me.

And me all the time telling me mate wot ter do. He's got his orders now. Yer'll never get out of New Guinea alive with them rubies. He'll fix yer, me mate will."

Stuart bowed mockingly.

"If you think you can frighten me, Bunting," he said, "you're wasting breath. But it was very nice of you to let me know about the mate and his orders. I'll be on my guard. Once more let me impress upon you one thing, Bunting. You talk too much."

"Yes, and I'll talk more when I git before the judge. I'll tell him some things yer don't think I know. I'll tell him wot Tompkins told me."

"Tompkins!" Stuart, in the doorway, whirled to face the luggerman.

"Yes, Tompkins," Bunting leered at him, came closer. "Yer didn't know he was taken ter the hospital at Moresby from Kerema in the lugger, did yer? Oh, he were raving. Out o' his head, he was. But I learned a lot, I did—afore I cracked him one ter stop his —— chatter. Now he can't talk."

"What did he tell you?" asked Stuart.

"I talk too much," jibed Bunting. "I'll tell it ter the judge——"

He had came closer, his lips twisted in a cruel smile. He had raised his manacled hands to shake them almost in Stuart's face. Now he brought them down suddenly, behind Stuart's head, so that the chain linking the iron cuffs about his wrist caught Stuart in the back of his neck and pulled him off balance. Then the luggerman's knee came up into the pit of his stomach with terrific force and he crumpled to the floor, writhing in agony.

Dimly he heard Maikili's startled shout as he grappled with his gigantic prisoner, felt the hut tremble as the constable was hurled to the platform. Then the reports of rifles came to his ears and, his pain easing, got up and staggered outside.

Out in the village street he saw a little knot of constables gathered about something upon the ground and Lipscombe pushing his way into their midst. Then the patrol officer was coming to meet him.

"Dead," he said in reply to Stuart's questioning look. "A bullet hit him in the head."

He placed a sustaining hand under Stuart's elbow.

"Want a look at him?" he asked. Stuart shook his head and turned toward the rest-house. He knew what he would see on the face of the dead luggerman—a mocking, derisive sneer. Even in death the cat would seem to be enjoying the tantalizing of the mouse.

To himself Stuart admitted that he was tantalized. He had thought he knew all there was to know about the *London Castle* and why Leong Ton had quit it so precipitately. All the known facts dovetailed so nicely to back up the theory he had evolved when he found the Chinese had been a leper.

Bunting's last words had brought that theory crashing to earth. He had said Tompkins was involved in the affair. He had refused to say how, delighted at the opportunity to bedevil the man who had scored so heavily against him. He never would tell now. Tompkins, bereft of his reason, couldn't tell. What had Tompkins said in Bunting's presence before the luggerman had "cracked him one ter stop his —— chatter?"

Into Stuart's mind flashed an idea. Before Bunting had struck the man, Tompkins had been only delirious—and he had talked. His memory, then, had vanished as a result of the blow. A surgeon's knife might restore it. He was in a fever of anxiety to be off to Port Moresby and see if it couldn't be done. He had to know why Leong Ton had left the *London Castle* and Tompkins held the only solution so far as he could see.

CHAPTER XXIV

STRANGE ORDERS

STUART'S first act when he reached Port Moresby several days later was to send Sun Kong a message announcing success. His second, was to rent a small private box in the vault of the local bank and put the pearls in it. He had a double object. One was to protect the pearls against theft. The other was born of his dislike to handle overmuch something that had been in the keeping of a leper. He felt certain that during the months Leong Ton had been in the tree-house, the pouch with the pearls had lain hidden in the *ravi*, perhaps in the wicker god itself. He knew, too, that leprosy is communicable only through long intimacy and that he was in little danger of contracting it from the pouch, but it gave him a creepy sensation just the same. He made arrangements to have the

person named in a sealed envelope notified if anything befell him and mailed to Sun Kong an order on the bank for the contents of the box.

Then he went to the hotel, changed into ducks, discarded the revolver he had carried so constantly and went to see the governor. Having given an account of the patrol and delivered some papers Lipscombe had entrusted to him, he brought up the subject of an operation to relieve the pressure on Tompkins' brain.

"I will be glad to pay for it, your Excellency," he said. "I'm not wholly unselfish in the matter, either. I do not yet know how my Chinese got into New Guinea. Tompkins, I feel quite sure, was with him and, if his memory is restored, can give me information of value to me if he were in his right mind. If not, I shall feel repaid if the operation is successful. Tompkins, a white man, is in a degrading job, one suited only to a native. It grates upon me."

"It can be arranged, no doubt," said the governor, thoughtfully. "You could be appointed guardian for him and authorize the operation. Wait. I'll have the doctor in charge of the hospital here join us."

But the surgeon when he arrived shook his head.

"No," he said, "the operation can not be performed here. It's a delicate one, something for which I would not care to be responsible under conditions here. Sydney or Brisbane, preferably Sydney, would be the place to take him."

In the end the governor consented to this and Stuart became legal guardian of the cloudy-brained man of all work at the "pub." His first assertion of authority was to separate him from his job. Tompkins accepted his changed status docilely, apparently unconcerned with his future.

Leaving Burns-Philp's trading-establishment, where he had gone to reserve passage for himself and Tompkins, Stuart came face to face with the governor's secretary.

"His Excellency has issued orders for the confiscation of Bunting's lugger," said the secretary. "He asked me to tell you and to say that we have information that Bunting's native mate has been seen here in the last day or two. You haven't run across him?"

"No."

"If he should happen to cross your path, his Excellency would appreciate his apprehension by you."

"I'll do it," promised Stuart.

Watching the secretary's retreating back, he wondered why the other had made it a point to let him know the Namau was in town. In view of Stuart's ability to recognize the mate, the request that he help in arresting him was not unreasonable. But there had seemed to be something behind the secretary's words. Was he trying to warn him to be on his guard?

"Lipscombe must have mentioned Bunting's threats in one of those letters I delivered for him," he concluded and resumed his walk to the hotel.

But he could not so easily shake the Namau out of his thoughts and when he retired that night his mind still was on the mate.

It was some hours later that he found himself widely awake, warned by some sixth sense that all was not well. He lay perfectly still, however, his eyes boring into the darkness for some movement that would reveal a prowler. Both the door into the corridor and the door giving on the wide veranda were open to create a current of refreshing air. The corridor at his end was not lighted, the veranda roof was broad and low and the shade at his single window was drawn.

Then he heard again the sound that must have awakened him, a shuffling noise, and it seemed to come from the floor near the door to the veranda. Stuart cautiously raised his head. Squeaky bed-springs gave him away. Before he could leap upon him, a man who had been crouching near the foot of the bed had jumped up and dashed from the room. Stuart, pursuing, was just in time to catch a glimpse of his shadowy form racing down the flight of steps into the back-yard. But that one glimpse had shown that the intruder was a bushy-headed native. Had it been the Namau mate?

The governor's secretary, to whom he mentioned the matter when they accidentally met next day, was inclined to doubt it.

"We've conducted a thorough search for him, both here in Moresby and in the two native villages," he said. "If he's here he has found a good hiding-place. A native constable, though, is insistent he saw the man night before last, slinking along the street long after nine o'clock, the hour at

which we compel natives to get under cover. He got away from the constable. But there's quite a lot of petty thieving goes on. Perhaps your visitor was merely looking for loot."

"And my imagination made me think he was the Namau," laughed Stuart.

ENSUED three more days of eventless waiting. Then in front of B-P's he was accosted by a native who thrust into his hand an envelop. A radio message. From Sun Kong, congratulating him on his success, Stuart guessed as he leisurely inserted a finger under the flap and withdrew the blank upon which it was written.

The message was from Sydney. He read it once, started in surprize, brushed his hand across his eyes to make sure he was not being tricked by his vision, read it again. He had not been mistaken. It said:

Take the articles which you recovered and throw them in the sea, making sure they never can be recovered. Important.

The signature was a code word agreed upon to represent Sun Kong.

Stuart continued to stand there in the hot sun, staring at the bit of paper, unheeding of the curious glances of the passersby, native and white. It was unbelievable. There must be a mistake. No man would go to the expense and trouble of recovering a fortune only to toss it in the sea like so much junk. It didn't sound reasonable. Was some one trying to get the pearls away from him? No, it couldn't be that. The message wouldn't have been indefinite as to the particular spot in which the pearls were to be thrown. It was left to him to decide that. It would have been different if it had ordered him to turn them over to some one. But to throw them into the sea?

Stuart crushed the message into the pocket of his white coat and went to the radio office. The operator assured him the message had been copied exactly as received. If Mr. Stuart would pay the charge and wait he would have it repeated by Thursday Island, which had relayed it from Sydney.

Thursday Island! Suspicion leaped into Stuart's mind. "Can't you get Sydney direct?" he asked.

The operator looked at him questioningly.

"I can, but it isn't customary," he replied. "T. I. always relays to us. Still——"

Stuart laid an impressively large banknote upon the counter.

"You get Sydney and confirm that message," he said.

The operator hesitated.

"I may get the sack," he began.

"Ten pounds is worth taking a chance for," interrupted Stuart, and the operator went to his key.

Twenty minutes later, twenty minutes during which Stuart found it difficult to keep from fidgeting, he got up.

"The message is correct, sir. I got the very chap who sent it originally. The charges for repeating——"

Stuart laid another bill upon the counter.

"Keep the change," he said and walked out. There didn't seem to be much doubt that his order came from Sun Kong. Very well. If the old Chinese wanted the pearls sunk and sunk beyond recovery, he, Stuart, proposed to do that very thing.

He arranged for a small launch, overcame the owner's objections to letting a stranger handle his beloved motor, and went to his room at the hotel. When he appeared at the bank and asked to be taken to his box his right hand was in his coat-pocket and his forefinger was curled about the trigger of a small automatic. He felt certain Sun Kong had sent the puzzling orders, but if any one *was* trying to trick him into removing the pearls, intending to take them from him, he was ready.

CHAPTER XXV

TEMPTATION

ONCE clear of the wharf, Stuart relaxed his tense attitude somewhat. He was alone on the launch. There was no place where any one could hide and duplicate the surprize which Hurricane Harry Bunting had worked upon him. He turned the bow in the direction of Fisherman Island, guarding the entrance of the harbor where the waters of Moresby Bay mingle with the waters of the Coral Sea.

Why he had chosen to do this when he might easily have weighted the leather pouch and dropped it overboard as soon as he had cleared the wharf into deep water, Stuart could not have told. Probably his desire to look at the pearls once more before he consigned them to the deep influenced him. Then, too, it was early afternoon and

he could kill some of the time that otherwise would be spent only as he had spent those other seven days when first he had come to New Guinea—idly waiting.

Fisherman Island, he knew, was not inhabited. Occasionally native fishermen went out to it in their outrigger canoes and spent the night there. Sometimes the whites picnicked there. Mostly, however, it was deserted. It would do, he decided whimsically, for the scene of what he chose to view as a ceremony. Few men could calmly consign a fortune to oblivion without investing the affair with imaginative rites. Stuart was not one of the few.

Ever since he had received that mysterious command to lose the pearls Stuart had felt himself tormented by a desire to know why Sun Kong had given such an order. His brain refused to furnish him with a logical reason. He hoped that when next they met the old Chinese would see fit to satisfy his curiosity on that point.

It was inevitable that his thoughts should turn to what could be done with those pearls if only one possessed them. Comfort, luxury, the power to go where and when he pleased, to seek the adventures he craved instead of waiting for them to seek him—what couldn't a man do?

He shut off the motor and let the launch drift while he indulged in day-dreams. The pouch he had taken from his pocket and laid on the seat beside him, unopened as yet. Riches such as he never could hope to accumulate otherwise lay there for the taking. He had but to go back to Sydney, report to Sun Kong that he had obeyed orders, sever relations with him after a time and dispose of the pearls. True, Sun Kong would hear of it in time and would know that Stuart had been a double-dealer. Perhaps, too, he would seek vengeance through his agents. What of it? It would but add spice to Stuart's enjoyment of his ill-gotten wealth.

With a start Stuart realized that he actually was considering stealing the pearls. Angrily he got to his feet and bent over to seize the crank of the motor. Then his eyes fell upon the pouch again and he returned to the seat beside them. His fingers were unsteady as he untied the knotted thong. He laid his helmet, crown down, upon the bench, propped it upright with a wooden block, opened the pouch and shook out the pearls with their protecting layers of cotton into the helmet. His nervous fingers plucked away the cotton and a jerky gasp came from his lips.

As Sun Kong had said, the pearls were wonderfully symmetrical and beautiful. As big as the end of his thumb, each of them, and of a lustrous brilliance that dazzled the senses. He took the helmet between his knees and let them trickle through his fingers. They were his, his—if he dared to take them.

Suddenly it seemed as if their red had become indeed the thing their color symbolized—drops of blood. Blood of Leong Ton, gone to feed the belly of a crocodile because he had steadfastly maintained his loyalty to one who trusted him. Blood of Hurricane Harry Bunting, shed because greed and cupidity and lust had tempted him into willingness to do murder to get them.

Revulsion seized Stuart. He who had condemned Bunting was lower than the luggerman had been. He was about to yield to the temptation to betray the trust of his employer. He, Allen Stuart, even considering such a thing, was as much a thief as if he actually had already accomplished it. He ranked below Leong Ton, of a despised yellow race, who—however bad his judgment if he had willingly quit the *London Castle*—had kept faith at least. He had not given up the pearls. Stuart got up abruptly, crammed the pearls and the cotton back into the pouch and began to ransack the tool-locker for a weight.

Then he was hurled from his feet, there was a rending crash forward and he realized that the launch had run aground upon a submerged coral pinnacle. His hasty inspection convinced him that the damage was not serious and he took off his white coat, rolled up his trousers, removed his shoes and gingerly began to let himself over the bow on to the reef. His strength might be sufficient to lift the boat off. It was shipping no water, so he knew its sides and bottom were unpunctured.

He paused for a moment to stare into the depths beside the reef. He caught faint glimpses of bushes, shrubs and antlers of coral—pink, red and blue—shoals of tiny fish scurrying about like meteor-showers; strange striped and mottled creatures slinking through the luminous green; on the bottom, outlined against a patch of sand, a gigantic clam, its vise-like shells lying

wide open; inside the shells the living clam phosphorescent like a giant opal, gorgeous but a fearful trap.

This, he decided, would be as good a place as any to throw the pearls. True, he was only a short distance from the island, a scant twenty yards, but he was alone and no one ever would look here for pearls. He clambered back aboard, found a bit of lead, put it into the pouch, retied the thong. He had vanquished the tempter. No longer did visions of what those pearls would buy torment him.

"*Taubada!*" The pouch in his hand, poised ready for the throw, Stuart whirled. Standing on the reef, midway between the launch and shore, stood the Namau mate of Bunting's lugger. His wicked eyes looked at Stuart over the sights of a rifle. Its stock was against his naked shoulder, his finger upon the trigger.

"Suppose you no stop, I kill," he said.

For only a moment Stuart hesitated. Then—

"Go ahead and kill and be hanged to you," he cried, flung the pouch far out and dived for the white coat upon the bench with his automatic in the pocket.

He might be about to die, but at least he had kept faith. The pearls were in the sea, far down among the shifting sands.

With a cry of baffled rage the Namau cast the rifle from him and plunged into the water. Down, down, down he went, his body a dark blot against the transparent green. Stuart, watching him over the side of the launch, automatic in hand, ready to cover him the minute he came to the surface, saw him suddenly wriggle desperately and turn his body to rise. Then one kicking foot touched the giant clam, the shells clapped together, imprisoning it, and bubbles came to the surface.

Soon his struggling ceased, the brown body swayed to the whim of the waters and Stuart knew that the blood-red pearls had claimed another victim.

He cranked up the motor after he had pushed off the launch, circled the island and went back to report to the authorities and to tell them they would find Bunting's lugger in a little cove on the seaward side. But he did not tell them he had paid it a visit, found its crew away and from the shelf above the bunk that had been Hurricane Harry's had taken a silver ring in the shape of a rope with its ends loosely entwined.

CHAPTER XXVI

DELIRIOUS CLUES

THE *Marsina*, with Stuart and Tompkins aboard, was five days out of Port Moresby and beating down the eastern coast of Australia inside of the Great Barrier Reef. Four more days would see them in Sydney and, Stuart hoped, two things would be cleared up shortly after that. One was the mystery of why Sun Kong had ordered him to throw the pearls into the sea after he had recovered them. The other—and for the time being it absorbed the major part of his attention—was who and what Tompkins had been in days gone by and what connection, if any, he had had with Leong Ton.

A change had come over the man in the days since they had been aboard. To Stuart it seemed to indicate that his protégé's mind, dulled as it was, was struggling to find whatever associations had once existed between himself and a ship. Tompkins seemed to find the lifeboats on the upper deck irresistible. He haunted their vicinity, sitting in a steamer-chair and staring at them by the hour or prowling from one to the other, his face screwed up as if by frowns and grimaces he could dispel the haze overhanging his mind.

Stuart, encouraged to hope that the man would succeed eventually, sought to help him along by suggestions. As he had done that time in the bar at Port Moresby, Tompkins did his best, but again took refuge in the "No, sir" or "Yes, sir" which made up the most of his vocabulary.

Stuart, finding the days growing tedious, had taken to exercising in the aft cockpit, where he could walk around the hatches more briskly than was possible on the narrow upper decks forward. It had not been difficult to induce Tompkins to join him, although he was a silent companion who never spoke unless spoken to and then only to reply in the affirmative or negative. He seemed incapable of thought, unless stimulated by questions and not then were his answers always appropriate.

One day, pacing thus side by side, Stuart suddenly became aware that the other had left him at a turn about the end of a hatch. Facing about, he saw Tompkins was staring after one of the crew who had passed with a bucket, one of the galley squad evidently

from his white cap and apron. Tompkins' face was distorted by some emotion but whether it was fear or rage Stuart could not tell. He wondered if, in passing, the man had not trod on Tompkins' toe or bumped him and thus aroused a resentment which his protégé never had manifested before. Perhaps it was another sign of improvement.

As they resumed their promenade Stuart observed that Tompkins' eyes continually sought the passageway down which the man with the bucket had gone. When their backs were to it, Tompkins craned his neck to keep an eye upon it. Again he stopped short. The man with the bucket had returned. There was no mistaking the glare that Tompkins directed toward him, a glare that was shot through with vindictiveness. And Stuart's quick glance told him what seemed to be the reason. The man was a slant-eyed Oriental, a Chinese apparently!

Stuart's heart beat fast. Was it possible that Tompkins reacted so to every Oriental? Did it have anything to do with Leong Ton? Again he questioned the other, slowly, carefully. Leong Ton, *London Castle*, lifeboat, these and a score of other things he mentioned to see if they aroused any response. But once more Tompkins had returned to the vacant-stared, lusterless-eyed expression, only there was a troubled gleam now and then.

The climax was not long delayed. That very night Stuart, chatting with an amusing fellow-passenger, was called aside by no less a personage than the *Marsina's* skipper.

"There's been a row down near the gallery," he said in a low tone. "Seems like this man Tompkins who is with you jumped one of the helpers, an old Chinese who's been on the boat for years. Was on the point of beating him badly, too, when some one interfered and laid Tompkins out with an iron frying-pan. Cracked his skull, I'm afraid. He's in the medico's cabin and raving. The stewards who are holding him down have their hands full."

With a hurried thanks Stuart hurried away and down the companionway to the cabin of the ships' doctor. From within came the sounds of a struggle, the voices of the stewards commenting, the doctor's soothing tones as he sought to quiet the patient. His hand was stretched out to sweep aside the curtains in the doorway when something one of the stewards was saying caught his ear.

"Mebbe the cove is a dook or su'thin'. 'E —— well is allus talkin' o' 'is castle hin Lunnon and a long tongue and a-cursin' o' hit."

A castle in London! A long tongue! Stuart's arm dropped to his side. The steward was wrong, but he knew! It was of neither of these things that Tompkins was shouting incoherencies, but of the *London Castle* and Leong Ton!

He pushed the curtains aside and entered. Tompkins was stretched out upon the settee under the port-hole, a steward astride his legs, another holding down his hands. A third sought to keep his shoulders pinned while the doctor, in shirt-sleeves, attempted to administer a hypodermic. Stuart strove to make himself small, to occupy no more space than necessary in the already overcrowded cabin, while he asked a few questions as to his protégé's condition.

"Nasty clip on the head, but not serious," said the doctor. "He's out of his head but he'll quiet down as soon as the hypodermic gets in its work. I haven't examined him closely, of course, but there might be a fracture, a slight one. Meanwhile——"

His glance was significant, and Stuart took the hint. He got out of the cabin, but he did not go away. He stood in the passageway outside and listened to the babblings of the injured man. They told him a great deal, or, rather, they told him snatches of a great many things and he managed to piece them together after a fashion.

"I *must* go on the *London Castle*— Yes, it's important— Tremendously so— No cabins available? I don't care when there's another sailing— I want to go on this ship."

A long pause. When he spoke again it was more of a mutter, as one who talks to himself.

"It's dark down here— I'm sick of canned stuff— This is good, this is— What if Sun Kong saw me now— But I had to do it— It was stowaway or stay behind——"

His voice died away, then rose again:

"She's rolling some now— Listen to the wind— Not as bad as it was, at that— There he is again— Wonder what he'd say if he knew I was here, watching him— Not much longer, though."

Again a pause, then a renewal of the

struggle in the cabin, dying away as suddenly as it had begun. Then:

"Kidnaping— That's a serious offense— My hands are blistered, pulling on this oar— If you'd only say something, you dummy— Oh, he's going to write it— Leong Ton, eh— You're the blackest chink I ever saw— My God, the reefs— Pull on that oar— We'll never do it— Pull, I tell you— Pull!"

Several seconds of absolute silence followed. When again a voice was heard it was that of the doctor:

"Well, he's under at last, thank heavens. Now to see what his injuries are."

CHAPTER XXVII

DENIALS

ALLEN STUART stood outside the door of Room 305, 48 Murgate Lane, for the second time in his life. This time, like the first, he hesitated. Now, however, it was because he wanted to have himself thoroughly under control before he entered. A radio message in answer to one of his own sent from aboard the *Marsina* had fixed this time and place for a meeting with Sun Kong. It was not going to be to the liking of the old Chinese, either. Stuart was certain of that.

He threw open the door. Sun Kong sat in the over-stuffed arm chair behind the battered desk. Welcome sprang into his eyes, he rose and held out his hand.

"Mr. Stuart," he cried heartily.

Stuart ignored the hand. "No," he said curtly. "I won't shake hands with you, Sun Kong. I'm afraid yours are stained with blood."

"Blood!"

A puzzled expression crept into the wizened countenance. Sun Kong dropped back into his chair.

"I'm afraid I don't understand you, Mr. Stuart."

"You will before I am through with you," Stuart promised grimly. "No, I won't sit down. And keep your hands where I can see them, Sun Kong. I might add that if I am still in this room an hour from now the police will be coming in that door to learn why. You see, I don't take any chances with you."

Sun Kong eyed him steadily from behind his thick-lensed spectacles.

"You are very mysterious and very melodramatic, Mr. Stuart," he said quietly. "I am at a loss to account for it. Let there be no beating about the bush between us. Say what you have to say. I am listening."

"I'll say it and without hesitation. Sun Kong, I have done what I undertook to do for you. I have ascertained the fate of Leong Ton. He is dead. I have recovered the blood-red pearls. They are at the bottom of the sea, as you ordered."

A sigh broke from the lips of Sun Kong. Across his face there flashed a look that Stuart could not interpret. Were sigh and look caused by regret—or relief?

"Go on," he said to Stuart and settled back in the overstuffed chair, his eyes fixed upon the face of the white man, the lean fingers of one hand caressing his wispy beard.

"Before I explain what you call my mysterious and melodramatic words," Stuart resumed, "I intend to give you an account of my stewardship, in detail. Listen carefully. There will be things in my story that may seem immaterial, as only a narrative of my experiences without any bearing on the ultimate result. But they will help you to understand other things that will come later."

"So," he concluded, half an hour afterward, "that is how Leong Ton died and how the blood-red pearls were recovered, only to be thrown away again at your orders."

He leaned forward over the desk, placing his hands flat upon the scarred top.

"Sun Kong, why did you order me to do that?" he demanded.

There was no shrinking on the part of the old Chinese, no fear in the look he bent upon the other.

"You shall have your answer, Mr. Stuart," he said. "But first, answer a question for me. You have refused to shake hands with me, saying you feared there was blood upon mine. You have warned me that the police are near, ready to come in if you do not leave this room within an hour after you entered it. There must be some reason for all this. In some way it is involved with the question you asked me. Before I tell you the real reason I ordered the pearls thrown into the sea, what is the reason that has suggested itself to you?"

Stuart studied him silently for a long moment.

"I've been wondering, Sun Kong," he

said at last, "if in spite of their value, in spite of the liking for pearls which amounts to almost a passion with you, the blood-red pearls were not evidence again you which you preferred to have destroyed."

Sun Kong started upright in his chair.

"Evidence!" he echoed. "Evidence of what?"

For the first time Stuart put into words the suspicion that had been born that day when he had seen the ring rolling across Bunting's cabin, that had flickered to a mere spark and been revived again in the days that followed, that had burst into a full blaze when he stood outside of the doctor's cabin and heard the disconnected mutterings of the injured Tompkins.

"Evidence that by your orders Leong Ton was kidnaped from the *London Castle*," he said.

"But why should I want him kidnaped, Mr. Stuart?" cried Sun Kong.

"I have tried to fix upon a motive for that. You are reputed to be a wealthy man, Sun Kong. You yourself told me the price you were to pay for the pearls was ridiculously low. Even that price may have been too high for you. Or you may have planned to get them for nothing."

Sun Kong shook his head and rolled the tip of his beard between thumb and forefinger.

"No," he said. "You are wrong. You still have me in the dark as to the reason why you have suggested such a thing. You have said nothing that would throw any light upon it."

"Listen, then, to what I have not told you," snapped Stuart. "About a certain ring which I found in the possession of Bunting, about a man named Tompkins whom I have not mentioned before."

Once more Sun Kong listened attentively.

"I see," he said. "You are influenced by what you heard of the ravings of a man in delirium."

"Which often reveal things he would not mention when normal," retorted Stuart.

"True." Sun Kong nodded agreement. "This Tompkins has used my name and Leong Ton's, has mentioned the *London Castle* and kidnaping. I think I can follow your mind in piecing together the theory you have evolved, Mr. Stuart. You think that I ordered Tompkins to kidnap Leong Ton, that Captain Banks of the *London Castle* may have sailed into the Gulf of Papua under instructions, that Bunting and his lugger may have been waiting there to pick up the boat with Tompkins and Leong Ton—and the pearls."

"I had considered that," admitted Stuart. "On the other hand, it would not be difficult for me to believe that neither Captain Banks not Bunting were involved, that the parts they played were wholly accidental."

Sun Kong rose, dignified and proud—and apparently very much hurt.

"I beg of you, Mr. Stuart, not to condemn me on circumstancial evidence alone," he said. "I think I can prove myself guiltless. For the present I must content myself with saying that I never heard of Captain Banks, under no conditions would I employ a jackal like Bunting and I made no plot to abduct Leong Ton or evade payment for the pearls. As for the man Tompkins, I know no one by that name, but I suspect that I know the man himself. Shall we go and see him? If he turns out to be the one I think, he is, in truth, an agent of mine, but he never heard of the blood-red pearls or was in any way connected with them or their bearer."

"Sun Kong," returned Stuart earnestly, "I feel myself more than ready to believe you. I have not wanted to think my suspicions were true, that I had been mistaken in my estimate of you. But I had to know. Clear up this infernal mystery and I'm ready to go on my knees and beg your pardon for thinking even that you were not on the square."

"If, in view of what you have learned, you had thought otherwise you would not be the man I think you, Allen Stuart. Come, we will go to the G. P. O., and while you telephone the hospital for permission to see Tompkins, I wish to send a telegram. But how about the police?"

"I was bluffing," said Stuart with a grin. "I have seen no police."

CHAPTER XXVIII

MORE SURPRIZES

OVER the telephone the surgeon who had examined Tompkins in the hospital and found him sane and normal but still suffering from the blow on the head received aboard the *Marsina* had granted permission for him to see visitors.

"But only for a few minutes, Mr. Stuart,"

he had warned. "He has been out of things for a long time, I judge, and he has not yet fully adjusted himself."

Stuart had promised and now he and Sun Kong were on their way to the hospital in a taxicab. The Chinese had scarcely spoken since they had left Murgate Lane and his beard had undergone a severe tweaking. He turned suddenly to Stuart.

"That ring you found aboard the lugger," he said. "I've been trying to account for it. Does it, by any chance, bear the number 368?"

"It does," confirmed Stuart. "Here, see for yourself." He took it from his pocket and passed it over.

"Courtney's," murmured Sun Kong. "I had thought him dead these many months. Mr. Stuart, I'm going to do something I've never done before, that is, if the description of a man which I am about to give you fits the Tompkins you know."

"To a T, it fits," said Stuart when he had finished.

"Then I am going to try and explain before we hear what he has to say what this man was doing aboard the *London Castle*. I never have told one agent what another was doing. In this case I shall tell you. Courtney was one of my most trusted men. Two years ago I sent him into Russia on a delicate and dangerous mission. I had learned that a noble family, formerly of the court, had managed to secrete some big rubies and wished to sell them before they were found and confiscated by the Soviet. The price fixed was large. I instructed Courtney to obtain a description, and if possible photographs, of the stones, purchase an option on them and return to Australia that I might decide for myself if they were worth the amount asked. He cabled me that he was starting, that the option was a short one and he must make close connections. I never heard from him again. Many things are happening in Russia, strange things. I became convinced Courtney was dead. Now, though, I believe that Tompkins is Courtney, that he stowed away aboard the *London Castle* and somehow became involved in Leong Ton's flight."

"So do I," replied Stuart. "Aboard Bunting's lugger when I was searching for the ring I found an envelop. It had pictures of jewelry and some papers. I was not interested in them. That must have been what he meant when he said I might have found something that would make me change my mind about sharing the 'red somethings' with him. How he figured it I don't know."

For a moment Sun Kong was silent.

"Perhaps he recognized the ring you wore as similar to the one he had taken from Courtney along with the pictures and papers, for that must have been how he got them. If so, he must have read the papers and found my name on them. I think he was trying to hold over you a threat to inform me if you didn't share with him, for he the same day told you he thought you were trying to steal the 'rubies.' Ah, we are at the hospital."

A white-capped nurse piloted them to Courtney's room.

It had been two days since Stuart had seen his protégé. That had been when his unconscious form had been trundled out of the operating-room where the last bit of pressure upon the brain had been relieved by the surgeon's deft fingers. It gave Stuart a thrill now to note that upon the well-molded features intelligence and life were reflected. But he was not disappointed that there was no recognition of himself. He had not expected it.

He stepped aside to let the eyes of the bandaged man fall upon the Chinese.

"Sun Kong," came the delighted cry from the bed.

"Courtney!"

"I failed," said the erstwhile Tompkins disconsolately. "I failed, Sun Kong. I got to Singapore. I couldn't get a cabin on the only ship that would get me here in time. I stowed away with a grip of canned food, in the hold. I used to steal out at night and tap the water tanks. I——"

He broke off, a question in the way he glanced at Stuart.

"Go ahead," said Sun Kong. "He is one of us."

"One night I couldn't get back into the hold. I hid in a lifeboat. A storm came up. It lasted a day and a night. One night I had seen a strange individual pacing the deck late. The night after the storm he found me in the boat, made me help him lower it over the side, made me row until my hands were blistered. Then," he shuddered, "we ran into a reef——"

"Never mind," Sun Kong said and laid a hand upon the other's lips. "We know all the rest of it, don't we, Mr. Stuart?"

"But I don't," cried Courtney. "They tell me that was more than a year ago. I don't remember. It all went blank when we capsized."

"You'll be told," promised Stuart, just as the nurse came back to tell them they really must go. "Good-by, Courtney, until tomorrow. Then I'll return and tell you all."

As they descended the hospital steps and Sun Kong beckoned a passing taxicab Stuart said abruptly:

"Forgive me, Sun Kong. I'm satisfied. If you don't want to tell me the rest of it, why you sent me that mysterious and puzzling order to sink the pearls, I'll not complain."

The Chinese held open the door of the taxicab.

"You first, Mr. Stuart. I shall give the driver the address. It is not Murgate Lane, either. You are to go now to the real headquarters of our little organization."

He climbed in after him and sank back into the cushions.

"Unless you go there of your own accord you will never see that dingy little hole again, Stuart," and the man he addressed noticed that he had dropped the courteous prefix, had placed him on a new basis. "You are one of us now. When you are in Sydney my home is your home if you care to make it such. It is a rather roomy affair, and there my agents meet me. The Murgate Lane place is but a makeshift, but few who come there to begin the tests I impose ever see the place to which we are going. It is only for those who have made good. This key is to the front door. Put it in your pocket, my friend. Use it when you like."

But Stuart did not take it at once.

"Wait until you hear one more thing, Sun Kong," he said in a low tone. "It is not an easy thing to say. Sun Kong, I was on the point of stealing those pearls."

But the Chinese shook his head vigorously.

"You may think you were, Stuart, but I know better. You couldn't have done it."

The emphasis he laid upon the "you" was a compliment in itself.

"We all are tempted. Shall I confess a little secret? The pearls could just as well have been placed beyond recovery after being brought to Sydney as before. But I dared not let them meet my gaze. I am human, too, Stuart. With my love for pearls it would have been a temptation to retain them and I did not trust myself."

"Was it necessary that they should disappear forever, then?" asked Stuart.

"Absolutely. But you will have to wait until this evening to learn why. We are home."

The taxicab had turned in at a gateway in a high wall encircling spacious grounds and stopped before a palatial structure. A liveried servant ran down the steps to meet them and, when the cab had been dismissed, bowed them into the midst of splendors the like of which Stuart never before had seen.

"Just follow the man up-stairs to your room, Stuart. Your things are there. I had them brought from the hotel before our little interview today. We dine at seven. After that——"

Following the servant up the heavily carpeted steps, Stuart surreptitiously pinched himself. It convinced him that he was really awake.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SECRET OF THE PEARLS

DINNER was over, such a dinner as Stuart had not tasted in a long time, and Sun Kong had led the way to his library. Amid the tapestried walls, the Oriental rugs, the teakwood furniture, the bookcases and the soft glow of shaded lamps Stuart again felt an inclination to pinch himself.

"Stuart," said Sun Kong sinking into an easy chair, "now that you are convinced Leong Ton was not kidnaped but left the ship of his own accord, what conclusion have you reached as to his reason?"

"I have gone back to the only theory I ever evolved since I learned he was a leper," was the prompt reply. "I think he fled from the *London Castle* because he overheard a conversation which told him his affliction was about to be discovered and he foresaw he would be detained and isolated for the rest of his life. The ship was in the Gulf of Papua, in sight of land, when he quit it. I believe he thought he would find a way to complete his mission or get back home without the fact he was a leper being discovered. He didn't know, of course, that the land in sight was savage New Guinea."

Sun Kong nodded approval.

"I quite agree. The same thing came into my mind when you mentioned that Dr. Curtis occupied the next cabin. While you telephoned today I sent Dr. Curtis a wire asking him if he could recall the man. His reply was handed me as we left the table. Let's see what he says."

"Your deductions are right, Stuart," he said after a bit. "Dr. Curtis recalls seeing him on the *London Castle.* The color of the man's face appeared to be the result of a dye of some kind. He mentioned to his secretary that he would have the man examined. Later when he saw that the man did not disembark at Thursday Island he postponed action until the ship reached Sydney. Failing to find any one among the passengers or crew lined up for medical inspection who had an artificial complexion he concluded he had been mistaken, that he had been deceived during their chance encounter in the passageway outside their cabins late at night. You see, he evidently never knew the *London Castle* lost a passenger *en route.*"

"There is just one more mystery to solve," prompted Stuart. "Why did you order me to throw the pearls in the sea?"

Sun Kong settled down in his chair, his elbows propped upon the upholstered arms, his slender fingers entwined across his lap.

"I'll tell you just as I learned the secret," he said. "In a long report received from my agent in Cochin China, a week or two after you left upon your mission he gave me the history of the blood-red pearls. As I had thought, they were very, very old and attached to them was the reputation of being the cause of ill-luck to their possessors. For generations each successive owner of the pearls had, after having them for a few years, suddenly become a recluse, shut off from mankind until his or her death. Strangely, too, the body always was burned and not buried with the honors usually accorded by the descendants of an Oriental.

"The blood-red pearls had a nickname, Mr. Stuart. They long had been known as 'the curse of Heaven.' Although they had disappeared, as I mentioned, the legends concerning them and the misfortunes that seemed to go with their possession had not perished. My agent was able to learn them while searching for proof that they were real, not cultured. Tradition said that their owners had retired from the world because they had been seized with madness. That seemed to account for their name. Insanity long has been termed the curse of Heaven. It seemed to offer a good reason why the mandarin should part with them after bringing them to light from their hiding-place, why he should be willing to part with them for a comparatively small amount.

"Two things put me on the right trail, two articles in a scientific magazine. One was concerning chaulmoogra oil, heralded as a real cure for leprosy. The writer mentioned that leprosy in olden days was not regarded as what it really is, the product of filth and contamination, but as an affliction visited upon those who offended the gods. Leprosy, in those days, was also sometimes referred to as 'the curse of Heaven.'

"The other article was about pearls and naturally I was keenly interested. A Brazilian scientist had made the astounding discovery that many precious stones, notably pearls, readily absorb the germs of any disease from which the wearer may be suffering and transmit them to the next person who wears them for any length of time. Thus it probably is true that many so called 'unlucky' stones are merely those which are carriers of disease germs. Unfortunately no way of ridding them of the germs has been discovered.

"I sent this information to my agent in Cochin, China. My suspicions had been aroused. I believed that the blood-red pearls were infested with leprosy. If the mandarin's ancestors, previous owners of the pearls, had become recluses because they had become infested with leprosy and not madness it would explain why the pearls had been lost to sight, why the mandarin was not disposed to bargain for a high price. When I received your message saying Leong Ton was dead and incidentally mentioning that he had been a leper I ordered my agent to confront the mandarin with the facts.

"The mandarin, driven into a corner, admitted that my suspicions were correct. Leprosy had been associated with the pearls for many generations. He did not know that the germs were in the pearls themselves. With him it was a matter of tradition and superstition, the same things that had driven his great-grandmother to hide the pearls when her mother died a leper. Leong Ton was chosen as their bearer

because he already was a leper. They could not harm him.

"As soon as I heard this from my agent I decided the blood-red pearls must disappear again, this time forever. No longer must they remain to deal out misery and death. Much as I should have liked to see them the good of mankind must take precedence over everything else. The pearls must be put where they could never do harm again. That, Mr. Stuart, is the reason for my puzzling orders to you."

Stuart had shot from his chair and crossed the room to stand beside the wizened old man.

"Sun Kong," he said. "One thing more I should like to know. Was the mandarin reconciled to thus disposing of the blood-red pearls?"

Sun Kong pulled himself to his feet and stood proudly erect.

"Allen Stuart," he said, "it is plain to see you do not yet know Sun Kong. The mandarin had no say in the matter. Before I sent you orders to throw the pearls in the sea my agent had paid over to the mandarin the agreed price of twenty thousand pounds and obtained his receipt. The pearls were mine to do with as I pleased."

Stuart's hand shot out.

"By heavens, Sun Kong, you're—you're—oh, hang it, you're white. Once today you asked me to shake hands with you and I refused. Now I am asking you to shake hands with me."

"On one condition, Stuart." There was a twinkle in Sun Kong's eye and a chuckle in his voice. "On one condition. That you go easy. I have not forgotten the first time our hands met."

FLOR DE GARFIELD

by

F. R. Buckley

Author of "King High," "Habit," etc.

A FORMER acquaintance of mine, by name Joshua Stimson, who, even when I last saw him in 1900 had far more whiskers than horse-sense, seems recently to have confided to somebody in some Longhorn City bar or other that I was formerly known as Flor de Garfield, instead of my Christian name of William. Naturally, human nature being what it is, and Three Pines Valley being the most human place I have struck in seventy-five years on this planet, a large number of rumors have been set afloat concerning the origin of this nickname or soberette. One, started by "Pie-Face" Lammermoor, is to the effect that I spent six weeks in a hospital after smoking my first cigar; another, of anonymous authorship, claims that I was fired out of the Rangers for robbing a tobacco store kept by an aged widow. Such statements being highly injurious to my chances of being re-elected sheriff without standing at the polls with a gun in each hand, I have accordingly drawn up the following narrative at Three Pines Township, Three Pines County, State of Texas, ss., for insertion in the *Acacia Weekly Bugle.*

Well, well, ah me! Here goes.

The incident to which I allude occurred in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight

hundred and sixty-five, and the month of January; which, as nobody around here will remember, was very cold. Come to think of it, I guess nobody now extant has any clear idea of the other two ingredients of this story, either—Red Dog Creek, and Myself as a Young Man. Concerning Red Dog Creek I will merely remark that it was a place where gold was erroneously supposed to line the river-banks; but about myself I must be slightly more particular. Having been born in 1847, I was naturally just about eighteen years of age; time had not yet added unto me the side-whiskers, wooden leg, and stores of experience which I now possess; and this here expedition to Red Dog Creek was my first tour of duty as a peace-officer. The preceding two years had been spent hunting Indians, Union troops and etcetera, in the capacity of war-private to the Confederate forces.

They say war makes men out of boys; but I'm prepared to swear that the fried corn and paper money of those two years had done a whole lot toward printing the marks of youth on me in red ink. My Adam's apple was twice as prominent as it had been in 1863; my wrists and knuckles were a whole lot larger in comparison with the rest of me; the best clothes I could get with the money I had, fitted me just about like a sentry-box; I'd bought my horse off a man for only two thousand dollars Confederate; and all I was armed with was a cap-and-ball revolver that had been run over by a commissariat wagon on the field of honor.

At this distance of time, I think old Sam Tinkler enlisted me in his Ranger company about fifty per cent. because he had known my Dad, and fifty because such enlistment offered splendid prospects of getting me stowed safely away underground. It was no doubt to make assurance on this last point doubly sure, that old Sam called me to his office at one end of the Old Glory Bar, in Longhorn City, and gave me a speech on the duties of a Ranger.

"Of course, you know," says he, pouring whisky in at one corner of his mouth on account of the other being temporarily stitched up, "that no Ranger ever fails to arrest his man, or, if unavoidably prevented from doin' so, checks out without surrenderin' his gun?"

Like everybody else in the State, I knew that, all right.

"Well," said Sam, motioning to the bartender to pour it out of the blue bottle this time, "I'm just about to fire off another order, and since you're leavin' town today, I'll give it to you in advance of publication. Heretoafter, in addition to not being allowed to surrender his gun, no Ranger will be allowed to let any civilian or other criminal put anything over on him of any kind whatsoever. It's bad for the prestige of the corps, and until somebody or other votes us some money to buy cartridges with, for instance, prestige is about all we've got to keep order with. Prestige is a French word, meaning that if anybody so much as smiles at you in public, much less calls you a scarecrow mounted on a crow's dinner, you must dismount and settle with him at once, no matter how big he is, nor how well armed. I'll try the yellow bottle with the knobs on it now, Jimmy."

"*De mortuis nil* except good" has always been one of my numerous mottoes; and when I say that immediately after these instructions, Sam assigned me to Red Dog Creek, I have no intention of branding him as a murderer. In fact, I have no doubt but that he thought he was doing me a kindness. Seeing me, and appraising my post-war prospects, he indubitably thought I should be better off dead. Looking back from this distance of time, I am inclined to agree with him; but just then my views were quite different.

There was a girl in Longhorn City—her name was Gracias, and she had blue eyes—who thought I was quite the cheese; then again, as a Ranger I was obviously in line for all sorts of five thousand dollar rewards and things. And in fact, as I started through the Winter sunshine toward that aerie of human buzzards, Red Dog Creek, I was actually singing "Lillibulero" and trying to decide whether Gracias and me would start small with the Jackson ranch, or wait a year or two longer and buy out old Emperor Pearse.

Well, the song stopped at seven that same evening, when it started to rain; and I kind of lost the thread of my real-estate speculations when the rain changed to sleet, and I simultaneously discovered that somebody had hooked my poncho while I was inside the Old Glory talking to Sam. In fact, to make a long story short, and to cut cross-lots to this business of my getting nicknamed Flor de Garfield—I rolled up to Red

Dog Creek looking more like a drowned rat than a properly prestidigitated peace-officer. The last word but one, I may explain for the benefit of "Two Toes" Trotter, "Rabbit" Roberts, Pie-Face Lammermoor, and others is the noun derived from the adjective 'prestige.'

Where was I? Oh, yes—entering Red Dog Creek, which consisted of 0 streets, 20 shacks, 4 saloon-dance-halls, 8 plain saloons, and 1 log building labeled "The Home From Home, S. Berger, Prop. & Mgr." The population, I later learned, numbered one hundred and six, all hellions, but at the time of my arrival all indoors on account of the weather—except one who had been shot too badly to do anything but lie bang in the middle of the trail and groan.

Feeling pretty certain that he was a clue to some crime, I dismounted, raised as much of his head as there was left, and advised him to tell me his troubles.

"I'M A Ranger," I told him, "and I'm here to——"

It was pretty near dark by this, but even so, it seemed to me that I perceived a mocking expression in the victim's eyes.

"A what?" he asks in a whistling manner.

"A Ranger—Texas Ranger," I told him distinctly. "Come—to—bring—law—and—order—to—this—town."

He didn't say anything for a long time—just stared at me; and when he did say something, it wasn't exactly words. In fact, he just gave a loud and hearty guffaw, and then died before I could have done a thing to uphold the prestige of the corps, even if so inclined.

You may imagine my state of mind as I led my weary nag under a shed in rear of the "Home From Home" and, having hitched her, walked into the hotel; but I defy anybody to imagine how I felt when I carried my incipient frost-bites into the main and only guest-room. It was a low-ceiled, dark sort of place built of unchinked logs, through which the wind whistled in a complicated system of drafts. By the looks of it, it was dormitory by night, and a sort of debating-hall combined with shooting-gallery in the evenings; and the heating problem didn't worry the regulars because they were either under the blankets, or clustered in a solid mass around the fire which burned at one end of the hall.

Never before or since have I seen a fire so efficiently administered as that one was. It was the only real fire to be found in Red Dog Creek, on account of there being no other fireplaces; and of course, it was patronized only by the worst-tempered, hardest-drinking, and quickest-shooting citizens of the town. Twelve of these guys jammed together in a semicircle like sardines, formed the front rank, and behind them, eleven others reveled in what heat-waves slipped between the heads and shoulders of the front line.

Naturally, there was keen competition; in fact, every man, on sitting down, appeared to have taken off his gun-belt and hung it over the back of his chair, so that being seated wouldn't interfere with his power of rising to any emergency.

You may say that for one in such an ambidextrous position, I did a whole lot of dispassionate observing; but then I had plenty of time to. Strangers were not expected in the "Home From Home," it being, as I have hinted, more or less of a close corporation. Then again, I had acted on old Sam Tinkler's advice as to entering a strange place, and slipped in through the door kind of quickly and noiselessly. If it hadn't been for the sound my teeth made chattering, I might, in fact, have been standing back there in the shadows to this day.

As it was, however, a guy that had caused a silence by saying he would blow the head off the next man that contradicted him, got up suddenly, looked back, and saw me.

"What the—" he began, pulling a long, mean-looking gun.

I walked forward and smiled at him as well as I could with a half-frozen face.

"Well, roast my liver on a pewter fork," says the guy with the gun, "if Doctor Munroly ain't come to town!"

Nobody, I suppose, remembers Dr. Munroly except me. Suffice it to say that he was a guy that let on he could do without food for six months at a stretch.

"My name," I corrected the gentleman chatteringly, "is William Garfield, and I should be obliged——"

"It's a lie!" says the man with the gun. "Your name is Doctor Munroly, M.D., and you live on water and newspaper clippings."

A kind of internal voice told me that if Sam Tinkler had been there, he would have considered that the speaker was putting something over on a Ranger, within the meaning of the act. However, the same

internal voice remarked that my new acquaintance didn't know I was a Ranger, and wouldn't be pleased if he did; and also reminded me that the powder in my cap-and-ball hand-gun was undoubtedly sopping wet. Even if it hadn't been, that gun was one that didn't take kindly to being hurried.

"He's a mine, gol darn him," says one of the men in the back row, getting up for a closer look, in which he was followed by several others. "Look at the bucket going up and down the shaft."

He meant my Adam's apple; but I was too darn chilled to the bone to take any interest in his poetic smiles.

"I'd be much obliged," I told all and sundry, "if you'd let me get somewhere near that fire. I've been in the saddle twenty hours, and I'm just about frozen."

I suppose it struck them as funny, me coming in unknown out of the night, and asking for something each and every one had gained by imbruing his hands in blood and pickling his stomach with Berger's rotten whisky. Otherwise, I can't account for the roar of laughter which greeted my reasonable request.

"I duddon't wuwant a p-p-p-ermanent p-p-place," I shivered. "I jujujujust wuwant a chachachance to g-get wuwarm!"

There was a terrible silence, at the end of which, the jasper who had first spoken addressed me again.

"Did nobody never tell you, my little man," says he, "that the way for a boy of your age to get warm isn't to squat over a fire, but to take healthful exercise, and get the good red blood to circulating again? Don't tell me that nobody never told you that!"

I looked at him in a way that would have melted the heart of a stone, and chattered some more.

"Dancing, for instance," says the man with the gun, "is one of the most warmingest-up exercises I know of—good, brisk dancing with lots of high jumps. I think a dance would do this young fellar a whole lot of good, don't you, boys?"

There was a bellow of agreement; and in the lip-licking pause which followed it, I put forth into the ether a pretty strong line of mixed prayer and cogitation. (This is Page 8 of my exercise book, and still no Flor de Garfield; but we are coming to it in just one minute.) I stood there, I say, and thought and prayed simultaneously. The subject of the thoughts was that if I did the tenderfoot's jig for this guy, it would be impossible for me to stay in Red Dog Creek as a human being, much less a peace-officer; while if I returned to Longhorn City after being run out of the town I'd been sent to tame—well, that would be the end of everything, especially Gracias, who'd been hypnotized into thinking me a sort of blend of Daniel Boone and Sir Salad, the English knight.

What I was praying for was, naturally, a way out of the difficulty. Being weaponless, I couldn't pound my way out by force of arms; and at the moment, I felt about as cunning as a piece of cold mush. You may well say that was an awful moment. I'm not a gambling man, but in a theoretical sense, I bet you!

"Now, when the first bullet is fired," says the man with the gun, "it will be at your left ankle. Better take off with the right foot, see? After that, just jump as you feel inclined. The inclination will be there, all right, unless you've a foot you've no use for. Ready?"

I looked him bang in the eyes, and saw he was dead in earnest; I shot a quick look around the other faces at the fire, and didn't see any help there, either. Well, you can call it an answer to prayer, or a manifestation of the subconscious, or what ever you like, but I'll swear I'd given up all hope, when I heard my own voice saying—

"I won't dance!"

THE effect of that remark was plenty staggering enough to the men around the fire; but it was ten times more staggering to me, though on account of my visage being convulsed with spasms of tooth-chattering, I didn't show it like they did. They just plain stared, with their jaws dropping.

"You—say you—*won't dance?*" gasped the man with the gun. "Eh?"

I stared at the muzzle of his revolver, and knew perfectly well that the first shot he fired would make me leap six feet in the air, I never having been brought up to consider my Achilles tendon a bull's eye.

And as I stared, I heard my own voice start to say something else. I was quite curious to know what remark it would make.

"Not," came the words, "until my horse has been looked after."

Upon this, the whole meeting broke into loud bellows of mirth.

"He wants somebody to attend to his horse! Hi, Jeems, 'is Lordship has arrived! What ho, without within there! Bran' mash for the Duke's charger! Blime, but this 'unting makes the 'orse 'ungry! He won't dance till we've fed his steed!"

I stayed right still, though, staring at the man with the gun. He didn't speak until all the others had done; and then, in an apologetic manner, he explained that unfortunately the stock of imported oats had kind of run low, and that——

"She's had her fodder," says I. "What she needs now is her after-dinner cigars."

"Cigars?" says the man with the gun, kind of dazedly.

"Have you got any good ones in the house?" I asked in the cold, calm voice which by no means belonged to me, though I was now getting able to sort of feel it in my throat. "She usually gets six."

"Six *cigars?*" asked one of the rear-rank guys, staring first at me, and then at all the other fellows, who seemed as flabbergasted as he was.

"If they're good ones," I told him. "Otherwise, she won't take more than four."

"You mean," says a ghostly voice from the crowd. "You mean to tell us that this here mare of yourn takes and smokes six cigars one after another?"

"No," says I. "Of course she don't smoke 'em. She just takes 'em in her mouth and chews 'em, same as everybody else that's been decently brought up. Did you ever hear of a horse that could stand smoke up her nose?"

Well, they say one touch of nature makes the whole world kin; and I have since discovered that one touch of truth will put over at least seven times its own volume of lie. There wasn't a man there but had seen a pony sniff a wreath of smoke from a campfire, and then back off and cough. So obviously I was telling the truth.

The gun-holder lowered his muzzle; and then kind of doubtfully dropped the revolver into his jacket pocket.

"Berger!" he roared.

There was no answer for a moment: and then a greasy-faced little fellow came in with a box of cigars in his hand.

"I heert vat vas goink on," says he tremblingly, "und here's my pest cigarss—a tollar itch."

"A dollar each!" shouts one of the men, craning over to get a look at the box. "Why, you thief, that's——"

"Young man," says the guy with the gun, "have you got six dollars?"

I had—just that: six silver dollars.

"Then perdooce it," says the spokesman, "preferably from some pocket unconnected with your guns. Give him the six cigars, Sol, and collect the money. You don't imagine, by the way, young feller-me-lad, that you are going to get away with any plan you may have to leave our midst, and ride away while you are supposed to be administering cigars to your caballo, do you?"

"I'm not paying six dollars out," says I, waving the stogies away, "for the pleasure of going out into the cold again myself. At that price, the landlord feeds 'em to the nag. If you gents want to watch the proceedings, I've no objections."

It was a dime museum, free gratis and for nothing. The assembled populace set up a howl of delight, grabbed a lamp off the table and made one concerted rush for the door which gave on the back yard of the "Home From Home." Berger, seeing the rush coming, skipped out ahead, and presumably went off, in his methodical Dutch way, to try Bony Mary with the smokes.

The man who had proposed to make me dance, and who now appeared to be shouting some kind of protest which nobody could hear in the babel, was shoved out of the doorway, and carried quite a distance before he could get his message over; and by the time he *had* got it over, and furthermore convinced that raging mob that Mary's ability to chew, if genuine, would still be on view five minutes later—by that time, I say, of course I'd had plenty of opportunity to collect all the gun-belts off the backs of the chairs, select the two likeliest looking revolvers for my own use, and take a seat which, while near enough the fire to be warm, was yet sufficiently out of the firelight not to make a cock-shot of a man.

I was just comfortably established in this chair, with the captured gun-belts under it, when the elite of Red Dog Creek charged in again at the door with even more impetuosity than they had charged out of it. At their head, gun drawn, rushed the man who had advocated exercise as a cure for chills. Being far more careful of my own life, and careless of other people's, than I

am now, I shot the gun out of his hand, and with the remaining five bullets in my left-hand gun, made him do five steps of a very lively clog-dance.

AFTER which series of explosions and thuds, there was what can only be described as a tense silence, during which the aristocracy of the neighborhood shivered very much as I had shivered a few minutes before.

"Well, gentlemen," says I, when this state of affairs had endured for about three minutes. "Here we are, you see."

They saw, all right; but apparently had no comment to make. With approval I watched them gage distances and so on, and decide against the idea of rushing me. I now know that the main reason they came to this decision was because they were chilly—cold weather will take the fight out of a man much more quickly than hot lead; but at the time I gave all the credit to my martial demeanor, and was very proud.

"In addition to being known by my baptismal name of William Garfield, Esquire," I therefore said haughtily, "I am recorded officially as a private in the Texas Rangers. I haven't been sent here to arrest anybody for anything he may have done in the past. But I have been sent here to arrest anybody for anything he may do in the future, if you get my meaning. If you don't, I'll just say that I'm here to keep order, and that I'm going to do it."

Still a dead silence.

"I may further say," I went on, having imbibed a lot of what I now see were fool ideas in the army, "that while this town's going to be extensively cleaned up, gambling won't be abolished until human's nature's all different from what it is just now. In the mean time, all games will be run by the municipality, which means a square deal."

"Vat aboud liquor?" wails a voice from the doorway.

"Anybody selling rot-gut," says I, trying to invent some brainy trick, "will be—er—compelled to drink a gallon of it himself—without drawing breath."

"O angels and ministers of grace!" says a voice. "Prepare to receive the soul of S. Berger, Prop.!"

Mr. Berger himself now entered the room in what I can only describe as a blinking and fawning manner. In his left hand, he held six cigars, the end of one of which appeared to be slightly wet.

"Mister—" he began.

I motioned him to silence in the bossy way one can, at the age of eighteen.

"Furthermore," says I to the bunch, "if anybody thinks I gained the bulge on him by a sly trick or anything, he has only to come out with me, some suitable day, to a lonely place where his pals won't shoot me in the back, and I'll whale the everlasting daylights out of him with my fists."

There was some more silence; and then somebody said.

"We wouldn't shoot you in the back, Billy. You're all right."

I don't know whether it was at me or at themselves, but immediately thereafter, all hands started to laugh like fools. After that, I knew there wouldn't be any immediate killing, so I laid my gun on my lap and motioned S. Berger to approach.

"Well?" I asked him sternly, holding out a hand into which he sagaciously put five of the six dollars I had paid him when I was young and inexperienced.

"The hawss," says Berger humbly.

Everybody stopped laughing to listen.

"Well?"

"She vouldn't eat the cigarss—just nuzzle 'em," says Berger. "Vat shall I do vit 'em now, boss?"

"She wouldn't take 'em, hey?"

"No, boss."

"They must be the worst cigars in the state of Texas!"

"Yes, boss."

Now, you see, patience is rewarded, and this is the story of the Flor de Garfield nickname—not that there was any such brand on the lid of the box, or anything; it was just a kind of nickname for me personally, if you understand what I mean, growing out of the incident hereinbefore narrated.

"Ah, well," says I, leaning forward and taking the cigars from S. Berger's trembling hand, "if the mare won't take 'em, still it's a shame they should be wasted. Draw nearer to the fire, boys—no extra charge for warmth. I'm stronger than she is. I'll smoke them myself."

*COLD TURKEY

by

Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Fish for the Gunner," "The Daddy of Eight Hundred," etc.

"FRISCO? Or another year in China?" Milt Walker asked himself, as he sat up in bed. It was nine o'clock in the morning. Sunlight flooded his hotel room, and the noise of Shanghai's streets far below clattered on his ears.

"And today is the day," he grunted a moment later to his socks.

For several days Milt Walker, an electrician, had been lingering in Shanghai, scratching the back of his neck, tossing up coins, playing the Fate-baffling game of solitaire, in a vain endeavor to decide whether to put his name to the American-Electric people's contract, and remain another year in China, or let the American-Electric people go hang and purchase a ticket for San Francisco. To sign, or not to sign? And today was his last day. The A-E. people wanted either his signature or refusal by noon.

Twenty minutes after opening his eyes, he had added the last stroke of the whisk-broom to his light-gray suit, and was reaching for his straw hat on the dresser. After which he stood with his hands in his pockets, his eyes roving over the carpet, his strong, sun-browned face puckered in thought.

His trunk with its lid back caught his eye, and he crossed the room to close it. First, however, the urge of habit prompted him to stoop and rummage out two letters.

Both envelopes bore the stamp of the San Francisco post-office. Both had been mailed nearly two years before, and were stained from much handling. The name and address written on one of them was the work of a master penman; a combination of flourishes and shading that was dazzling—the work of an artist. The artist was Milt's twin brother Jimmy. The other letter was addressed in a small, neat feminine hand. Its writer was Laura—a little San Francisco girl who before the receipt of that letter had been Milt Walker's past, present, future, and beyond—his sole end and aim in life.

Now Milt had read each of those letters at least five thousand times. He read them both several times every day. He knew not why. Seemed the habit had just grown on him. He always read Laura's letter first. He did so now.

In that letter Laura confessed to being a very sorry girl. She deeply regretted having led Milt to believe she cared for him when, to get down to brass tacks, she had all the time been in love with his brother Jimmy. It was very tough, but very true, she scribbled on. She sincerely hoped that Milt wouldn't take it too hard; and finished by entreating him, in words printed out and heavily underscored, not to write again, for the reason that it made Jimmy jealous.

"And so it goes," he muttered, slipping the still scented sheet back into its envelope. Whereupon he extracted and commenced reading Jimmy's letter. This letter always removed the bad taste left by the

**This is an Off-The-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

other. It had followed Laura's letter by about two months. He read:

— Milt, old boy, I'm here to state that there's no way of doping out a woman. For a few weeks after you sailed Laura shined up to me as if I was the only man in the world. Yes, sir, she turned me into the most conceited jackass in 'Frisco! I tell you, Milt, she made a complete monkey out of me! Had me dancing on my ears! She took me by the nose, just the way she did you, and led me way up into Jackasses' Paradise—then she let go of my snoot and down I flopped. Bang! Along comes a rich geezer from New York. Smasho! The bum's rush for me! So cheer up. We're both in the same tub. I'm going to ship out of 'Frisco tomorrow. I'll see you somewhere, some day——

Which was the last he had heard from Jimmy.

"And so it goes," he muttered again, this time with a grin, and slammed down the lid of the trunk.

One minute later Milt stepped out of the elevator and crossed the lobby to the desk.

"Did you have your morning's morning, Riley?" was the greeting he flung at the clerk.

"I did," was the response. "And say—I've got a morning's mornin' for you."

Mr. Riley then bent over the register and ran a finger down the page over the signatures of recent arrivals.

"There," he said. "Do you know him?"

For a few moments Milt squinted hard over the signature the other pointed to. Finally he shook his head.

"I don't think so," he replied. Then, grinning: "I might if I could read it. That looks as if it was written by a man with delirium tremens. Can you read it?"

Riley ran his fingers through his hair, and grinned down upon the illegible signature.

"I can't," he answered, with finality. "I've been tryin' all night to cipher it out. But that's only half of your morning's mornin', Mr. Walker."

He paused a moment, straightening up. Then, tapping with his finger on the unreadable name:

"This fellow is the dead image of you—mind I said *dead* image."

Milt stood back, his hands in his pockets, his heavy shoulders squared, and a flicker of smiling interest in his clear brown eyes.

"Yeah?" he encouraged.

"Just that," Mr. Riley answered. "He came in last night about an hour after you did. I took one look at him and reached for your key, then happened to think you'd already gone up. By then he was signing the register—or makin' those marks on it. Then I looked him over.

"Now mind, I'm not sayin' he looks exactly like you." Riley held up a hand in apology. "There's difference a-plenty between yuhs. First, he has a sloppy way in the wearin' of his clothes, and a slouchy droopin' of the shoulders, neither of which you've got. He'd be the same height and build of you if he straightened up and was filled out. He hasn't your healthy color. He's hollow-eyed and yellow, with the marks of many a fight with the —— written all over his map. And I'm tellin' you too, he has the shifty eyes of a man the ——'s hot after. He had the shakes so bad he couldn't write his name."

Riley paused and leaned over the desk.

"And for all of that, I'm tellin' you, Mr. Walker, lookin' straight at him, he's the dead image, the ghost of yourself!"

Milt stepped up to the desk and again studied the erratic dashes and slants and flourishes.

"No," he said, shaking his head; "my brother Jimmy never wrote that. No, sir. You see," he explained, "I've got a twin brother. When we were kids our own mother couldn't tell us apart. But this was never written by Jimmy, because my brother Jimmy was a natural born scribe. Why Jimmy can do things with a pen that would make your eyes pop! He's a wizard.

"We had a little doorway stand on Market Street in 'Frisco, when we were only twelve years old. I barked, and Jimmy scribed—wrote calling and business cards. Jimmy's penmanship kept us out of the orphan home——"

Here Riley interrupted him by drumming on his arm, at the same time calling out, "Oh, say, sir—mister— Your key, sir! It's the rules——"

Too late. The man crossed the lobby in the high and lunged through the door without turning his head. Milt caught a fleeting, side glimpse of his face, then set out in hot pursuit. Riley stepped out from behind the desk and danced over to the door, from where he watched Milt go striding down the crowded street after his double. He saw Milt overhaul the other a half-block away. And there they stood shaking hands.

"Then that must be Jimmy, the champion scribe," Riley meditated, as he watched

the two walk on arm in arm. "Well Jimmy'll have to learn to leave his key at the desk."

JIMMY it was—but so changed that Milt could hardly believe his eyes. This was but a ghost of the Jimmy he had left in San Francisco two years before. *That* Jimmy had been clean, clear-eyed, robust; as fine a compound of youthful health and vigor as ever God put in a man. *This* Jimmy stared as through a haze out of glassy, deep-sunk eyes; and his twitching face was drawn, sallow, and furrowed with the dark lines of hard living. His head and shoulders and jaw sagged. He wore good, but ill-kept clothes. His appearance suggested the man who, after a drunken carousal the night before, had turned in "boots and saddle."

Jimmy spoke hurriedly, and in a thin, quavering voice.

"I'm out after a shot," he said after they had shaken hands. "I've got to have a shot!"

Milt nodded and grinned knowingly. They moved on arm in arm.

"There's no doubt in my head, Jimmy, that you need a shot," Milt said, eying his brother aslant. "And I suppose the sooner the better. Here's a place——"

But Jimmy held straight onward, pulling Milt along.

"Not there," he said.

"Particular, eh?" Milt grinned. "What's the matter with that place?"

Jimmy didn't answer.

"So old Demon Rum got you down, eh," Milt teased. "Why don't you handle it right?—or not at all? Any jackass can go to the dogs! You didn't used to be that way."

And Milt continued to hammer away as they moved along. Beyond an occasional sidewise glare Jimmy gave no indication of hearing a word. Jimmy's whole cerebro-spinal system was demanding a shot. Apparently there was but one place in the city wherein he cared to have that shot; and, from his swinging stride, and straight-ahead stare, Jimmy knew the shortest cut to that place. So decided Milt, after several futile attempts to press his brother toward divers doorways. Each time Jimmy shook his head, said "Not here," and held straight on.

They turned off Nanking Road presently. From then on their courses were various. Jimmy set the pace, gradually increasing his speed, as a camel nearing an oasis. Milt clung to his arm and panted along. They zigzagged through a maze of Hop Long alleys and Wun Lung streets, unmindful of the sing-song gabble of voices, the clatter and rumble of vehicles, the putrid odors—unconscious of everything but Jimmy's shot.

And at last, after fifteen minutes of straining and panting, they hove in sight of Jimmy's place.

"Love of Mike!" Milt grunted in disgust. "This dump?"

They entered one of Shanghai's notorious water-front dives. It was a den wherein crooks, beggars, down-and-out water-men, cutthroats—the earth's riffraff—foregathered to drink, gamble, plot, fight, and, not infrequently, cut one another's throats.

Early though it was a few blear-eyed, ragged sots lounged along the bar. A coolie, sprawled over one table, was snoring like a buzz-saw. Three red-eyed, hairy-faced "dock rats" communed over another. Back in a corner sat a foxy, dried-up little derelict, staring far off into space. The air was thick and reeking with the smoke of bad tobacco and stale beer fumes,

Milt sniffed, grimaced, and shook his head, as they sat down at a vacant table.

"I don't get you, Jimmy," he said. "I don't savvy you keeping me in the high lope for fifteen solid minutes, and then fetching up in a dump like this."

Jimmy appeared not to hear. His glassy eyes were fixed on the hideous face of the Korean bartender, who now approached.

"Whisky," Milt sang out, holding up two fingers. Then he turned to Jimmy. "You'll have to stow 'em both," he said. "I never drink anything this time of the day."

Jimmy was paying his brother no attention. He leaned over and said something to the Korean, which Milt failed to catch. The Korean bobbed his head up and down, and through his brown teeth muttered:

"Me go looksee."

With which he shuffled away.

"Chop chop!" Jimmy snapped after him.

"What's it about, Jimmy?" Milt queried.

"Sh-sh-sh-sh!" Jimmy held up a trembling hand in mock warning. "Don't rock the boat, Milt!"

Milt sat back, eying his brother seriously.

"Jimmy," he said after a few moments, "you've sure been going the fool's pace!

What 've you been up against? When did you leave 'Frisco? How come you never wrote me any more?"

Jimmy twisted his sickly face into a guilty grin.

"Me? 'Frisco? Why—" he began; then broke off to the bartender, who then returned with the drinks— "Chop chop!— Why, I left 'Frisco right after I last wrote you, Milt."

"Right after Laura threw you over, for the New York geezer?"

"Um-m-m-m—"

Jimmy's hungry eyes followed the Korean to the door leading to the back room. In that door-way the bartender halted, turned, and stood grinning like a gorilla, beckoning Jimmy with his head. Jimmy stood up abruptly.

"Say, Milt, wait a minute," he said. "I'll be right back."

Puzzled, Milt sat watching him disappear through the door. At length he turned, his gaze falling on the two full glasses at his elbow. With that his perplexity increased. There was something wrong in Rome. Now why— What sort of wild antics was Jimmy pulling? A man in dire need of a shot doesn't get up and walk away from that shot when it's placed in front of him!

Ordinarily the term "shot" is anything but ambiguous. Milt knew what was meant by "a shot in the arm." But by "a shot" he had always understood a man to mean a drink of whisky.

Suddenly light dawned. He sat up stiff, tense, his eyes flashing. His mind was a wild-fire. The words "dope," "dope-fiend," "Jimmy," flooded his consciousness. Like a crash of thunder the realization came. It dazed him. He sat back, limp as a rag.

So it was dope that had reduced the clean, hale Jimmy to such a yellow, trembling wreck! Jimmy, the wizard penman, now unable to write his name legibly! Jimmy gravitated to that well-nigh lowest of human planes—Jimmy down to the level of the "hop-head," "snow-bird," "arm jabber"! And Jimmy only twenty-seven!

BUT when Jimmy emerged from that back room he was yet another Jimmy. His step and carriage as he crossed over to the table were those of an athlete in top-notch fettle. He was a bundle of springs and elastics and electric energy. All pepped up. An all's-well sparkle danced in his eyes, and an indefinable something caused a faint tinge of color to mantle in his cheeks and a smile to play about his now firm lips.

He gave a snappy, business-like tug at the lapels of his coat, as he sat down. With dexterous fingers he next straightened out his neck-tie. Then out came the cigarets, as a matter of course. He held up the lighted match for Milt with a hand that shook not, and lighted his own with nary the flutter of an eyelash.

Whereupon, rubbing his hands together jovially, in the strong, confident voice of a fellow about to sell an island, Jimmy began:

"Well, Milt, old boy, it's been a long time between for us, eh? Well, look who's here!" he broke off, and lifted his glass.

Milt abruptly waived his nothing-in-the-morning resolution. He felt the need of a shot himself, now. He tossed off his drink, then sat back, watching his re-animated brother narrowly.

Jimmy commenced talking, his words flowing with smooth, rapid fluency. He tersely narrated his movements and doings for the passed two years, most of which period he had spent in Hongkong. He had held several promising positions, most of which he had lost on "flukes." The Goddess of Chance had smiled and frowned fitfully; he had made a few winnings and many losings—had moved up and down.

"Mostly down," Milt growled, fixing him with steady eyes.

Jimmy's face sobered for an instant at the interruption.

"Oh, I don't know," he said slowly. "I think, Milt, that I've got more—yes, I'd bet I've got ten times as big a stake as you've got right now."

Milt grinned disdainfully.

"Stake!" he rasped. "Do you call a wrecked constitution a stake? Jimmy, I wouldn't trade with you for a million!"

"No?" Jimmy laughed for a moment. Then—

"But guess what?"

Milt glowered at him.

"Laura 's coming here in the *Empress*, due this afternoon," Jimmy announced.

"Laura!"

"And we're to be married tomorrow morning," Jimmy added.

Milt thrust his jaw across the table, and for many seconds sat glaring into his brother's laughing eyes.

"Laura coming here! —to marry you!"

"Of course, it's all a pipe-dream," Jimmy went on glibly. "I've been in the city a couple of days hunting you up. You see, I got the dope about you still being here from a steel-worker I'd met in Hongkong— He'd worked with you. I knew——"

"Laura!" Milt tried to break in.

"I knew you were in that hotel when I registered last night," Jimmy rambled on, "because I'd followed you there. Didn't want to trouble you last night because it was late, and I was in pretty bad shape, and I knew I'd see you today——"

"Look here, Jimmy!"

Milt's roaring voice, accompanied with the bang of his fist on the table brought an abrupt hush in the hum of voices. The snoring coolie a few tables away sat up. Rough-hewn, rummy faces with blood-shot eyes leered at them expectantly. The Korean bartender approached them slowly, pausing at the next table to pick up an empty bottle. The move didn't escape Jimmy's lively eyes.

"Chop chop!" he snapped, slipping his hand into his side coat-pocket. And the Korean moved back to the bar with the empty bottle.

"You're rocking the boat, Milt," Jimmy said easily. "It's bad business to start an argument in this place—unless you finish it. These birds don't like to be disappointed."

"To —— with these birds!" was Milt's hot return. "What's this raving about Laura coming here this afternoon to marry you?"

"It's straight. She wrote me so over a month ago; and a week later cabled she was sailing from 'Frisco."

"But Jimmy," Milt protested, "you're having a pipe-dream! You wrote me nearly two years ago that a rich geezer from New York——"

"Oh, but that was long ago, Milt," Jimmy came in. "I ditched that duffer long ago, right after I wrote you. For all present purposes, he never was. I'll give you all that later. The point is, Laura's coming in on the *Empress* this— Hang it, Milt, don't sit there looking at me as if I was a murderer!"

Milt's eyes were blazing.

"Murderer!" he echoed. "—— it, Jimmy, do you mean to tell me that you're going to marry Laura—in the shape you are? Murder! That'd be worse! You're a hop-head, Jimmy! Don't deny it! I've been in China two years, and I know a hop-head when I see one!"

Jimmy not so much as batted an eye. After for a few moments smiling serenely into his brother's fiery eyes, he retorted:

"But the point is, Milt, Laura knows she's coming here to marry a hop-head. What then?"

Milt had no immediate reply.

"That stumps you, eh?" Jimmy went on smoothly. "Not many in a million women would come over five thousand miles to marry a hop-head. That's over most people's heads—because it's genuine bigness, and only Bigness understands it."

"And a hop-head that'll take advantage of that bigness is a rat," Milt asserted bluntly.

"And then," Jimmy continued, "add to the fact of her knowing him to be a hop-head the further fact that he owes her money——"

At this Milt relaxed, his expression changing to one more of pity than contempt.

"Even borrowed money from her, eh?"

"Oh, at different times," Jimmy answered easily. "In various amounts. Seventeen hundred dollars in all."

Milt eyed him in silence for a few minutes. Then, speaking slowly:

"Jimmy—as a kid you were pretty small-natured, selfish—you always got the biggest half of the pie. You never worried about any one but Jimmy. But, —— it, Jimmy, I never would have believed you'd turn out as rotten as this."

Jimmy drew his pocket-knife and commenced manicuring his nails.

"It's Green-Eye that's working on you, Milt," he said evenly.

Milt's eyes blazed again, but he held himself well in hand, speaking in a low tone yet with that quaver of voice that wise men heed.

"No, Jimmy; I'm not green-eyed. I don't mind telling you I'm just as much in love with Laura as I ever was. Looks like I'm one of those one-woman fools, and Laura is the one woman. Anyhow, all the other women in the world are just so many million shadows—to me. I like 'em all, but there's only one—Laura. Just the same I've got enough of that pride stuff to keep from wedging in where I'm not wanted. When Laura wrote me and asked me to

quit writing to her because it made you jealous—I quit——"

Milt paused, fixing his brother's sallow, line-marked face with eyes that glared like two balls of fire.

At the mention of Laura's letter of two years before Jimmy moved uneasily in his chair, his hands working convulsively on the table before him, and the half-smoked cigaret shifting in jerks from one end of his mouth to the other. His eyelids moved, but he failed to raise his gaze above Milt's chin. Then a flash out of his eyes, as if struck with a happy thought, and Jimmy commenced throwing up a "smoke screen." A few powerful inhales and exhales and he was completely hidden in smoke.

"I quit," Milt echoed. "I've stayed quit for two years. Because I never could horn in where I'm not wanted. But now—" he thumped on the table—"now, I'm going to horn in whether I'm wanted or not!"

Here came an interruption from the side-lines. The sharp-faced, rat-eyed little dreamer back in the corner spoke.

"Why the bloomin' —— don't you —— stand up an' fight it hout?"

"To —— with you!" Milt flung sidewise at him, as a busy bulldog might relinquish his hold for a moment to snap a growl at some interfering pup.

"Listen, Milt," Jimmy tried to cut in: "There's no use stirring up——"

But "Red-Eye" was crowding Milt close.

"I'm going to see Laura before you do!" he almost shouted. "Get that!"

"All right, Milt. That's just the point I hunted you up to talk about," Jimmy explained. "I've been——"

"Another thing—" Milt was off again—"you're going to break from the dope! No more shots, or sniffs, or whatever you're taking! You break right now!"

Jimmy pocketed his knife, then folded his hands on the table. For a minute or so he sat regarding his brother with a sour, sarcastic smile.

"The cold-turkey cure, eh?" he mused, grinning. "I wonder, Milt, just how you figure on putting that over on me. What do you know about dope and dope-fiends? Been reading what some jackass of a doctor wrote?—some of that break-'em-off, lock-'em-up stuff?"

Jimmy's grin vanished, his eyes became two gleaming slits, and his teeth showed white and ferocious.

"The murdering rats!" he snarled. "Cold turkey! Any man that'll put another through the cold-turkey cure deserves to sizzle in eternal ——!

"Cold turkey! Lock the poor —— in prison! Break him off!"

Jimmy leaned over the table.

"If you mix with lepers you'll contract leprosy. Same with small-pox. Also an ordinary cold in the head. Dope is a disease, Milt. You isolate lepers, people with small-pox, consumption. But why put the dope-fiend in prison?

"The only way to break 'em, eh?" And Jimmy laughed.

"Cold turkey! Take ten hop-heads and lock them up, cut them off right short—and here's the result: Four die; four go nutty; the remaining two come out cured and begin all over the minute they think no one is looking. What I want to know is, which committed the greater totality of rottenness—the society that stood for locking those ten poor devils up, or the ten poor devils?

"The only time the cold-turkey treatment works, Milt, is when the patient wants to be cured.

"If they'd take the poor ——, get him all hopped up, and then hang him, they'd be acting human!"

Again Jimmy leaned over the table. For a few moments he glowered across at his brother viciously.

"Let me tell you something, Milt," he growled. "No man in this world is going to tell me what I shall or shall not do with my own man's machinery. I'll do my own telling. Get that straight. In a few minutes I might take a notion to step in that back room for a couple more squirts in the arm. And if you try to block me——"

He hesitated, slipping his right hand into his side coat-pocket.

"—— it, Milt, I'll blow your block off!"

They glared at each other across the table like two dogs each restrained by a leash. Both Milt's fists were on the table; his set jaw was thrust forward; his eyes seemed about to pop from their sockets.

"Yes; I've got a gun in my hand!" And Jimmy shook the hand in his pocket for proof. "Don't think I'd hesitate to pull that little stunt just because you're my brother. And I'd get away with it too. Know what they do in this dump with a fellow that's been shot or had his gullet

slit? Stow him in the cellar till after dark —then wrap him up and tote him down to the river. She's a muddy stream—that Yangtze.

"To tell the truth there's no man in the world I'd rather see dead than you, Milt. I often think I should have blown your block off long ago.

"So don't get rattled. I came up here from Hongkong because I've got oodles to say to you. And I'm going to be heard."

NATURALLY such a set-to would draw a ring of faces about them. The place had been steadily filling up. And to that ribald fraternity, with a shooting affair in the offing—sufficient unto the moment were the prospects thereof. Nudging and grinning at one another, they circled the two glaring brothers, as a gang of hoodlums might gather about a cock-fight.

"First," Jimmy broke the lengthy silence. "I want to put you a question. If a woman thinks enough of a man to come from 'Frisco to Shanghai—and this after the dude has been writing her for two years, telling her what a bum, booze-hound, hop-head he is—even cabling her for money—do you think the dude ought to turn his back on her?"

Milt ignored the question.

"You've been writing her— But what the blazes was your idea, Jimmy? Why all the hop-head, booze-hound, money-borrowing stuff? You're stark wild, Jimmy! I don't get you head or tail! Two years ago you wrote me that Laura ditched you for a New York geezer—that it was all off—we were both froze out! Today I meet you here in Shanghai—or about half of you—and you tell me Laura is due here today. She's going to marry you tomorrow. You threaten to blow my block off. You——"

"Yes," Jimmy broke in. "I should have blown your block off years ago, before Laura saw you. Then I wouldn't have all this mess to straighten out today. I could go to —— in peace. But you ducked my question. How about it? Ought the hop-head turn his back on her?"

He paused, meeting his brother's gaze squarely, but with a wild, insane light in his glassy eyes that caused Milt to fidget uneasily in his chair.

"But, Jimmy, you wrote that Laura gave you the bum's rush for a New York geezer!"

At which Jimmy grinned.

"That letter was just bunk," he explained. "There was no New York geezer. I wrote that for the sole purpose of easing your feelings. Sit down, Milt!" he snapped, as Milt half-arose. "I figured that letter would make you sit back and say, 'Oh well, if Laura is as small as that, I guess I'm better off.' "

Milt studied him in silence for a full minute.

"Jimmy," he said finally, "you're a liar. If you lied in that letter about the New York geezer, then you're lying now when you say your idea was to ease my feelings. You wrote me that letter for the purpose of keeping me from writing further to Laura."

"You're right in part—but it don't make any difference," Jimmy returned impatiently. "But I'm not lying when I say there never was any New York geezer. But to—— with that. What I'm trying to hammer into you is that in spite of all I've written to Laura in these passed two years —all the hop-head, booze-hound stuff—she's coming here anyway."

Again that maniacal light in his glassy eyes as he paused. And when he continued his voice was husky and cracked.

"You've got no idea how big that little woman is, Milt. Just imagine! For nearly two years I've been writing telling her how low I was, how I was steadily going down, down, down. First I played heavy on the booze; then gambling; finally dope. And all the time I kept her busy cabling me money. First fifty dollars; next a hundred and fifty; again five hundred; and, not so long ago, a thousand. Sit down, Milt!"

And again Jimmy emphasized the command with a vigorous shaking of that hand in his pocket.

"But what the blazes was all that for, Jimmy?"

"And she stayed right along," Jimmy rambled on, rolling his wild eyes over the ceiling. "Never a grumble. Never came back with a balling out. Never tried to preach. —— you Milt, nothing this side of —— can break down the love of a thoroughbred like Laura. It can't be done. I tried it for two years!"

"But why, Jimmy?"

"I should have blown your block off long ago!" Jimmy reiterated. "Then I wouldn't have all this mess to straighten out today."

With his left hand Jimmy then drew from his inner coat-pocket a long envelope and tossed it across the table.

"There's a draft in there," he growled. "When we were kids, Milt, you always used to ride me for gambling. I used to tell you I'd hit big some day and get back all I'd lost in one scoop. I always said when that scoop came I'd stow away three-fourths, gamble back the other fourth, and then quit the game for good. Well, my big scoop came, less than two months ago. That draft is for three-fourths of it. The game'll never get that back. The other fourth is pretty near gone."

For a few moments Jimmy sat gloating down upon the envelope in Milt's hands.

"Boy!" he went on. "It was some scoop! I put 'Hongkong' Lewis' gambling dump on the bum in one night! Put Lewis on his uppers. Cleaned him out so clean that he hasn't done a thing since but *smokum opum!*" And Jimmy laughed, as he added, "I was all hopped myself that night."

He chuckled for a few moments. Then—

"There I was, with forty-two thousand dollars—enough to get hopped up and keep hopped up all the way to ——!"

Milt blinked. Then after fumbling a moment with the envelope, thrust his fingers within. He drew forth a long slip of paper. His eyes fell on the amount—thirty thousand dollars. Forthwith his eyes were bulging and his mouth wide open. But before he could utter a word Jimmy was off again.

"Naturally after that I got smoked up right. And now here—" he rapped with his knuckles on the table— "by everything known to the realm of hop-heads I should still be in Hongkong, dreaming my way to ——, instead of sitting with one hand on my gun trying to make you listen to reason and having all I can do to keep from blowing your block off."

The ring of rough-hewn faces had been persistently closing in about them. Hideous brown and crooked teeth and red, watery eyes leered at them from close at hand.

Suddenly, like some snarling animal sensing the nearness of intruders, Jimmy sprang to his feet, kicking back his chair. He spun on his heel, in his right hand flourishing an automatic pistol.

"Scatter, you rats!" he barked.

THERE was a hubbub of oaths and snarls, the scraping of shoes on the floor, and the banging of chairs that stood in the way of the scramblers. A gun in the hand of a wild-eyed dope-fiend might hold the little joker for any man in the crowd. They backed into the corners, against the walls. Yet none went out. For in that stratum of society nothing was so magnetic as a gun or knife affair.

After pivoting a few times Jimmy added to his broadcast—

"If you birds know when you're well off you'll keep your ugly mugs out of this!"

Then, resuming his seat, he again turned to his dumfounded brother:

"All this, Milt—my coming up here from Hongkong to tell you Laura is due here today—is a pipe-dream! Yes sir, a pipe-dream! I got it the night after I made the big scoop.

"A man with a heavy conscience can't go to —— in peace—dope or no dope! There I was, all smoked up, grinning at Fate, Life, Destiny, and every other bugbear of the bugs—but grin was the best I could do. I wanted in the worst way to just let everything go, take the long slide, but I couldn't without first straightening things out.

"You see, Milt, I couldn't have kept up the game I was playing much longer. You know what a scribe I used to be. You know that there never was a handwriting I couldn't duplicate. But no more. Now, if I'm not all snowed up I can't write my own name, much less some one else's. My hand walks all over the paper!

"Anyhow that's how she figured out—this pipe-dream. First I'd stow away three-fourths of my scoop, as I always said I would. I'd put it in a draft for thirty thousand dollars in your name. Next I'd write Laura to come to Shanghai. Then I'd mark time, going easy on the dope, until just before she was due here, when I'd slip up from Hongkong, hunt you up, and have you meet her at the gangway. After which I'd disappear. That's the pipe-dream. Say what you will, I claim it's a pip. Everything dovetails."

Milt studied him with slowly blinking eyes. Wild, irrational though all this talk was, yet there was a glint in Jimmy's glassy eyes that bespoke a deadly earnestness of purpose. Just a flicker, it was. The rest of Jimmy was sinking fast. The spark, kindled by those two shots in the arm, was

dying down. His whole face was commencing to sag.

"I need another squirt in the arm or two," he mumbled sadly, and allowed his gaze to wander wistfully toward the back-room door. Then, pulling himself together:

"But no, sir! It's all over, Milt—the shots. Only that I had to see this through—this pipe-dream—I wouldn't have busted into my cold turkey this morning. I'd been on cold turkey for three weeks. I was so bad for the want of a shot last night that I couldn't sign the hotel register. But I had to buck up this morning to tell you about the pipe-dream—about Laura coming this afternoon."

He leaned over.

"You'll meet her at the gangway? Explain everything?"

"Sure," Milt responded. Then eagerly: "But is that straight, Jimmy? You're trying to break from the dope?"

"Trying ——!" Jimmy exploded. "I tell you I did break from it for three solid weeks. Those two squirts were the first in all that time. I'm not dead sure, but I think they're the last. I'm shipped out on a tramp packet leaving here tomorrow morning. In the fire-room, on the heavy end of a slice-bar and shovel, I'm going to burn and sweat the rotten stuff out of me! I'll make it or feed myself to the sharks! I make steam from here to Australia, then to 'Frisco—and it's going to be cold turkey all the way!"

Milt thrust out his hand. But Jimmy only shook his head, maintaining his grip on the butt of his pistol.

"You won't want to shake with me in another minute," he mumbled. "You'll meet Laura, will you, at the gangway of the *Empress* this afternoon? You'll tell her everything?"

"Sure, Jimmy. I told you I would! Hang it, Jimmy, I'll do anything in the world for you, as long as I know you're off the dope! But I don't see why you have to *fire* your way. Why go through all that torture? You've got money enough here to engage a doctor. I don't know anything about dope—but there must be some way of counteracting that craving."

Jimmy grinned derisively.

"Doctor be ——! All those jackasses know is 'Lock 'im up! Break 'im off!' The murdering rats!

"No, Milt. They can dig out gall-stones, slice off ulcers, snip off a man's appendix, or saw off an arm. They can take out a man's liver or kidneys, scrape 'em, and put 'em back in again, hunky-dory. They can pump poison out of a man's stomach. But all the knives, hack-saws, scissors, pumps that belong to surgery can't dislodge a like or a dislike, a love or a hatred from a man's brain. Only the man himself can do that.

"No; I don't have to fire my way back. I could go back soft—have a boy to dress and shave me, and bring my meals to my stateroom. I could sit pretty up on deck in one of those big deep chairs, with a monocle on one eye. I could look bored as —— when any one with less than thirty thousand tried to talk to me. And all the while I'd be wondering who I might get a shot from.

"No sir! I've reasoned it all out. I've talked it over with the chief engineer of the packet I'm shipped out on. I'm leaving you in a few minutes. And I'm going out broke. It's going to be sweat and toil and cold turkey all the way to 'Frisco, by way of about a dozen ports in the Antipodes—for about three months.

"You meet Laura this afternoon. Take her back to 'Frisco. Take care of that thirty thousand. That's our stake. When you get back in 'Frisco I want you to pay my debts. Seventeen hundred goes to Laura; fifty dollars to Pete Waldo, in Oakland; thirty-five to Jack Breton, in Vallejo; twenty-five to Dick Poots, in Berkeley. Look up Mike the wop's widow and see what you can do for her and her kids."

Jimmy fell silent, his face sad, woful, his listless eyes wandering vacantly over toward the bar upon which the Korean rubbed industriously with an old wet rag.

"That's all I can remember," he added in a hollow, far-away voice. "Bury the remainder in some sound investment. Maybe you can run it up some by the time I get back to 'Frisco."

"I'll do all that, Jimmy," Milt assured him. "But I can't help thinking you'd stand a better show if you went back with me. I can't see you suffering down in the —— hole of a tramp steamer. You could——"

"Oh, shut your bazoo!" Jimmy growled. "I don't care a rap for your opinion or advice. All I want you to do is meet Laura this afternoon, and explain things."

"All right," Milt snapped. "I'll do that. I'll tell her everything."

"Wha'd'yuh mean—everything?"

"Why—" Milt faltered—"what you've told me—that you realize what a bonehead play it would be, at least for the present; that you're bucking up and coming back strong; and, I suppose, that it's to be postponed till you get back to 'Frisco."

"You tell her no such —— thing!"

With which Jimmy pushed back his chair.

 TO LOOK at him he might have been a murderer, rising to tell the world he was guilty but not sorry. For commingled with the guilty cast in his eye was a dancing glint of defiance; it fairly shouted out of every line and furrow of his handsome but sadly dissipated face. His right hand gripped more tightly on the butt of his pistol, while with his left he drew from his trousers pocket a door-key.

"There's the key to my hotel room," he said, tossing it on the table. "I'm not going back there. All you'll find in that room is a suit-case with about fifty letters in it. Look 'em over. Read 'em.

"Those letters will tell you everything. But I'm going to tell you everything right here, now, before I go."

Jimmy then stood up.

"Now don't come at me, Milt." This with a menacing shake of the pistol at his side.

"You want to know why for two years I've been writing Laura what a bum—rum-hound—snow-bird I was. You wonder why, if I didn't want the girl, I didn't simply write and say so—right? Why didn't I merely say, 'Sorry, Laura, but it's cold turkey for yours'?

"But I did want her. I figured I wanted her worse than you did."

For a moment he glared wildly down into his brother's puzzled eyes.

"You were always so —— square—so easy," he drawled sarcastically. "If you had anything I wanted you gave it to me. I believe if I'd told you I wanted Laura you'd have sidestepped. I thought of it more than once, but realized it wouldn't work because you stood too high with Laura.

"I don't mind telling that more than once too I thought of blowing your block off. But that wouldn't have worked either, even if I did manage to get away with it, because Laura never would have forgotten you. I'd never had a moment's peace from then on—it would have been 'Milt this' and 'Milt that' all the way down the long trail to the grave.

"I did, though, come pretty close to pulling it," Jimmy added as an afterthought, "just once. I actually went so far as to get Duke Mentz, the drug clerk, to get me some prussic acid——

"Remember the day you got me into Mike the wop's cat-boat and ran me outside the Golden Gate to sober me up? You remember, Milt, lying out there off the Farallones, how I knocked the water-jug out of your hands, and how I fought with you when you tried to recover it? Boy—if you'd taken that drink of water, your heart would have quit you in less than two minutes!

"Do you know why I knocked that jug overboard? It wasn't a stroke of cold feet. Nor conscience. Right at that moment I could have seen you go without batting an eye! I'd have gone in and told that you'd fallen overboard—and there wasn't a court in the world could prove me a liar! What stopped me was an idea. It came in the snap of a finger—in the wink of an eye!

"You were leaving for China. You had a big opportunity with the American-Electric people. And all that fit right in with my scheme.

"Remember how all of a sudden I gave in?—promised to quit booze? And in we scudded for the Golden Gate and 'Frisco.

"You left 'Frisco the next day, with a head full of air-castles. You were coming out here to save five thousand dollars in two years. Then it was to be back home to a bungalow and Laura. You and Laura certainly had things dreamed out nicely.

"You thought you left me in 'Frisco. Why, you poor simp, I was in Shanghai, China, ahead of you! An hour after shaking hands with you on the dock in 'Frisco, I was Seattle bound. There I connected with the *Chamoran* for here. Your packet went by way of Honolulu. Mine came straight through."

"You must have gone back shortly after," Milt interrupted.

"No, I didn't go back." Jimmy spoke slowly. "I've never been back since. But I didn't stay in this town long. For there was no telling what moment I might bump into you on the streets here. I went to Hongkong."

Milt held up a hand in protest.

"Now wait a minute, Jimmy! Your memory is off. The dope has got your brain warped. You say we were neck-and-neck across the Pacific. You beat me here. You've been in China since. Then how the blazes came the San Francisco post-office stamp on that letter you wrote me a couple or three months later? —the letter telling me about the New York geezer? How could your letter come from 'Frisco when you were in Hongkong, China?"

Jimmy grinned.

"You've got me down for a screw loose, eh? Why, that was simple enough, Milt. I sent that letter, enclosed in another envelope, to Red Muldoon, Cassidy's bartender, with instructions to just drop it in the mail box. Red kind of had a grouch against you for the night you yanked me out of that poker game—the night he and I were all set to cold-deck those three high-school dudes from Sacramento—and was glad to do anything that might hurt you.

"But I'm ahead of my tale. That letter about the New York geezer was the second one I sent Red to mail to you. The first one was mailed to you about two months before that."

"I never got it," said Milt.

"Oh yes, you did, Milt. You only mentioned that same letter a while ago."

"I mentioned——" Then abruptly all the color left Milt's fine straightforward face. As well might it have been a blow on the head with a club. The truth about that letter from Laura came smashing home to him with a suddenness that deadened his senses.

WHITE-FACED, open-mouthed, vacant-eyed he sat there, plunged in a quagmire of bewilderment, his muscles numb, his brain powerless, while at the door of his consciousness battered the thought——

That letter from Laura—Jimmy had forged it! It was like a burst of white, glaring daylight to a man long in darkness.

"I wrote you that letter," Jimmy went on. "It was easy enough for me to imitate Laura's hand. You see, Milt, I figured I knew you pretty near down to the roots. You were always a proud kind of a jackass. I was pretty sure you'd never reply to that letter. If you did, of course, my game would have fizzled. That was a chance I took."

He paused. Slowly the color was returning to Milt's face. Slowly, too, his teeth came together, and his eyes grew less bulging.

"What else could I do?" Jimmy resumed. "I wanted Laura worse than you did. The only way I could dope out of destroying a woman's love was to make her disgusted with the dude she's in love with. That was my only chance. And it was better for you than if I'd have let you drink out of that jug.

"Now you can see why for two years I've been writing to Laura telling her what a rotten and rummy rat I was. I did all that in your name. Sit down, Milt! Sit——"

The gun roared as Jimmy, backing away, pulled the trigger. The bullet buried itself in the floor at Milt's feet.

"Sit down, —— it!"

And when Milt had obeyed, Jimmy added:

"Another move like that, and—well, I'll point before I pull! And don't forget, it was this idea that kept you from drinking the prussic acid that morning!

"In your name, I say— You'll find every letter in that suit-case is addressed and written to you—Milt Walker.

"That was the game. It worked, but it didn't. I overlooked just one little joker. I fooled you with the letter I forged in Laura's name. I've been fooling Laura ever since with letters forged in your name. But the one I fooled most was myself, when I imagined I could batter down the love of that little thoroughbred."

Jimmy backed slowly toward the front door, grinning, as he noted the frightened glances directed at him from along the walls and corners, and laughing audibly as the apelike face of the Korean disappeared behind the bar the instant he glanced at him.

"All right, Milt," he sang out, "she's all yours. She's due here in the *Empress* at three this afternoon. If Laura is game to come all the way from 'Frisco to marry Milt Walker, the bum, booze-hound and hop-head—a dude so low he'd borrow money from a woman—then, by George, Milt, she's welcome to you, and you to her! I didn't used to think they made 'em like her. But wasn't that a pip of a pipe-dream?"

Jimmy halted with his back to the door, his left hand behind him on the knob.

"Good-by, Milt," he shouted. "Square

all those debts. Tell Laura all about it on your honeymoon back. From now on it's cold turkey. If I win through I'll see you in 'Frisco in about three months. If I don't show up you'll know I lost out and fed myself to the sharks!"

He yanked open the door.

"Good luck, Milt. If I see you trying to follow me, I'll blow your block off!"

And *bang!* went the door.

RED AUTUMN

A Five-Part Story

Part Four

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Tameless Days," "Long Rifles," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

WHEN the United States declared war against Great Britain in June, 1812, I was despatched on a keelboat expedition to carry the news to Manuel Lisa—"Mr. Manuel"—founder of the Missouri Fur Company, who was trading with the Indians along the upper Missouri River. Speed was imperative, for if word should come to the hostile Sioux from Canada first, Mr. Manuel would be trapped. For a year past, British agents had been urging the nations of the upper region to join Tecumseh's great confederacy; and with the exception of one or two tribes, they were in an ugly mood.

The same special knowledge of Indian conditions, especially among the Mandan tribe, that had earned me the nickname of "Mandan" Ramsay resulted in my appointment as *bourgeois*, or head, of the expedition sent to warn Mr. Manuel.

Our start was made from St. Louis in June, and by the latter part of September I had got the news to him. Briefly I summarized our long trip—how we had unwittingly shipped two British agents named Le Fou and Balise, who had tried to murder us and then had made off to the hostile Indians, Le Fou carrying with him a package of arsenic. They were now working, I believed, in cooperation with a one-eyed medicine man named Medicine Crow and with Le Borgne (the Blind) a one-eyed chief of Hidatsa, chief village of the Minnetaree tribe.

"The sooner you get to the Minnetarees the better," Mr. Manuel told me. "You will find the British flag flying in their villages. You must demand that it be lowered and the United States flag raised. While you are gone I shall be kicking the Canadian traders out of the Sioux villages."

Next day I started, accompanied by one of our hunters, a giant American named Richardson. On our journey we encountered a hostile Sioux band, and before we could get away we had to kill a Minnetaree who was riding with them.

The Sioux gave chase, and we entered the Mandan village of my friend Shahaka for protection. At this time of year the truce of the corn-trading season was effective in the villages of all tribes hereabout, though warfare was actively waged on the plains outside.

Here I met my enemy Balise. The latter had already raised the British flag.

"Being Shahaka's friends," I said, "the Americans will not shed blood and break the law of the village during the corn-trading season. Yet the flag of my people's enemies should not be seen in the village. Balise will go outside with me. He will pull down his flag, or I will beat him like a squaw."

"I have killed men with my bare hands," snarled Balise, "and I will kill you."

I flung out my hands for room in which to fight.

BALISE'S tactics, learned in the school of frontier fighting, had none of the earmarks of fairness, and he gouged and bit me at every opportunity. We were both fairly exhausted before I managed

to get in a blow that dropped him. In a few minutes the British flag was lowered and the American flag put in its place. In spite of Shahaka's plea that we remain in his village and trade solely with him, I sent Richardson ahead to find Red Shield, a friendly chief of the Minnetarees. When I set out behind him Shahaka insisted on escorting me part of the way.

From Red Shield we learned that Elk's Tooth, an important warrior at Hidatsa, Le Borgne's village, had mysteriously died. We decided to visit the village, cover the dead man's body with presents from the Great White Father and investigate.

At Hidatsa we found Medicine Crow, who was rapidly influencing the tribe against the Americans. Le Fou, who chose to turn up at this time, was creating unlimited awe with his strange mannerisms and antics. I accused him of having used arsenic in our camp, and he became defiant.

"I shall be greater than any red man after you Americans are driven down the river!" he threatened.

While wandering through the village we encountered a sick warrior named Black Deer, who told us that Le Fou was *mahopa*. or "touched," and therefore sacred. He also said that Le Fou had had a dream in which Elk's Tooth appeared and that the *mahopa* man prophesied his death. Soon afterward Elk's Tooth died. He spoke mysteriously of some medicine he had found in the dead man's hut. This information set Richardson to thinking—with good results, as I was to learn later.

After we had covered Elk's Tooth's body with gifts, we learned that that night a powwow would be held and that Le Fou would recount a new dream, naming another victim. I somehow felt it would be I.

With the tribe gathered in a circle about a fire the powwow began. With his pet crow on his shoulder, Medicine Crow launched a fierce tirade against the Americans. Red Shield then rose and even in spite of his stirring address had all he could do to reassure the Indians. Then Le Borgne began to speak, and by siding strongly with Medicine Crow overwhelmed the good effect of Red Shield's address.

At this point a friendly Indian thrust a letter into my hands, but the excitement was so intense that I did not have time to read it then.

Le Fou began his part in the ceremony, circling gradually toward me. It was evident that he would name me as the next victim. Here Medicine Crow's pet crow hopped into his path and Richardson suddenly tossed a piece of meat, poisoned with arsenic, to it. This was the medicine that Black Deer had referred to. Just as Le Fou was about to name me the crow dropped dead. Richardson sprang up, crying:

"It was the medicine crow he dreamed about! Look!"

Consternation prevailed, and Le Fou's power began to be openly discredited. Hastily opening my letter, I found it was from Mr. Manuel. He stated that the Sioux were causing him trouble, but that he would endeavor to join me if absolutely necessary. He also warned me against the appearance of a medicine man named Medicine Crow, who was really Tenskwatawa, brother of Tecumseh, prophet, loser of the fight at Tippecanoe. Mr. Manuel advised me first to expose Medicine Crow, and then if possible kill him.

CHAPTER IX

OUR MEDICINE SLEEPS

TWICE during the night I awoke and beheld Red Shield muffled in a blanket in front of the medicine log; and I suspected that he was pondering over the momentous news sent me by Mr. Manuel. Until that gray morning of November 7, 1811, the name of Tenskwatawa, twin brother of the famous Tecumseh, was a name to arouse fanaticism among the red men. The prophet's influence was far-reaching, and stirred the tribes from the Seminoles in the South to the Siksika on the Bow River in Canada.

In declaring that he had been taken into the spirit world by the Master of Life his talk, and the warning he proclaimed, were peculiarly similar to the language and arguments used by the great Pontiac half a century before. In fact, the parallel was so obvious as to warrant the belief that the Prophet had borrowed from that notable strategist. There was no denying that he had aroused the tribes to an extraordinary pitch of credulity and excitement. Among those living in barbarism, as well as among those who call themselves "civilized," there is the belief that some time some one will come to save a favored people.

When the Prophet foretold the Summer eclipse of the sun in 1806 he eliminated doubters and for a brief time was hailed as a red savior. As extreme emotionalism is never self-sustaining it naturally followed that the wave of unrest and frenzy rapidly subsided once it reached the peak, but not before it had sufficed to bring into existence the scheme of a confederacy among many tribes.

Unfortunately for the hopes of the new faith and the new confederacy Tecumseh, the most extraordinary red man in all red history, was absent in the South when General Harrison with his army of nine hundred men approached Tippecanoe on the west bank of the Wabash. This ancient town, originally held by the Miami, then by the Shawnees, and, after its destruction by the Americans in 1791, by the Potawatomi, became the headquarters of Tecumseh and his brother in 1808 on the invitation of

the Potawatomi. Blinded by their zeal and their implicit faith in the Prophet, the allied warriors, equal in strength to the white army, attacked at daybreak and were defeated.

Some fifty or sixty men were killed on each side. This loss was small, considering the stubborn nature of the battle, yet the results were portentous. Destiny is builded of queer materials, often of things seemingly insignificant. Cannon roar and banners wave, and thousands on thousands are slaughtered on the battle-field—and nothing determinative results. Then at an Indian village in the forests of Indiana a hundred men are killed, and the prestige of an Indian prophet is destroyed; Tecumseh, mighty leader of men, is sent to join the British, and the leader of the little white army finds himself precipitated into the Presidency of the United States of America.

It was easy to understand why Tenskwatawa did not care to avail himself of his former repute. Among many of the tribes he was discredited. He could not, as the Prophet, relight the fires of ardor which formerly set the red world ablaze with the purpose of exterminating the white race. So he had come on his mission as a medicine man, unsung; a stranger until he should succeed in building up a new identity and in duplicating his former successes. He believed he could use nothing of his past greatness in establishing his influence over the Missouri tribes.

If Red Shield slept any that night it was while sitting up before the medicine log. Richardson very sensibly laid aside his worries when he spread his blankets, and snored lustily. My sleep was patched with disagreeable dreams and broken by waking moments. Whether asleep or awake I was conscious of the momentous question Mr. Manuel's message had given me to answer. I knew a great secret, and was perplexed as to how I should utilize it.

I quit my blankets early, still undecided as to the course I should pursue. When Richardson returned to the world of fact I called on him and Red Shield to give me counsel.

The hunter was as direct as one of his rifle bullets. He urged:

"Git the whole crowd together and tell them who the Crow really is. Tippecanoe's too close for them to be forgetting what a mess the Prophet made of it when he started a fight without his brother on hand to handle the warriors."

Red Shield, muffled in his blanket, smoked his pipe and did not speak until I had repeated my request. Then he sententiously said:

"Why hurry a strong medicine? Do we know more than the medicine knows? The white Mandan knows the truth and can use it like a club. If he tells the village he has thrown his club away, then he must begin all over again. Tenskwatawa does not wish to be known.

"Let the White Mandan tell *him* he is the Prophet; then wait. When the Prophet knows that the White Mandan knows, he may believe the white man has something to trade.

"The mighty Tecumseh does not want the Minnetarees to know the real man he has sent among the Missouri tribes. His brother takes a new name and says he is a Sioux. He comes as a strange medicine man. Everything is before him. He does not have to watch for an attack from behind so long as no one knows anything about him. *Hao!** The White Mandan has something to trade. *Ihe!***

"Tenskwatawa may say he will go away if the White Mandan keeps his tongue behind his teeth. If he goes away he will take the *mahopa* man with him. When the two are gone the Blind will be like a man who has no lance, no club. Do not hurry a strong medicine. Last night the white Mandan's medicine would not let the *mahopa* man name him. Do not try to whip a good medicine into a run when it is walking fast."

I believed that his counsel was good, and I decided to follow it. The chief suggested that we have our breakfast brought to us instead of seeking it in any of the lodges. He stepped to the door where several men were waiting, and on his appearance one of the warriors approached and received a command. In a very short time a kettle of hot meat and a wooden platter of dried berries, the latter pounded and mixed with fat, were brought to our door by a woman.

"This is good meat," said Red Shield significantly; and we satisfied our appetites without fear.

Having eaten, I smoked two pipes and considered the delicate task ahead of me.

*Denotes gratification. Usually written "how" by travelers.

**There now!

I must secure an audience with Tenskwatawa and speak with him alone. The hunter insisted on accompanying me; but as the Prophet would be likely to take alarm on learning that several knew his secret I ruled that the hunter could go only as far as the little square before the lodge.

Red Shield had business of his own to attend to. He was a natural politician and could quickly grasp the advantages to be derived from any unusual occurrence, such as Le Fou's failure to name me the night before.

When we reached the end of the lane opening on to the square Richardson reluctantly turned back, and alone I advanced to the big hut. A woman was bringing some empty kettles from the lodge, and I knew Le Borgne and his guest had finished eating. I told the woman to tell the mystery man I wished to speak with him alone.

"A Minnetaree does not carry talks for Big Knives," she sullenly replied.

"You are a foolish woman when that talk is meant for Medicine Crow."

This frightened her, but she was not inclined to reenter the lodge. While she was hesitating Le Borgne came to the door, smiling with his wide mouth and lowering venomously with his one eye.

"The white man talks with one of our women. Does he want to sell her? Then let him go among the Arikara, who sell their women to white men," he shouted, taking care that his words might be heard at a distance.

The woman scuttled away, fearfully frightened. Speaking loudly in my turn, I answered:

"I come to have a talk with Medicine Crow. His medicine is weak. The white man thinks he can tell him how to make it stronger."

"The white man can tell it to the Blind. His words shall be told to Medicine Crow."

"It is something the Blind is not to hear unless Medicine Crow tells him."

Le Borgne stared at me wrathfully. Balise and Le Fou had heard my words and now came out on the porch. I had supposed them to be quartered elsewhere. Le Fou began his crazy antics for the benefit of those spying on us from the adjacent lodges, but ceased when I asked him in French:

"Why did you kill the Indian's tame crow? The village says you are no longer *mahopa*."

Balise asked me in English:

"What trick is *m'sieur* up to now? Death of my life, but it will be a clever one!"

"You look ill, Balise," I retorted. "You may not be safe even in eating from a chief's kettle. Your crazy friend may take strange notions in order to prove his power."

He drew apart as if having no further interest in the matter. His face had taken on age overnight; or rather was reflecting more of his true age.

Le Borgne was suspicious of these passages in French and English, and harshly broke in:

"White medicine can not make red medicine strong. Let the friend of the Mandans go back to his lodge before he is very sick."

"I have eaten," I told him. "I come to see Medicine Crow. Is he a slave that the Blind can say who shall see him and who shall not? And must I shout to the whole village what I was to whisper in his ear?"

Le Borgne was very curious and very suspicious. But before he could offer further opposition a deep voice called from the lodge—

"Let the white man enter alone."

Le Borgne did not like it; nor did Le Fou. The chief stalked sullenly away from the porch, but Le Fou would have followed me inside had I not threatened—

"Go away from here, or you'll think you're back on the boat and have lost your pole."

He scuttled out of reach and tried to scowl. He could not forget I had been a *bourgeois* when he was a *voyageur*. His weak face worked convulsively; then he salved his pride by shouting to Balise—

"Pig, follow at my heels, or you'll be sorry."

"I follow, M'sieur Le Fou," Balise softly replied; but the face of him portended no good for the half-wit were the two ever together alone.

"Let the white man enter with his talk," called Tenkswatawa, and I passed through the doorway.

THE Prophet was seated on a raised mat of willows with a reclining back. He rose on my entrance and greeted me with cold courtesy. At that time he was about thirty-seven years

old, and despite his facial blemish he instantly impressed me as possessing a powerful personality. Within the space of six years he had aroused among the Southern and Western tribes a religious fervor which surpassed in intensity any similar phenomenon witnessed among the red nations since the first white men came to America.

Most great men display the potentials of greatness when young. Tenskwatawa was an exception to rule. Until nearly thirty years of age he had been addicted to gross intoxication, and was supposed even to be wanting in average intelligence. What strange mental stimulus brought out his undoubted powers? Richardson would say it was his medicine. Why should he suddenly abandon his slothful habits and at once become remarkable for his intellectual gifts, and famed for his eloquence as an orator? Perhaps Richardson's summary was correct; the term "medicine" is variously interpreted.

The wonderful fact remained that wherever the Prophet traveled he had lighted fires of a new faith, and only at long-spaced intervals is it given to a man to do this. Whereas he is said to have been a drunkard he turned squarely about and continuously preached the evils of strong drink. Those who have witnessed the red man's terrible susceptibility to strong drink will recognize this one piece of reformation as being most extraordinary.

Had he been contented to play the rôle of prophet and leave the direction of battles to Tecumseh there is no knowing to what great lengths the twin brothers might have advanced. Or had he won the battle of Tippecanoe it would have required the breadth of a continent to contain his fame. I was in the presence of a great man.

"The white man comes to tell me something," he said, without indulging in the usual period of silence that with the red men always prefaces a formal conference. He motioned for me to take his seat, but I seated myself on a robe.

Producing my pipe I inquired—

"Do we smoke before opening our talk?"

His face was devoid of expression as he stared at me through his one eye. His voice was amiable and pleasing when he finally answered—

"We will not smoke, white man, until we smoke under the same flag."

And he pointed to the enemy's colors leaning against the wall back of him. He reflected the influence of the Eastern tribes when he added:

"There is no white wampum between us. You came, unasked, to tell me something. You believed you will count a *coup* by your talk."

"I come to tell you I know you are Tenskwatawa, the Prophet, the brother of the great Tecumseh," I bluntly informed him.

By no sign that I could detect did he betray any surprize at my words. He quietly asked—

"Why do you come to tell Tenskwatawa something he already knows?"

"Because down the river you said you were a Sioux. Because the Minnetarees do not know you are a Shawnee and the Prophet, the brother of Tecumseh."

"That is not why the white man came," he corrected me.

"If you wanted the Missouri tribes to know you are the Prophet you would not come to them as Medicine Crow, a Yankton Dakota."

He reached a hand to his shoulder as if to caress the tame crow, then dropped it heavily in his lap. I continued:

"You were sent here by the great Tecumseh to stir up the Missouri tribes against the Americans, to join in with the upper Mississippi tribes in making war against the United States. You believed you would find more men to follow you if you came as a strange medicine man."

He straightened his bowed shoulders and haughtily replied:

"Tenskwatawa can raise up tribes wherever he goes. He can do so under the name of Tenskwatawa, or under a new name. The Master of Life has told him what to say and where to go. Names are like a buffalo robe, to be cast aside when worn out. The red men hear Tenskwatawa's voice and follow him and fight behind Crouching Panther."*

His voice was now taking on an oratorical roll. Its vibrating quality is hard to describe, and yet was most pleasing to listen to. I found it inclining me to respect him for his sincerity, but I stifled the weakness by remembering that he had fooled many a wiser man than I. My plan of attack was based on bluntness of speech.

"You can raise up no red warriors if they

*Tecumseh; indicates owner belongs to Great Medicine Panther, or Meteor *gens*. Also interpreted as "Shooting Star."

know you to be Tenskwatawa, the man who spoiled Tecumseh's medicine by making a weak fight at Tippecanoe. Your name went behind a black cloud when you lost that fight and sent your brother to wear a red coat under the English flag."

"The white man came to tell me something besides this," was the imperturbable reminder.

He would not come a step to meet me. He was forcing me to take the initiative. So I decided to have it over with in a mouthful and accordingly told him:

"It is this. If you leave this village today, taking the *mahopa* man with you, I will hold my tongue. If you stay here I shall tell all the Minnetarees that you are the man who led a thousand warriors in a surprize attack against as many white men, and then left the fighting when only fifty of your men were killed. When the Minnetarees know that, they can decide if they will accept you as a leader and go to help the British.

"This village is divided against itself. When it is known you are no new mystery man, and are a Shawnee and not a Yankton Dakota, I do not believe many will follow you. Le Borgne may go if he receives enough gifts—but he will do little fighting under Tecumseh. Perhaps some of the Missouri tribes will send their warriors; I do not know. But the Minnetarees and the Mandans will not send as many warriors as you lost at Tippecanoe. They may kill some American traders here on the Missouri as they have done before. But that will be all."

Again his hand went to his shoulder in search of the tame crow, and he bowed his head as he pondered over my frank speech. With no display of resentment he lifted his head and said:

"The white man has a straight tongue. He speaks what he believes. Tenskwatawa can not smoke with him, but he has found his talk good."

He rose, and the interview was over. Whether he would leave the village or remain was a matter of guesswork for me. I feared he would choose to remain. He followed me to the door and gravely inclined his head as I passed out.

I found Richardson waiting for me. He was placidly smoking his pipe while a dozen of Le Borgne's followers lounged about and scowled at him most murderously. As he walked away I briefly told him:

"I've given him until night. I'm afraid he intends to stick."

As he entered the lane across the small square Le Borgne popped out of a hut and demanded—

"What did Medicine Crow have to say to the white talk?"

"He said it was good."

"What did the white man tell him?"

"That is for the Medicine Crow to tell."

And we brushed by and left him fumbling with his war-club and wishing us dead.

We returned to our lodge, kicking a path through packs of snarling curs, but no longer annoyed by boys and young men. The dramatic happenings of the preceding evening had cloaked us with respect. At the lodge we found Red Shield talking with Black Deer. I told the Shield:

"We will know by night. We did not smoke."

Red Shield glanced at Black Deer and explained:

"This man with broken hands comes to say he wants tobacco. He says he can not catch an eagle. He wants something to trade for food before the lodges go to the Snake House river."

We owed the poor —— something, owed him much; and I told him:

"There is nothing the matter with the Deer's feet. If he can not catch eagles he can take a talk for me down to the new trading-post above the Arikara villages. He shall have enough trade-goods and tobacco to keep him in food all Winter."

"There are bad Indians along the way. A man on foot will be run down and killed by the Sioux in the lower Mandan village."

The chief interposed:

"He will be safe if he calls at the middle village and tells the people that Red Shield says he is to have a horse. The women will take him across the Missouri, and he can ride down the other side and meet nothing but buffaloes."

But the fellow had no heart for the lonely trip. Since early youth his lot had been practically that of an outcast. He had been forced to help the women at their work in order to receive scanty rations. His life had not taught him self-dependence nor promoted the growth of courage. I could see he was hesitating, seeking a way to refuse my offer without giving offense to Red Shield. I reminded him:

"They say the Winter will be cold and long. The village will soon move back to the timber on the Snake*. What lodge will have a place for Black Deer then?"

"If there is a horse the talk will be taken down the river," he finally surrendered.

As my message to Mr. Manuel must await Tenskwatawa's decision I told Black Deer to hold himself in readiness until night. I wrote out a concise account of all that had happened and placed the letter aside until I could add the result of my talk. This done, I requested Richardson to make our flag fast on top of the lodge.

The appearance of the colors met with no opposition. It took the hunter some time to get the staff properly secured, but at last the task was finished, and he called down through the opening over the firehole for me to join him.

I ascended to the roof, and the first thing to catch my eye was the enemy's flag over Le Borgne's big hut. It was good to have the Stars and Stripes answering it.

Richardson had a definite purpose in desiring my presence.

"They'll be clear of the huts very soon," he said, pointing to the north side of the village.

Then they appeared; four horsemen with several pack-animals, and they were traveling down the Knife toward the Missouri.

"The Canadian traders!" I exclaimed, scarcely believing my eyes.

"It does my old heart good to see them skedaddling," said Richardson with one of his broadest grins.

We watched them until convinced that they were actually making for the crossing of the Missouri. Once beyond the river there would be nothing for them to do but continue traveling northeast and back to the Red River country.

This retreat of the Canadians made me optimistic. They would not be leaving the village unless they believed the fight was lost. And we had driven them out, even as we had expelled them from Shaha-ka's town.

My thoughts took on new importance. Mr. Manuel had chosen wisely in sending me to handle a very delicate and dangerous situation. Of course the hunter had played an important part in shrewdly guessing Black Deer's possession of the piece of poisoned meat; yet it was I who had first gained the good-will of the Deer.

The traders' departure was excellent news to add to my unfinished letter. I descended, but before I could resume writing Red Shield was telling me:

"The men say something is about to happen. They say there is much moving about near the Blind's lodge."

"We have frightened the four traders. They have started back to the Red River," I proudly told him.

"They say this is not about the traders," said the Shield, and from his failure to show surprize over my announcement I knew he had learned the news while I was on top of the lodge.

Black Deer came running up to us, dramatically exclaiming:

"They go! They ride away! The Medicine Crow, the *mahopa* man and the white man—all ride away!"

THIS news was too good to be credited without an investigation. I thrust my letter aside and started down the lane followed by the hunter. I would have some rare items for Mr. Manuel. It was permitted me this early to inform him that the fight was won; that the evil influence had been driven from the village. Tenskwatawa had bowed before the inevitable. He might make trouble among the Sioux, but he had been defeated in the Minnetaree and Mandan villages.

My satisfaction would have been complete had I not learned the secret of the Prophet's identity from Mr. Manuel, and if it had been I, and not the hunter, who accomplished the death of the tame crow. However, there was no gainsaying the fact that it was Mandan Ramsay who had taken advantage of the developments and had handled the situation.

Then I was filled with fear lest Black Deer had misconstrued the facts. Le Borgne and his guests might be starting after buffaloes, for the Blind was very fond of hunting.

We quickened our steps, and my egotism fed itself on the sight of Tenskwatawa about to ride away from Le Borgne's lodge. Le Fou was being helped on to a bony horse by Balise.

As the Frenchman vaulted on to his mount Le Borgne appeared in his doorway,

*Mi-hoksa Atiazi: Snake House River by Indians. Snake Creek by Lewis and Clark.

his long hair sweeping the ground. He said nothing to his departing guests, nor did they appear to see him. The number of spectators quickly increased and took up positions on four sides of the square. As the three men started to ride away Balise spied us and shifted his course to pass close to us.

He grinned down at me savagely and warned—

"Next time, *m'sieur*, it will not be with the bare hands."

I made no reply, but the hunter bawled back:

"Next time will be the last time for you. He'll knock your —— head off. If he don't, I will."

"I shall remember *m'sieur* the hunter's words. He will remember them and will be very sorry," Balise called over his shoulder.

Le Fou, perched like a monkey on the crude wooden saddle, kicked a warrior in the chest. The Indian gave ground with never a thought of resenting the insult, and he was one who wore a wolf's tail on his ankle also, which was not a common practise among the Minnetarees. He was wearing a war-shirt which must have been handed down through several generations of fighting-men, as the pictographs representing the enemies killed covered the front of the garment.

Had Le Borgne offered him such rudeness the chief or the warrior would have died on the spot. But a *mahopa* man had kicked him. There was no loss of self-respect in giving ground and cringing before one who in his dreams talked with Itsikamahidis, the First Made.

The witless one needed the opening to permit of a close approach to me. I made ready to drag him to earth did he try any of his tricks. He was cunning enough to know how far he could go with white men, and he contented himself with taunting:

"*M'sieur* has much to learn. Ho! Ho! They say he is very young. He has very much to learn. Let him remember what the *mahopa* man says. He has much to learn. Pig, repeat my words."

The last to Balise ahead. And the Frenchman dutifully raised his voice and gave the speech in the Minnetaree tongue.

The two of them cut across the square to catch up with Tenskwatawa, who had avoided us. I saw his hand go to his shoulder as he absent-mindedly reached up to caress the tame crow. He had seen us the moment we debouched from the lane on the square, but by no sign or glance did he recognize us. The crowd parted respectfully for the three to pass; then closed in behind them and followed them. Le Borgne retired to his lodge. We trailed after the silent spectators until the horsemen reached the outskirts of the village and swung into a course which would take them to the Missouri.

My victory was almost complete. There remained only the hostile flag over Le Borgne's hut. I hastened back to the lodge and finished my letter to Mr. Manuel, writing enthusiastically of the traders' flight and the withdrawal of the Prophet and his white companions. I assured him that there was no need of his presence and that the Prophet would soon be back in Canada, a defeated man.

Wrapping the letter in some oiled skin, I called in Black Deer and saw that it was tied securely around his neck. Red Shield supplied him with several days' rations of dried meat, and I paid a squaw three loads of powder and as many bullets to set him across to the other side of the Knife in a bull-boat. He had his directions to follow down the south side of the Knife to the middle village, where he would be provided with a horse.

With the letter on its way we gave our attention to Le Borgne's lodge, using some of the Shield's trusted adherents. These reported back that the chief was still in his lodge.

Richardson declared that within twenty-four hours we would have the enemy's flag off the hut and only the American colors showing in the village. I hoped this could be accomplished as I was anxious to be back with Mr. Manuel, but it was a task for Red Shield to handle. Many white men have made the mistake of taking too great liberties in an Indian village. The warriors who would support Red Shield in removing the flag would be quick to resent our taking any such initiative.

After the seven enemies had departed Hidatsa seemed to be a different place. No longer was there the dread of poison, nor open hostility. Even Le Borgne's followers seemed to have lost their spirits and to be realizing that the Americans were in the ascendency. At least they withdrew to their lodges and remained, like their leader, out of sight. I walked abroad in

high fettle. I had learned that the average situation, if let alone, will work itself out to a logical conclusion. Red Shield had the right of it when he warned me not to "hurry a strong medicine."

Sometimes with the hunter and at times alone I made short excursions from the lodge, and even walked outside the village and watched the women busy in the fields. I became accustomed to viewing myself as a victor and was discovering that I was impatient to go down the river and have Mr. Manuel tell me I had done well. I even pictured myself as being rewarded with the permanent rank of *bourgeois* in a new post another season.

Richardson was sleeping in the lodge when I returned from my last walk. I woke him up for the sake of having a white man to talk to. He said the Shield had been very busy canvassing the village for new adherents to his growing faction. Le Borgne had kept to his hut ever since the Prophet departed.

We talked ourselves out, and I was discovering that I, too, was sleepy when voice at the door called me to the porch. The man who brought us meat was there with a strange Indian.

"Swift Horse, the Cheyenne man who lives with the Minnetarees, comes to find the White Mandan," said the Minnetaree.

"You bring a talk from the new trading-post down the river?" I eagerly inquired.

"Swift Horse brings a talk from the white men at the old fort," he replied, pointing in the direction of Fort Lisa, twelve miles distant.

"They say you will give me powder and tobacco," he added.

This was startling news, as no outfit had been sent to this post.

"Where is the talk?" I demanded.

"Swift Horse had it. Then it was gone," he explained.

"You lost the talk!" I cried in great disgust.

"It was under my robe. It is gone," was the imperturbable reply. "They said there would be tobacco and powder for Swift Horse."

"How have you earned any tobacco and powder?" I angrily demanded.

"Softly, softly, Mandan Ramsay. Now is the time for you to walk on the toes of your moccasins," Richardson called out from the doorway. "Make him talk."

"The white men are there," explained Swift Horse. "They are waiting to see you. One of them spoke in the Mandan tongue. He said that."

I got him inside the lodge and gave him half a carrot of tobacco and ten loads of powder, although in my heart I was cursing him most roundly for a lazy, careless scamp, entitled to receive nothing more pleasant than the big end of a lodge-pole over his shoulders.

"How many white men were there?" I asked him.

First he said four, and then he said eight. On my striving to pin him down he became either confused or sullen and would say nothing. Before I knew it he was out of the lodge and making off with his tobacco and powder.

"It must be Louis Lorimier or Reuben Lewis," I told Richarson.

Lewis was a brother of Meriwether Lewis, the explorer, and a partner in the Missouri Fur Company. He had had charge of different posts since joining the company in 1809. He had left the new post down the river for the Little Bighorn the day before I arrived.

But why should he be loitering at Fort Lisa; or why Lorimier, who had set out for the Wind (Bighorn) River trade? If Lorimier was in any pickle he could wait till I got around to seeing him; but I did not care to risk Mr. Lewis' displeasure.

Richardson and I talked it over, and the hunter believed that whoever was at the fort had written a report for me to forward or take back, to Mr. Manuel.

"But why either Lorimier or Lewis should be staying at the fort is a puzzler," said Richardson. "We can mighty soon find out what was in the writing by riding out there."

This very sensible suggestion was at once acted upon. Not finding Red Shield at the lodge, we left word for him with one of his red friends, and went to get our horses, which were grazing south of the village. We rode for the hill northwest of the village, the top of which was dotted with scaffolds, where slept the dead. From this elevation we paused to look back at Hidatsa, and found it to resemble a collection of gigantic beaver houses.

Richardson pointed out the resting-place of Elk's Tooth on the brow of the hill. He identified it by the gifts we had presented

to the ghost. These were tied to the supports of the high platform and heaped on the ground underneath. The new gun rested beside the closely wrapped body.

THE horses were willing for the work; we were in haste, the twelve miles were soon covered, and we were riding toward the square blockhouse. This fort was surrounded by a fifteen-foot palisade and was situated near the wild and romantic bluffs on the Missouri.

The Spring and Autumn floods from the high country of the interior had worn deep ravines through the bluffs, leaving formations of yellow clay to deceive the eye of the newcomer. At a distance they had the appearance of huge buildings, their perpendicular faces and regular lines suggesting the work of giants who had condescended to imitate the architecture of men.

"Always makes me feel that some mighty big medicine lives among 'em somewheres," muttered Richardson. "When the thunder gits to bumping and the lightning begins showing itself I always feel the Big Folks are there and having a fracas."

Around the fort was excellent grazing, although the bluffs were bare of vegetation. Early in the season many flowers brightened the landscape.

About four miles from the fort was a hill, a favorite spot of mine when I was last up the rive above the Knife. From this hill one can look down on the wonderful valley formed by a tributary of the Knife. My first view from this elevation had been on a soft June day, when the creek-bottom was carpeted with scarlet lilies, the strip of red extending on both sides of the silver stream as far as the eye can reach.

That June day and the fairy valley were in my mind when the hunter swore in his beard and complained:

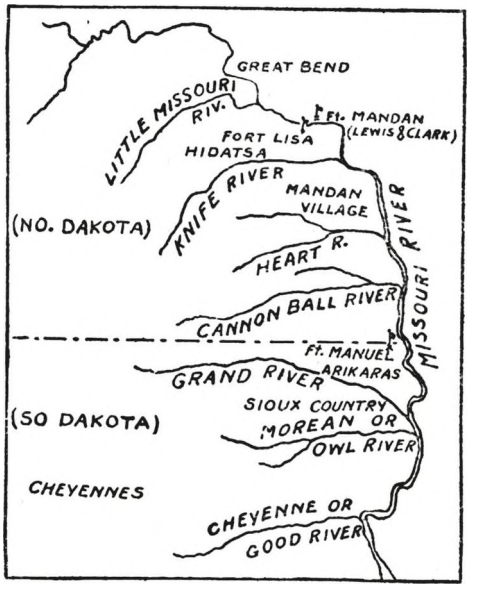
"Not a danged sign of smoke! Mandan Ramsay, this whole business hits me as being mighty queer. S'pose smallpox has struck the outfit?"

I did not know, and could only shake my head. I told him:

"What's queerer is the idea that an outfit could be at the fort and the Indians not be talking about it. Red Shield ought to have known if any of Mr. Manuel's men are there."

"They must 'a' passed by it for some distance, then turned back to it. They must 'a' reached the fort just before gitting hold of the Cheyenne man and sending the writing the critter went and lost."

This did not explain why either of the outfits had turned back. Had the Blackfeet or any other hostile tribe barred their



way, there must have been pursuit of them retreating. And there was no sign of life around or inside the stockade.

We rode alowly to the high fence, and even before we had dismounted I was sensing the emptiness of the place. The surrounding country, as well as the enclosed fort, impressed me as being devoid of life; such a feeling as one gets in the East when entering a house long abandoned and being ruined by the elements.

Entering, we closed the gate so our horses might not stray, and made for the fort. The doors of three outbuildings were ajar, left so by prowling Indians, who had ransacked the premises before the white men were out of sight down the river in the hope of finding some odds and ends left by our traders.

The strong door of the fort was closed, however, but not fastened. It opened into the big room occupying the entire lower floor. It was here we received furs and made our house-trade. On the second floor were the living-quarters of the *bourgeois*, the clerks, and several veteran engagés. The first-season men, as well as the

Indian hunters, lived in the outbuildings, or in skin lodges.

As we entered the big room mice scurried beneath the short counter where furs were spread and examined. A box that had contained salt was chewed to a pulp by porcupines.

"No outfit's been here," muttered Richardson, unconsciously lowering his voice.

"Swift Horse said they were at the fort. That would mean anywhere in the vicinity of the fort," I told him.

"As near as a Injun would come to it," he growled. "Let's look at the next floor. If any camp's near here we can raise it from there."

We mounted the upper floor and found it as empty as the first. The Indians had been through the place, and not a broken knife-blade or a flint was to be seen. We stepped to one of the small aperatures that served to ventilate and light the sleeping-quarters and stared out on the lonely country in search of a tent or a camp-fire smoke.

"Empty of life as Le Fou's head is empty of brains," grumbled the hunter.

I crossed to the opposite window. For half a mile down-stream the high, perpendicular bluffs line the Missouri, and the same formation continues for several miles above the fort; only up-stream the heights are set back a bit and afford room for grass and plant life.

For lonely grandeur I have never seen anything that can compare with these upper reaches of the mighty river. The turbid waste of waters, with only the roots of trees showing—like huge serpents—on its yellowish bosom, pile down between desolate, naked bluffs. Neither on the lowest bench nor on the heights are there trees or herbage.

Look as he will the traveler will see nothing of humanism, nothing that is amiable, such as we find along the Ohio and on the Eastern rivers. Never a sight of a settler's log cabin and his blue smoke testifying to the white man's love of home; and never a glimpse of a graceful bark canoe, for the river is not suited to the usage of such frail craft.

And yet it is the obstacles, the ruthlessness of the river, that made it possible for white men to ascend it to the Three Forks. Had it been a more friendly stream the upper tribes would have developed into a race of boatmen, and river travel would have been as hazardous as overland travel. The Sioux and other nations would have had no legends of terrible marine monsters to keep them from navigating the river, and the adeptness of the New York Mohawks as canoe men might have been achieved, and the river sealed to white men. Implacable and inexplorable as conditions were for the first white wayfarers, they made the lonely flood a sanctuary for traders. The high, fantastic cliffs of raw clay prevent adventurous boats from glimpsing the interior, and give, as a lasting impression that here is a river recently poured through a land that is too new to have covered its nakedness with grass and forests. This irresistible torrent is in no mood to slow its onward sweep by dallying in chains of lakes —delightful incidents of most waterways.

From his window on the land side Richardson called out:

"Thought I see some game back of that little hill. Guess I was mistook. Mandan Ramsay, what be we to think of that renegade Cheyenne man now? He was kicked out of his tribe years ago and come to take up with the Minnetarees. I'm quick to say I'm s'picious of the cuss."

"He is a liar. He played us a trick to get some tobacco and powder."

"He's a liar all right. We've proved that. But I'm powerfully minded to think there's a game bigger'n tobacker behind his lies. What give him the idee to tell us white men were here? If he wanted to tell a lie that we couldn't prove up ag'in' him by a hour's gallop, why didn't he say he was fetching a writing from Mr. Manuel?"

His suspicions annoyed me because they startled me.

"Your words don't make sense." I retorted. "If he had any other game there must be others in it. What sense in bringing us on a fool's errand up here if not for the sake of a present? One lie is as good as another in his way of thinking. He knew he could disappear before we proved him to be a liar. When we get back we'll find him gone and the Minnetarees will shake their heads and pretend they know nothing about it."

Then I too became suspicious and demanded:

"You mean this trip was planned to give them a chance to try some trick while we are gone? You believe that the Prophet, Le Fou and Balise will sneak back to the

village and make it so warm that we can't return there?"

By the way the hunter's eyes bulged at this suggestion I knew that he had not given that possibility a thought. He slowly exclaimed:

"Mandan Ramsay, you've got a better head than me. I didn't have wits enough to think of anything except what might happen to us two up here alone. If it's a trick to keep us out of the village it won't work. Red Shield is there. What was beginning to gnaw at my mind was something that's mebbe a heap worser'n that."

I had walked to his window while he was talking, and was gazing out on the rolling land while he stood with his back to the window.

"Horsemen!" I yelped, pointing to a band of men riding around a low hill and bearing down on the fort.

"Injuns!" he exclaimed. "They're coming —— bent! If they mean mischief we'd better make the gate fast."

"No use. They'd be over the pickets in a dozen places at once. If we're to make a fight we must make it in the fort. But a fight will be bad medicine. They can burn us out in no time. Don't you show any fight till I give the word. A good talk is better than bullets if they're Minnetarees."

"What if they're Sioux from the lower Mandan village?" he barked; and he began chanting *Les Chevelures*.

"Then we'll fight."

In another minute his keen eyes had told him the truth, and he was yelling—

"Minnetarees!"

"Then we'll talk. We'll meet them at the gate. We mustn't show any suspicion. We came up here to look over Mr. Manuel's fort."

He refused to take a very comfortable view of the situation and would only concede:

"Mebbe it's better to have them Minnetares then Sioux. Minnetarees hack a man up most mortal, but not till after they've killed him. Sioux do their hacking while a man's still got the kick of life in him."

We hurried from the building and ran to the gate and swung it open. Then the horsemen, some fifteen of them, were pouring through the opening and had surrounded us. Le Borgne was there with the patch over his eye, and it was his hand that snatched my rifle away while another warrior disarmed the hunter.

Three men on the outside of the savage circle threw back their robes and revealed themselves to be the Prophet, Le Fou, and Balise. The last two grinned at us most evilly.

"You'n' me, Mandan Ramsay, be two —— fools," muttered Richardson.

CHAPTER X

HAZARDOUS HOURS

A ROPE dropped over Richardson's shoulders. He offered resistance, but the noose pinned his arms to his sides. Thongs were attached to his wrists, and his hands were roughly yanked to the middle of his back and were secured there. Even after he was rendered helpless the Indians cuffed and mauled him. My own hands were tied in a similar manner, but as I submitted quietly the noose around my body was omitted.

Not until the two of us were trussed up did I discover the Cheyenne man, Swift Horse, who had lived with the Minnetarees ever since he was outlawed by his own people. He pressed forward to get a closer look at us and grinned maliciously. Richardson uttered a deep roar, dropped his shaggy head and butted the fellow in the chest, knocking him senseless.

The hunter was dragged back before he could stamp on our betrayer, but no number of medicine men could bring Swift Horse to his feet in a hurry. When he did manage to resume breathing he groaned and gasped at every breath and I suspected the impact of the hunter's hard head had caved in one or more ribs. The Minnetarees did not seem offended by Richardson's act; rather, they appeared to be enjoying the spectacle of Swift Horse dragging himself clear of the group and groaning dismally.

"I congratulate the hunter on his head," spoke up Balise.

"And I cuss him whenever I remember how he pulled you and that rat behind you out of the river," replied Richardson.

"*M'sieur* speaks of ancient things. I have paid that debt."

"If I'd pushed you into the river and then yanked you out you might call it paid," growled the hunter. "But holding a gun on a man and then not shooting him is a mighty queer way of saving a man's life.

Yet you'll pay the debt, Balise; pay it when you die."

Le Fou skipped in front of the Frenchman and snapped his fingers in the hunter's face. His eyes blazed with eagerness and cunning as he shrilly demanded:

"Come now, big pig of a hunter; what's this about Balise aiming a gun at you? It didn't happen on the boat. When? Where?"

Balise scowled. I could see he was uneasy, and that Le Fou knew nothing about the encounter on the Cannon Ball. Pleased with the opportunity to sow discord between the two I spoke up and explained:

"He met and talked with my friend while you and your red friends were camped on the Cannon Ball. The two met within a pistol-shot of your fires."

"Ha! Treachery!" snarled Le Fou, wheeling and glaring at Balise.

"The hunter was alone. I believed he was going to join his boat and that we could bag all of them," defended Balise.

And I believed the rascal spoke the truth, and that he had refrained from killing my friend in the hope of ultimately murdering an entire outfit. Le Fou attempted to explain the matter to the Indians, but his knowledge of their language was inadequate.

He turned to the hunter and commanded him to act as interpreter. Richardson answered him profanely. The half-wit screamed and struck him in the face. The next second a long leg had caught him, lifted him three feet from the ground and hurled him violently against Le Borgne. Had he been standing a few feet farther away the kick would have broken his bandy legs.

Le Borgne gave a grunt and swung his war-club over the hunter's head.

Tenskwatawa, who had been a silent spectator, stepped in front of the Blind and warned:

"The white men are not to be killed. When we made this trap we saw farther than the death of two men. If they die you will have two white men dead, but the American traders will still be at their new fort near the Arikara villages. If they live we will trade their lives to Lisa.

"What good to kill two Americans? The Sioux and other tribes have killed them, and still they come. But if we can clear the river of Americans while the great chief over the water is sending his warriors against them, we can keep the river empty of their long boats. If Lisa takes his men and goes down the river we will let these men go after Lisa passes the Platte.

"The Americans will turn around and come back to their post again," said Le Borgne.

"There will be no post; it will be burned. The season will be too late for them to build another. Once they leave the post the tribes will say they have been whipped and driven away. Before they can come back the Arikaras will carry a pipe against all Americans as they have done before. If they will not do that they will be struck in the head with Sioux axes. Let the Blind remember that these two men alive are worth more than these two men dead."

Le Borgne lowered his club and sullenly agreed—

"They shall live till Tenskwatawa has used them as medicine on Lisa."

The Shawnee medicine man imperturbably replied:

"If the Sioux kill them while they travel down the river after Lisa, no women will go out on the hills to mourn through the night. They are not Minnetaree men."

Thus did we learn that Le Borgne and his followers knew the Shawnee's identity. I wonder whether they had known it from the start, whether the Prophet had revealed himself after my visit to him. And thus from the Shawnee's talk did we learn that we were sentenced to death, even though Lisa should abandon his post in order to save our lives. For while we might be set free and told to follow after the *bourgeois* there would be small chance of our ever reaching the upper Arikara village. The Sioux would be credited with killing us, and the Minnetarees would insist that they had held to their bargain.

"Mandan Ramsay, we've been snared as easy as Injun boys catch snow-buntings with a horse-hair snare in Winter," sighed Richardson in great disgust. "And by such a simple trick! Our medicine must have been sleeping very sound when we listened to that Cheyenne dog's talk."

"We're still alive and in better condition than the Cheyenne man," I comforted.

With a snort of disgust he returned—

"Think I'm gitting white-livered?"

And to evidence his high spirits he lustily howled *Les Chevelures*, and thereby won a

gleam of approval from the Prophet's one eye.

Balise now spoke up and warned:

"These men may have left word where they were going. Red Shield and his friends may come to hunt for them. My medicine tells me we should take them away from this place."

Tenskwatawa haughtily assured him:

"The spirit eye of Tecumseh's brother sees all things. The white man need not be afraid. The white men will not be missed until night comes. Those who know they were coming here will wait for them to return. They will not ride after them until it is day.* When they come here they will find no signs. There has been no fighting here.

"We will go to the village and say the white men ran away. Red Shield will find his warriors leaving him. He will go back to the middle village to save his life.

"It will be said in all the lodges that the Americans' hearts grew weak. Then Shahaka and the other Mandans will take our flags. When the Sioux know that the Knife River villages will fight the Americans, they will join us. Then the Arikaras will fight by our side to save their villages. Then the red men will hunt far south and the Canadian traders will give them many guns and much powder. You can use guns in killing the buffalo just as the white men do. Now you save your powder and use bows and arrows. The Master of Life has said it."

Now the hunter and I understood the full scope of the simple trick. We were to be held hostages for Mr. Manuel's departure down the river. After he had abandoned his new post, if he could be induced to do so, we would be set free and would suffer no harm while in the Minnetaree village. But once we started south, either by boat or by horse, we would be trailed and killed by some of Le Borgne's warriors.

The Prophet had reasoned correctly in estimating the effect of Mr. Manuel's withdrawal on the red mind. His retirement would greatly weaken, if not destroy, his influence over the tribes. Even did he return with a larger force he would find the Indians set in their hostility; for no warrior will follow a weak man. So personal a matter as Balise's defeat in the rough-and-tumble fight had been sufficient to keep the Sioux from visiting the Minnetaree villages.

I did not find any comfort in the situation except in considering the possibility of an escape. Mr. Manuel was my friend and patron; but his business on the upper Missouri was of too much importance to be spoiled for consideration of a clerk and a hunter. He had lost hunters in seeking beaver; surely he would not give up all he had so laboriously secured on the chance of saving two lives. He risked his own life many times on each trip up the river when in pursuit of commercial profits. How much more would he risk with the welfare of the republic involved! No; from whatever angle I viewed our plight, I could see only the alternatives of death or escape.

"The poor —— fools think they can make Mr. Manuel skedaddle so's he can save our ha'r," sneered the hunter.

OUR horses were brought to us, and we were lifted into the saddles. After we and our captors had left the stockade Tenskwatawa, Le Borgne and two warriors remained inside to make sure there were no signs left of our visit. Leaving nothing to chance, the Prophet and the chief went to the fort and inspected it.

When they rejoined us Le Borgne ordered the men to walk and lead their horses. Several men were detailed to eliminate any signs left by the band in approaching and leaving the stockade. This task was much easier than it would have been earlier in the season before the sun had baked the ground.

We were curious to know whither we were being taken. I put the question to Balise, who was riding beside me.

"M'sieur Ramsay, I owe you a debt," he politely began. "You humiliated me in the Mandan village. When Sieur de—the man from Balise—is humfliated only blood will wipe out the shame. As affairs now stand with me in this accursed country I shall lose my self-respect altogether if I do not pay some of my debts."

"You will do evil. You have done evil all your life. That is understood. But is that any reason why you should not answer my question while waiting until you are free to murder us?"

"Death of my life! But *m'sieur* has a smooth tongue! A world of apologies. I await on *m'sieur*. I answer. There is a hill ahead, and beyond it is a camp."

And he pointed to the round hill four

*Tomorrow.

miles away where I had stood to gaze on the valley of scarlet lilies.

"We are to go behind that hill, M'sieur Ramsay, late of St. Louis."

"You speak as though I were already dead."

"You are as good as dead. I shall have to look sharp to even my score, or Le Borgne will get ahead of me. Understand this, if you will be so good; there is no escape for you and the hunter. Did your friends ride up this minute in great numbers you would be killed before my friends turned in flight."

"Mr. Manuel will never leave his new post even to save our lives."

"That is as it will be. He will be told that unless he starts on a certain day, one of you will be killed and his scalp and gun left at the fort. I believe the hunter will be the first as you have held high rank. Le Fou is impatient to have his way with the hunter.

"It is droll. The hunter saves Le Fou's life by pulling the two of us from the river. He risked his own life to save his slayer. It is humorous.

"After the hunter's scalp has been delivered another message will go to M'sieur Lisa. If it has no effect— Phut! Then another scalp! But pardon, *m'sieur;* why should we talk of disagreeables?"

I trust that outwardly I maintained my composure. The Frenchman was a bloody-minded devil. If the old town of Balise could tell his history from the time of the Spanish don what gruesome stories it would relate!

Behind me rode Richardson with an Indian on his right. Le Fou kept to the head of the procession, perched high like a monkey. We rode north and circled to the northwest until behind my hill. Several skin lodges were awaiting us, but on arriving, the hunter and I were pegged out under the sky while Le Fou shrilly told us the shelters were for our betters.

This was a preliminary hardship I had not counted on. The days were warm, but the nights were cold and already bringing a white frost. What with the tightness of the cords and our spread-eagle position, we were bound to suffer much.

After the kettles had cooked, the hunter and I were allowed to sit up and eat and smoke a pipe. Le Fou was less in evidence than when back in the village; nor did he attempt to carry a high hand with the Indians. There was no pushing and kicking and other indignities which he had indulged in at Hidatsa.

Somehow I received the impression that the half-wit was moody and downcast and inclined to worry. Possibly this was because Le Borgne and the Prophet conferred much together at one side and did not accord him the homage he had been used to, prior to the death of the tame crow.

He was still a *mahopa* man and would always be one. But the fiasco in Le Borgne's big hut when the pet crow was killed must have weakened his prestige as a medicine man.

Perhaps the two leaders had learned that he had counted his coups by the aid of poison. Blackbird, the famous Omaha chief, had climbed to power by the use of arsenic obtained from a trader, and the fact was well-known among all the Missouri tribes. With Elk's Tooth's death no longer a mystery, and the death of the crow proving that his medicine was likely to err, it would be natural for the red men to suspect that his powers were waning. Being a half-wit, he was safe from harm even though he played no tricks. It was obvious that the Prophet was more averse to his company than was Le Borgne; and he would eye Le Fou coldly when the latter ventured to intrude on the two men.

After the evening meal and before we had finished our smoke, I called out to Tenskwatawa and asked if we were not to have blankets.

"The Blind will give you blankets," he curtly replied as he passed on to his lodge.

Now Le Borgne was ever a man who was keenly jealous. For years he had been brutally autocratic not only in his own village but in the two lower villages. And few have been the Indian tribes that have submitted to the bloody caprices of such as he. For a chief is a chief only so long as he can maintain a following, and of actual power often has less than men elected to village offices in the East each year. Tenskwatawa stung Le Borgne's pride when he unthinkingly spoke for him; the Blind would have resented it even in the great Tecumseh.

Le Borgne stalked over to us, his mouth stretched in an ominous grin. With a poor simulation of courtesy in his voice he asked—

"The white men think they will sleep cold?"

Both of us knew he was up to some deviltry; I heard the hunter draw a deep breath as he leaned forward to watch the man.

"It will be a cold night for those who sleep without blankets," I replied.

His one eye wandered to the closed flap of Tenskwatawa's lodge, and he murmured—

"There is a medicine that makes men sleep well."

"Watch out, Mandan! He's going to use his club!" hissed the hunter.

"The ground will be white before the sun comes back," continued Le Borgne. "But the white men will not feel cold. They will sleep so strong their heads will feel bad when they open their eyes."

The warriors crowded closer with animal eagerness. The chief as yet had made no hostile gesture.

"Red medicine is not for white men," I told him.

"The Blind's medicine can kill or put to sleep red men or white men. It is not time for the white men to die, so they shall have a little of the strong medicine and sleep."

And, throwing off the mask, he lifted the big war-club to tap me over the head.

I swerved my body to one side just as Richardson, pinioned only by his ankles, sounded a tremendous roar, threw himself forward and clutched the chief by the legs before the latter could guess his purpose. The club fell between the hunter and me, and the next moment the chief's heels were in the air and he was on his back. Richardson was on top of him by the time he struck the ground; and there followed a struggle the like of which for ferocity I had never before witnessed.

Both were big men and wonderfully muscled. Le Borgne fought with native cunning, and his naked, greasy body made it difficult for the hunter to maintain a hold. For a bit Richardson held him pinned down by sheer bulk and his bull-like strength. Then the Indian was squirming from beneath his opponent, and they began whirling over and over on the ground. When they reached the length of the ankle cords the pegs came out and the hunter was free. The chief was undermost again, but managed to draw up his knees and throw the hunter to one side.

Before he could follow up his advantage Richardson was piling back on top of him. Le Borgne darted a hand to his breechclout girdle in search of a knife, and I yelled a warning to my friend. The hunter seized his opponent by the ears and began banging his head on the ground.

It was terrible punishment for any human being to receive, but Le Borgne made never a sound and continued searching his girdle. The knife was wedged in the scabbard, and it was necessary to pinch up the point of the leather case before a hold could be had on the handle. I saw the handle protrude and the strong fingers close about it.

"The knife! For God's sake, the knife!" I screamed.

Instantly the hunter released his hold on the long hair, darted his left hand down and gripped the chief's wrist. One of the warriors stole toward the two, his bare knife drawn back. I believed that the hunter's life was about to end and could not utter a sound to warn him. If he released the chief's wrist to meet the new peril the chief would stab him to death with one lunge. It seemed an age that I fought to get back my voice, whereas it was a matter of two or three seconds.

Suddenly Balise bustled forward and seemingly by accident tripped up the assassin. Le Borgne jerked up his head and butted the hunter in the face, causing the blood to pour from his nose. Richardson drew back his mighty fist and delivered a smashing blow in the chief's face.

Tenskwatawa like a tornado came plunging through the excited onlookers, hurling them aside and with unexpected strength dragged the combatants apart.

"What would you do?" he thundered, holding Le Borgne away from his victim, whom he kicked beside me with one backward swing of his foot. "Is the Master of Life to save red children who go against his will?"

"That white man will die!" panted Le Borgne, his brutal face convulsed with rage.

His one eye was beginning to close as a result of the mighty blow.

"He shall die!"

"He is yours to kill—but not now," harshly retorted Tenskwatawa, beginning to lead, or force, him farther away from us. The Shawnee's bearing was so terrifically angry that it overawed all but Le Borgne.

"The Master of Life has told me the Blind shall rule over many villages; but this can not be if he kills a white prisoner before the white man's time has come. Kill this man now and you will be driven out of your village and the Big Knives will name Red Shield chief in your place. If you wait until the trader Lisa goes down the river you can kill your white man. But kill now and you will be like the Cheyenne man—a man without a tribe."

And as he talked he was working Le Borgne away from us until they were well outside the glaring circle. As he lowered his voice and added arguments to his warning the chief gradually relaxed, stumbled to his skin lodge—his swollen eye making it difficult for him to see—plunged through the opening and closed the flap.

Tenskwatawa stood with folded arms and stared at the warriors until they began to give ground and fall back from us. Not deigning to glance at us, he started for his lodge and contented himself with saying—

"The Blind says the white men are to be tied fast to the ground."

Nor did any one think to bring us blankets; or if any one did he thought better of it, and we had to reconcile ourselves to a cold night. Richardson was so hot with rage that it would require time for him to cool off. He kept babbling:

"Turn me loose ag'in' him! Give him a knife and club. I'll use my bare hands and tear his head from his shoulders! Turn me loose ag'in' him!"

"*M'sieur* is excited," spoke up Balise, now standing by us and smoking his pipe as he looked us over.

As Richardson ceased his mad clamor the Frenchman glanced about to make sure Le Fou was out of hearing, and whispered—

"*M'sieur* the hunter, there is no longer any question as to my paying my debts."

Richardson glared at him blankly. I spoke up and explained about the Indian and the knife and told my friend the Frenchman had saved his life by tripping the wretch. The hunter grunted unintelligibly and said:

"We're quits, Balise. That score is wiped off the slate."

"If it had been M'sieur Ramsay the warrior would not have lost his knife," Balise was frank enough to add.

"Never mind. We're quits," growled Richardson.

"I will only say that we are through saving each other's lives."

With that he left us.

THE darkness came, the stars came, and the nipping frost chilled us to the marrow. With our arms and legs stretched at full length and pegged to the ground it was impossible to encourage circulation by twisting about.

The Indians retired to their lodges. Two men were left to stand guard over us; and these, enveloped in heavy robes, huddled over a small fire and talked in undertones as they watched us.

Le Fou and Balise were in the same lodge, and I could hear the querulous voice of the half-wit complaining of his companion. Balise's replies were brief and low-spoken. Le Fou gave loose rein to his anger, and his voice rang out in the accusation:

"Pig! I saw you make that man fall and lose his knife!"

I could not catch Balise's response, but as Le Fou subsided I assumed he had been placated.

"Bad blood between them," I murmured to Richardson.

He whispered back:

"Mandan Ramsay, that was a great tussle. In another minute I'd 'a' had his throat open with my bare hooks. Sixty seconds more and I'd 'a' killed him——"

"And killed both of us," I interrupted.

Then penitently I told him:

"You saved me from a clubbing, Richardson. You're a rare man to share trouble with."

He chuckled sheepishly, his anger dissipated apparently, and he muttered:

"Shucks! I was glad of the fracas. I'm too full-blooded. Bump on the nose makes me feel more wolfish. S'pose we don't talk about it. S'pose we try to git a little sleep."

For once I was asleep ahead of the hunter. Doubtless he kept awake to live over the fight. It was his voice that aroused me from a dream wherein I was buried in ice.

"Mandan Ramsay," he softly called, "wake up!"

"I am awake."

"A horseman comes at a gallop."

"Red Shield?"

"I said a horseman. The Shield wouldn't ride here alone and at night."

Our low talk disturbed the Indians at the tiny fire. They threw aside their robes and

catlike advanced to make sure we had not released ourselves. As they stood and stared down on us they heard what Richardson had caught with his ear pressed to the ground—the rapid thudding of hoofs. One of them darted to Le Borgne's lodge and without entering called out:

"O the Blind! A man rides hard to find this camp!"

For a few moments the silence of the camp continued after the guard had sounded the alarm. Then the lodges began disgorging their inmates; Le Borgne and Tenskwatawa being the first to appear. Le Fou and Balise were the last. Each warrior brought his weapons.

Le Borgne gave an order, and two men ran to their horses and leaped on their bare backs and ran them up the hill. Six men mounted and galloped around the south shoulder of the hill. Tenskwatawa spoke in a low voice to Le Borgne, and the latter ordered the guards to drag us into the Prophet's lodge and to obliterate any signs which would show we had been held captives.

As the guards finished tying us inside the lodge Le Borgne appeared in the entrance and warned:

"If the white men call out they will die where they are. Make no noise. The man on the horse will be told this is the medicine lodge of Medicine Crow. If a noise is heard he will think it is a ghost talking; but the white men will pay for the noise with their lives."

He withdrew, and we were alone. Richardson whispered:

"It ain't the Shield. It's some messenger from the village who knows where Le Borgne is camping. He comes at a gallop in the night. It's some mighty big news."

After a short wait we heard the Indians south of the hill returning. They were yelping and yapping, but I could not tell whether they were lamenting or rejoicing. As they rode into the camp I heard one of them announce—

"Running Buffalo brings a big talk."

Bundles of dry grass were tossed on the fire as was evidenced by the light beating against the closed flap of the lodge and seeping beneath it.

"Let the Buffalo speak. Our ears are ready," said Le Borgne. "It must be a very big talk to come in the night."

The messenger, feeling the importance of his mission, began in a loud voice:

"They say there has been a very big fight near the lower Mandan village. They say the Sioux waited by the bluffs and sang their war-songs and shook their war-clubs and lances. They say Shahaka and Little Crow went out to watch their people drive the Sioux away. They say eleven Sioux were killed."

The messenger paused as if to get his breath, and there came a low murmuring from his auditors. The messenger then proceeded direct to his climax, and my heart jumped as he added—

"They say Shahaka and Little Crow were killed and three Mandans were hurt."

For nearly half a minute the camp was silent on hearing this astounding announcement; then came a babel of low cries. Tenskwatawa was impatient for details and requested of the Blind:

"Have the man tell us what this talk means. How did the fight begin? Why did they fight?"

Without waiting to be urged by his chief the Buffalo replied:

"They say the Sioux in the village finished trading for corn and rode away behind the bluffs. They say one of their horses broke loose and tried to get back to the village and was seen by some of the young men, who rode out to catch it, as the peace was ended. They say more Sioux came up and drove the young men back to the village and then rode back by the bluffs and sang their songs and called on the Mandans to bring them a fight. They say the Mandans went out to drive them away, and Shahaka and Little Crow were killed while watching their men driving the Sioux along the bluffs."

This was momentuous news. Little Crow was second chief of the lower village, a man of influence, and the owner of a Lewis and Clark medal. This man had wished to return with the expedition to the States when it reached the Mandan villages on its return from the Pacific and pay a visit to President Jefferson. But, being jealous of Shahaka, the first chief, he renounced his desire and refused to accept a flag from Captain Clark. Before the expedition quit the village, however, he was induced to become reconciled to Shahaka, and agreed to that chief's making the long and hazardous trip which was to keep him from his people for three years. The death of these two men

would be a heavy blow to Mr. Manuel's plans, and I could only hope the messenger was mistaken.

The camp was thrown into much confusion, and for a time Le Borgne was all for riding post haste back to his village. The Prophet remained calm and collected and repeatedly urged him to wait until morning.

"If the Sioux are on the war-path they will come to my village. The Blind must be there to meet them and swing his big club," the chief insisted.

As it was not seemly for the two to dispute in the presence of the warriors the Prophet led him to one side, closer to our lodge, and argued with him, saying:

"The Sioux lost many men. They have run away by this time. The Sioux will fight for the big chief over the water. The Mandans must smoke a pipe with the Sioux. If the Sioux have done this bad thing to the Mandans they must cover the dead with many presents.

"Shahaka and Little Crow show the flag of the Big Knives. It is well they are ghosts. But the Mandans and Minnetarees are like brothers, and it is good that many gifts pass under the stem to pay for the death of the two chiefs.

"The Mandans of the two lower villages are now without leaders. They will follow the Blind or Red Shield. Let their dead be covered deep with presents and a peace pipe sent to the Sioux. Then they will follow the Blind, and only a few fighting-men in the middle village will follow Red Shield. The death of these two men, who were friends to the Big Knives, will give two more villages for the Blind to lead."

Le Borgne was an astute rascal, as crafty as he was brutal. He had no love for Shahaka and Little Crow, but he did love a fight. The unimpassioned voice of Tenskwatawa and the logic of his counsel began to take effect. I could picture the fierce face of the chief twisted in a broad grin as he weighed the advantages he might find in this fight along the bluffs below the big growth and out of sight of the village. He replied:

"Tenskwatawa's words are good. But how do I know what my people are doing? The Blind should be in his lodge."

The Prophet further advised:

"There is much time. Give the Buffalo a fresh horse. Let him kill it in reaching the village. Let him tell another warrior to ride out to us and tell us what the village is doing. Let him tell that man to be like a fox and leave without being seen by Red Shield or his friends.

"If the second man brings the same talk and says the village needs its chief, we will ride back and stop the noise. The young men must not steal away to chase the Sioux.

"The Blind will be chief over many villages, says the Master of Life. Already two more villages come to him. Next comes the village of Red Shield. And so it shall be if the Mandans and the Sioux smoke peace tobacco together.

"The Master of Life tells me the Sioux will bring a pipe to the Mandans and gifts for the dead. They will come with a flag of the great chief over the water, and the flag of the Big Knives will drop from Shahaka's lodge. Then many gifts will come to the Blind from the English. The great Tecumseh will be head-chief of all the upper-Mississippi tribes; the Blind will be head chief of many upper-Missouri tribes. He will be leader of the Arikaras, who will look to him to keep Sioux axes out of their heads. And the Sioux will be afraid of him."

This prophecy of conquest bit deep into the ambitious mind of Le Borgne. That Tenskwatawa had increased his grip on the man was proven by Le Borgne's egotistical reply:

"The Blind is a mighty chief and warrior. Tecumseh will be glad to call him brother. We will wait for another talk. The Mandans are like cows with calves, hunted by wolves when no bulls are near to drive the wolves away. The Blind is a strong bull. He will hold his shield in front of them and they will be glad to fight behind him."

THEY returned to the group around the fire, and we heard the messenger, freshly mounted, ride away for the Knife; and by degrees the camp quieted down. Tenskwatawa did not return to his lodge, and, I presume, spent the night before the fire, trying to read his destiny in the coals.

In this unexpected fashion were we provided with a lodging. Shahaka's death might mean an alliance of the Mandans and Minnetarees with the British, but this night it had furnished us with protection against the white frost.

The hunter prosaically fell asleep, unmindful of the possible far-reaching effects of the senseless red skirmish. I remained awake for some time, wondering how long it would be before Mr. Manuel learned the news and torturing my mind in endeavoring to hit upon some scheme for getting word to him. Then I slept soundly until I was awakened in the morning.

After being unceremoniously dragged into the sunlight our ankles were pegged down and our hands were untied and we were permitted to rest our aching bones by sitting up to eat. While we were being served with meat and water Balise sauntered over to us, and I asked him if the news were true.

"*M'sieur*, Shahaka and Little Crow are dead. I am frank to say I rejoice that Shahaka is dead. He had no backbone. He was not fit to rule."

"Will Le Borgne lead his men against the Sioux?"

He shrugged his shoulders and with a short laugh replied:

"Death of my life! How should I know? It is Le Fou who is *mahopa*, not the man from Balise. Le Borgne does not see much beyond the reach of his war-club. While he listens to Tenskwatawa he thinks what the Shawnee thinks. When the Shawnee is not by his side he does not know what to think. One minute he is glad; the next minute he is wishing to fight the Sioux. The Shawnee is trying to hold him in control so that the original program concerning *m'sieur* and the big hunter may be carried out.

"The second messenger arrived while *messieurs* slept. He says the village waits for Le Borgne to come and raise a big war-party. The Shawnee keeps him here so he will not take the path."

"He will do as Tenskwatawa says," I remarked.

"Then *m'sieur* and his friend surely die. And they die all the quicker if he refuses to be led by the Shawnee. Remember, *m'sieur*, you and your big friend are as good as dead."

I disregarded his animosity and repeated my belief in Tenskwatawa's influence. Balise lightly replied:

"Who knows which way the red mind will turn? Or how long the Shawnee can hold him in his village? The Shawnee must have the help of the Sioux. He seeks the help of the Minnetarees, but the need of the Sioux comes first."

"If Le Borgne does not take a path against the Sioux his own people will say he is afraid and will ask Red Shield to lead them."

This struck him as being humorous; he chuckled softly and reminded me:

"Then it will be the Shield who will be treading on M'sieur Lisa's toes. The *bourgeois* is as anxious to patch up a peace between the Sioux and the Minnetarees as is the Shawnee. The Shawnee has told Le Borgne not to worry over losing favor with his people as the Shield will keep very still. The Shawnee says the Shield plans to smoke peace tobacco with the Sioux and help the *bourgeois* keep the Sioux from fighting the Americans.

"Is it not a droll situation? And, alas, is not my lot cast in a hard place? Had I kept with the Sioux band I would be in excellent temper now; for the Sioux can do anything and yet be forgiven. Both Great Britain and America are eager to give them absolution. If they had my mind to direct them they could name and receive a high price, deal with both sides and cheat both."

He was much like his old self, much like the Balise of the keelboat. The death of the two Mandan chiefs and the resulting uneasiness among our captors had acted as a tonic on him. He was quick to find an advantage in other people's troubles and to use them as a ladder in climbing within reach of some new prize. With Tenskwatawa busily occupied in holding Le Borgne back from a red path, and with the latter torn between dreams of empire and lust for fighting, the Frenchman remained cool and unprejudiced, thinking entirely of personal gain and waiting to decide which way he should jump.

For once Le Fou was not on his mind, and the half-wit was quick to sense this high spirit in his former patron. Standing back by the lodges, he watched Balise closely while we talked. He was observing the Frenchman's wild jauntiness, the head held high as it entertained ambitious schemes.

It was plain to see that Le Fou believed himself to be ignored by the crowding events. Forthwith he proceeded to bring himself to the Indians' attention. His first move was to stalk Balise.

There was something humorous and very much that was deadly in his way of stealing

after the Frenchman. He was not quite certain how he should proceed, and yet he was determined to assert his superiority as a *mahopa* man.

The Indians readily made room for him, with the exception of Tenskwatawa and Le Borgne, who were too deeply engaged in conferring and arguing to give him much heed. When he intruded upon them they patiently waited for him to have done with his mummery and seek an audience elsewhere. He kept some rods from Balise, and only halted to indulge in eccentric antics when Balise halted.

"He'll be knifing the Frenchman yet," muttered Richardson hopefully.

The hunter had lost none of the little drama slowly working itself out.

"He may kill him, but it won't be with a knife," I corrected.

In the middle of the forenoon Le Fou suddenly dropped out of sight, and we wondered where he had gone and what new trick he was up to. When he returned he was wearing no robe and had changed the pattern of the paint on his scrawny figure and face. He had washed out the eyes and had replaced them with small, blood-red knives cunningly drawn. There was a tiny knife on each sallow cheek and one extending across his forehead. One long knife had the handle at the throat and the point covering the midriff. On each side of this central decoration radiated smaller knives, all pointing inward, and from the tip of each dripped a few drops of blood.

The effect was very ghastly and made a deep impression on the savages. Some accepted the red knives to presage a war against the Sioux. Le Fou was proud of the attention he was exacting, and he strutted among them, for the first time since our capture resuming his misbehavior toward them. We noticed, however, that his temerity did not extend to offering any insult to the Frenchman. The latter, too, was now keeping an eye on his shadow, as if expecting some piece of viciousness.

This by-play was interrupted by the return of a scout, who reported that Red Shield and a dozen men were at the fort. Richardson and I were aroused to a fresh pitch of excitement. The tiny fire was throwing off no smoke, yet it was killed. Men were sent to the top of the hill to spy on our friends. These soon returned, reporting that Shield and his men were galloping back to the village. The hunter and I were not disappointed at this news, for we both believed that did the Shield make for the back of the hill we would be slain and our bodies concealed.

With this tension removed Le Fou renewed his demands for attention and commenced prancing about the camp in an ungainly dance, shrilly singing an obscene song. At regular intervals he would pause to proclaim the power of his medicine. He was *mahopa*, and it was the power of his medicine that had blinded Red Shield and sent him back to Hidatsa.

He soon worked himself into a frenzy and turned his prancing steps toward Balise. The Frenchman eyed him sullenly. When their eyes met, those of Balise continued staring boldly. This was a challenge. Le Fou accepted it, and demanded—

"Pig, why do you not interpret my medicine words to the Indians?"

"If you are medicine you can make them understand," Balise told him.

"Pig, you are planning mischief against these good red men. I can tell."

"Empty-headed fool, you can tell them nothing. So your guesswork does you no good. They do not understand your words. You can tell them nothing," jeered the Frenchman.

"Interpret my words!" yelled Le Fou, now losing what few wits he had.

Balise laughed at him. Le Borgne and Tenskwatawa paused in their earnest talk to stare in surprize at the spectacle of the *mahopa* man being defied by his white companion.

"What does the child of Itsikamahidis* want?" Le Borgne demanded.

"He is losing his power. His medicine got away from him and killed the medicine crow. Now it is making him say foolish things. An evil spirit has crawled into his mind and is eating it," Balise explained.

"He is *mahopa*," muttered Le Borgne.

Le Fou knew he was being derided, if not being misrepresented; and, bending over the hunter, he demanded—

"What does he say?"

"He says you're a —— fool. Ain't got and never had any medicine," promptly replied Richardson.

"Curse you, *m'sieur!*" wrathfully exploded Balise, turning upon us.

But before he could advance Le Fou

*The First Made.

sounded a chattering yell and was attempting to rake his face with his long nails. Sacrilege was instantly committed. There was not a red man present who would have done what Balise did, not even Tenskwatawa. For the Frenchman allowed his pent-up rage free rein, and smacked his palm against the half-wit's face and knocked him down. The onlookers rushed forward and laid violent hands on Balise. Richardson taunted him:

"You've got less sense than the fool. You've lambasted a *mahopa* man."

Le Borgne plunged into the excited group in time to save the Frenchman from being knifed.

"Tie him up and put him with the other white men," he ordered.

Nor could Tenskwatawa overlook a blow to one he had used, although there was a change in his bearing toward Le Fou ever since the tame crow ate the poisoned meat. I have since wondered if the Prophet was not a trifle jealous of Le Fou when he beheld the *mahopa* man's reputation rapidly spreading. I am inclined to think Tenskwatawa secretly preferred the subtle mind of Balise, only there was no getting away from the fact that Le Fou was *mahopa*. So the Shawnee waited until Le Borgne had spoken and then gravely endorsed:

"He is only a white man. The *mahopa* man he struck is a red man. His blood has been washed red. He speaks for the Master of Life when he dreams."

"He speaks lies!" cried Balise. "He said he would name the White Mandan in Le Borgne's lodge, and his medicine killed the crow before he could call the name."

With a dramatic sweep of his hand Tenskwatawa pointed at Balise and declared:

"This man has struck a *mahopa* man. It is good that he be held a prisoner here while we go to the village and see what the Shield is doing."

By this time the Frenchman was tied, ankles and wrists, and thrown on the ground between the hunter and me. Le Fou chattered and squeaked horrible threats, but did not come near us.

"Death of my life, but it was worth it to see the rat wince!" muttered Balise. "Better death than to dance attendance on that creature."

"I figger you're going to have your wish," said Richardson.

"I shall be in brave company when I go."

I was remembering his bloody threats, and I reminded him—

"Not much chance of you getting ahead of Le Borgne in wiping out the score between us."

"That was a private quarrel," he promptly retorted. "Men about to fight a duel may forget their differences and join together in repulsing a common foe. We are facing a common danger. We will stand by each other. Our quarrel can wait. It may be that what we must go through together will make us forget that quarrel."

Richardson was not interested in anything which did not pertain to our common danger. He asked—

"Where will they leave us while they are gone to town?"

"Not here," answered the Frenchman. "It's too open. *Messieurs*, from now on your cause is mine."

"You're quick to change flags," was my skeptical rejoinder.

"Bah! I have no flag. I fight under the flag which serves me best. Now I am out of favor with the one-eyed men I must look for a new standard to follow. I will fight for America."

"You came up the river to fight for the English."

"I was well paid for doing it. That is, I would have been well paid if the fool hadn't tipped over the fat. I will make a good fight for America if we can escape from this trap."

"What'll Le Borgne and Tenskwatawa do next?" asked the hunter.

"Return to the village and deny any knowledge of you two. They will say they were hunting buffaloes. They will suggest you two were afraid and ran away, leaving your goods. Le Borgne is to discourage the young men from following the Shield against the Sioux while the Shawnee will carry a Minnetaree pipe to the Sioux and, after smoking, induce them to cover the dead Mandans and smoke a pipe with Shahaka's people. While this is being done a third man will carry a talk to M'sieur Lisa, telling him he must go down the river at once or find your scalps at the gate of his new post.

"If they can make him take to his boats, even if he goes only as far as the Arikara villages, they will win. The Sioux will believe he is weak of heart. The Arikara also

will believe that, and they'll not be anxious to harbor a man who is weak and whom the Sioux have driven from his fort. If Lisa goes to them they will push him from their village and make peace with the Sioux.

"Tenskwatawa will get the credit of driving the white men down-river. Then he will swing them all to the side of the British. It will be too late for Le Borgne to balk. He can go along or stay behind; but with the Mandans, Sioux and Arikaras joining hands against the Americans the Minnetarees must do likewise or find themselves in the same position the Arikaras are in today. It is very simple and very clever."

I mulled over his words and found them logical on the surface. The situation was most peculiar. Le Borgne, Tenskwatawa, Red Shield and Mr. Manuel were all anxious to smoke peace tobacco with the Sioux and induce that nation to cease warring on the Arikara, Minnetaree, and Mandan villages. This accomplished, the common purpose split into two opposing plans. The Minnetaree chief and the Shawnee were working to unite the tribes against the United States; Red Shield and my employer would unite them against Great Britain. I was convinced that the man who induced the Sioux to receive pipes from the three tribes would win them to his flag. I could only hope that Mr. Manuel was well forward with his undertaking.

THE lodges were struck and hidden behind an outcropping of rock at the foot of the hill, for Le Borgne would carry out the pretense of having received news of the fight while engaged in hunting and of having ridden without stop back to the village. The horses were brought up by the horse-guard, and all was made ready for an immediate departure.

Six warriors separated from the band and came and stood by us. Le Fou also came to gloat over us. His venom was chiefly directed at Balise, and he taunted:

"Pig, I am looking at you for the last time. They take you somewhere to kill you, where the blood-marks won't show."

He spat at us and kicked the Frenchman in the side. The latter's threat was more eloquent because it was delivered by his eyes.

Le Fou scuttled back to his horse and mounted. Without a word or a glance for us Le Borgne and Tenskwatawa started for the Knife, the warriors streaming along behind them. The horses were brought in, and our feet were released so we could be boosted in the saddles. Once we were mounted, thongs were secured to our ankles to make us fast to our horses. With two men to watch each prisoner the Indians started in a northerly direction.

I asked the man on my right, Big Kettle by name, where he was taking us. He did not answer for a few moments, then he grunted:

"A hole in the rocks. Near Makadistati."

Now Makadistati, or the House of the Infants, was a cave near the Knife and within a few miles of the village, and was one of the two sacred places of the Minnetarees. It was from this House that infants came to be born to Minnetaree women. A mother has shown me marks on a babe, caused by too tight swaddling, and told me they resulted from kicks bestowed by other inmates of the House when they drove the babe from its underground spirit home to be born.

I was surprized that our destination should be so near the medcine cave; for childless parents went there and left offerings in the hope of promoting parenthood. Second thought told me it was an exceedingly clever scheme for keeping us concealed. Only those who wished for children came to consult the oracle, and preliminary to their coming they underwent a fast. Should they by accident discover any signs of our presence and so report back to the village, they would be set down as victims of medicine dreams prompted by hunger and weakness.

"They're —— clever!" exclaimed the hunter, speaking my thoughts.

"If they hold to this course and make for the place in a long circle we must try to escape before we reach the cave," said Balise. "We will be ready when they stop to eat, or rest——"

One of his guard struck him over the mouth, bringing the blood. The hunter took warning and ceased all attempts at conversation. Balise grinned ferociously at the Minnetaree and licked his split lips. I knew what he was promising the fellow.

A mile from our camp and we were straightening out on a direct course, thereby narrowing our opportunities of escaping before we reached the rocks. We dipped down into my valley of scarlet lilies, crossed

the shallow stream, entered the broken country to the south of it, and turned and rode toward the Knife. We covered four or five miles on the new course before we came to a halt.

Our ankles were unfastened, and we were pulled to the ground like so many packs of peltry and told to remain quiet. Two of the Indians, scouting among the rocks at the base of a hundred-foot cliff, soon returned and we were helped to stand. They led us and the horses among the rocks until we came to the entrance of a cave. Two of the men swung to the right with the horses, and the others conducted us into the cave.

Robes were brought in for us to lie on. For food they had brought a large quantity of dried meat.

The cave was low at the opening, but farther back it opened out into a room some forty or fifty feet square. Water was assured by the tiny rivulet trickling along the west wall. This stream disappeared before reaching the outside wall and must find its way to the small tributary of the Knife through some underground passage.

We were seated on the robes some distance apart from one another and were allowed to sit up. Besides having our ankles tied and our wrists tied behind us, each had a long length of rawhide fastened around the waist with the end secured to a lance thrust deep into a crevice in the wall. As our eyes grew accustomed to the meager light I observed that Balise was closer to the wall than either the hunter or I.

I risked a blow by calling out to him—

"A piece of sharp rock should do the trick."

"Be hopeful, *m'sieur*. I am sitting on one."

Our captors did not resent this exchange and fell to talking among themselves. The three of us concentrated on some scheme which would permit us to make a dash for liberty. After an hour of this wearisome waiting three of the men arose and glided from the cave. Balise scraped a foot to attract my attention; then drew himself on his side and pretended to be very sleepy. Like a man talking in his sleep he drowsily muttered:

"Almost any time. It is very sharp."

The hunter and I shifted our positions and affected sleepiness; but feel about as I would behind me with my benumbed fingers, I could not locate any bit of outcropping rock with an edge. The three guards changed their position to one closer to the opening. I saw Balise turn on his back and bridge on his neck and heels.

He had barely made the essay before he was limp and breathing heavily, and one of the Minnetarees was gliding back to inspect our bonds. He first examined Richardson and me and then passed on to the Frenchman. I held my breath, but Balise had not proceeded far enough to leave any signs. To my great relief the fellow rejoined his companions at the entrance, and the three gave us no further attention.

Balise immediately resumed his efforts. I cut my wrists in a vain attempt to loosen the rawhide. Finally convinced that I could not free myself but must wait for one of my fellow prisoners to release me, I fell to watching the guards crouching near the mouth of the cave. Between them and me were our rifles and some of their own wargear piled on a blanket. If Balise could reach that blanket without being discovered he might account for perhaps two of them. But did one escape from the cave he would soon bring back the other three.

I darted a glance at the Frenchman. He was in the act of withdrawing his cramped hands from behind his back. My hopes grew strong when I saw a hand dart inside the Spanish coat and draw out a short skinning-knife. I held my breath when a guard turned his head and stared steadily at us. The suspense lasted only half a dozen seconds, for the fellow's eyes were blurred by the sunlight. Yet something had aroused his suspicions, and he might have come back to inspect us had not a voice crooning a song shifted his watchfulness to the outside world.

A Minnetaree woman, newly married, was passing the cave on her way to the House of the Infants, to invoke the Makadistati to send her a son within the year. She would become silent and stealthy when she got close to the medicine cave, and she would wait until near sunset before depositing her tokens.

From their elevated position the guards peered down on her, and Big Kettle said:

"It is the woman of Long Lance. The Lance was foolish to take her as a wife; her sisters have borne few children, all girls."

Another said:

"Broken Bow took the first sister, but

would not take the others because his woman gave him no children except a girl. The girl died when she was only a few sleeps old."

"The Lance is young. He wanted a woman. He will wish he had waited and found one that does not need to go to Makadistai," grunted the third.

A man marrying a Minnetaree girl has claim to her sisters as they grow up unless they refuse to become his wives through preference for another man. When a man takes as a second wife one who is not related to the first he invariably finds himself in much domestic trouble until one of his spouses returns to her people. A woman is not "bought" regardless of her inclination, as some traders have represented; and polygamy as practised recognizes the rights of the woman to refuse or accept a marriage offer. As I listened to the song and the guards' comments I knew that the singer must be comely, else she and her sisters would not be sought after Broken Bow had refused to take more of the family into his lodge.

THEN Balise came up on his feet with the stealth of a cat, and with one noiseless spring reached the hunter and slashed his wrists and ankle bonds. I heard no sound, not even the bite of the knife through the tough rawhide, but the guards, much farther away, jerked their heads about as if a gun had exploded. They had filled their eyes with sunlight, however, and for a few moments they were nonplused to make out just what was happening.

Balise dropped the knife for Richardson to use on his waist thong and leaped for the rifles. The warriors lifted a howl and, armed only with clubs and knives, rushed toward us. The hunter was free, but paused only long enough to free my feet before jumping forward to reenforce the Frenchman.

Balise snatched up a rifle, and it snapped harmlessly. He had time to pick up another and kill one of the guards, and then went down with a man on top of him. Richardson grappled with the remaining guard. I struggled to my feet and yelled for my companions to work back within reach of my long legs. For half a minute the four combatants were a confused mass, rolling from side to side, kicking and straining.

The two pairs came to their feet. Balise was using all his brutal tricks, but his adversary was meeting him with the savagery of a wild animal. The Frenchman was hampered in that he had no weapon and must keep his man from using a knife.

"Work back here, Balise!" I shouted as I strained against the tether around my waist in an attempt to get within reach of the couple.

This time he heard me and sensed my purpose—began manuvering to get his foe closer to mé. Richardson appeared to be fairly matched, his man being Big Kettle. He was still clutching the short knife, but Big Kettle had a grip on his wrist. Their big bodies buckled and straightened, their barrel-like chests smashing together most violently.

I screamed in excitement as the hunter wrenched his hand free and struck. But the Kettle as quickly partially parried the thrust; and the blade, while buried to the hilt, entered sidewise through the muscles of the back. Before the blow could be repeated the red hand had grasped the hunter's wrist.

The wound did not seem to have any effect except to spur the Kettle to greater efforts. Richardson was a very powerful man, but now he was meeting one almost, if not fully, as strong as he.

Big Kettle was celebrated for his powers of endurance. Once he had passed cords through his shoulder muscles and had made the ends fast to the bridle of a horse that had been denied water for three days. Then he had taken the animal to water and had prevented it from drinking without using his hands. Such a man was not to be greatly disturbed by a stab such as the hunter had given him.

"Work him back here, Richardson," I yelled.

"—— if I will!" panted the hunter; and he tripped the fellow and crashed down on top of him, the knife flying from his hand.

"*Attendez vous, m'sieur!*" gasped Balise.

And I knew he had met more than his match.

The Frenchman exerted all his strength and pushed his adversary a foot nearer to me. The Indian sensed his danger and swung violently to one side. Balise did not resist this effort, but gave before it and in turn summoned his waning strength to keep the red man revolving. Around and

around, until both of them must have been dizzy, did they whirl; and at last I got my chance. I shot out my foot, caught the toe of my moccasin on the Minnetaree's instep and yanked his leg from under him. Balise had been waiting for this, and even as the man was falling on his back the Frenchman had torn the knife from his relaxed grip and was butchering him savagely with his own weapon.

He staggered forward to help Richardson, who was now on his back with his opponent on top of him. The hunter cried out—

"I figger he's finished, but stand clear and look out for tricks."

And he hurled the body aside and came up on his knees. Balise examined the limp form and in an awed voice whispered—

"*M'sieur* broke his neck!"

"I went for to do it, but he was a mighty hard man to lick," puffed the hunter.

"Cut me free!" I impatiently demanded. "If the other guards return you're done for."

"Not with them rifles," corrected Richardson; but he lost no time in releasing me.

"Why didn't you work him back here where I could trip him up?" I rebuked.

"If I can't land a man unhelped then he's welcome to my ha'r," growled the hunter. "When I make a kill I wanter be the only one to count coup."

"But he's not welcome to my hair," I told him. "If you'd lost the fight he'd have cut my throat."

"Pardon, *m'sieur*," Balise crisply told me. "But I had my man in hand without any help. I feared only the return of the other men."

His pride prompted him to claim this, which was untrue, for he had called out to me to be ready with assistance. Without my foot to help him he would have been dead in another ten seconds.

However, I did not want his gratitude, and we had important business before us. I told my companions that we must conceal the bodies and remove all traces of the struggle, and then seek a new hiding-place. When the other three guards returned they would be mystified at our disappearance unless they assumed that the men left to watch us had found it necessary to remove us to another hiding-place. The hunter was for leaving the dead where they would be found.

"It'll show them dogs we're mighty big warriors," he argued.

"They must be concealed," I insisted. "If the Minnetarees learn we have killed three of their men they will be very angry and take our hair to cover their dead. Even Red Shield's followers might turn against us."

Richardson went to the back of the cave to see if he could find a hiding-place for the dead men while Balise stood watch at the opening. I smoothed the scant top-soil to obliterate all traces of the scuffling feet, and scattered earth over the few traces of blood. The hunter returned, announcing that he had found a rift in the rocks and that the slain warriors could rest there undiscovered for all time.

Leaving Balise to guard against a surprize attack by the three remaining Minnetarees, Richardson and I carried the dead far back and dropped them into the narrow crevice. The buffalo robes were disposed of in the same manner, as well as the lances and their lengths of rawhide. We retained the knives worn by the dead men. Balise reported that there was no sign of the guards returning; but because of the broken nature of the country we knew they might be near.

"A short distance east of this hole is the House of the Infants," he added. "Go there while I reconnoiter a bit and observe where the three men go after they return, and find no one in this place."

"That's a strong medicine place," mumbled Richardson uneasily; and I knew he did not care to seek refuge there.

"Therefore the safest hiding-place we can find," Balise insisted. "Only men and women wishing for children go near it; and they go only at sunset. None ever dare enter the cave."

"Why not all of us hang round here and watch for them cusses to come back? We've got our guns and we could git their ha'r," suggested the hunter.

"Never without the truth being found out," declared Balise.

"There must be no more killings," I insisted. "It's very bad as it is."

Balise then offered:

"Let the hunter reconnoiter while M'sieur Ramsay and I go to the medicine cave. I have not the reverence and fear of medicine places that many have. I have seen too many dead men to fear the House of the Infants."

"Balise, I ain't hankering to hear you tell me a second time that I'm scared of anything in this red country," growled Richardson. "What shall we do with the horses, Mandan Ramsay?"

I had forgotten the horses. They constituted a troublesome problem. We must have them, but we did not even know where the Indians had hidden them. If we found them they would be a nuisance to hide; for we could not take them into the House of the Infants. The Frenchman spoke up, saying:

"Without horses we will be helpless. There is no good hiding-place near the medicine cave. But there is a good place west of here—a small, deep pocket in the heart of the hills with water and grass. If we can find where the Indians hid the animals we will take our own and those belonging to the dead men. Then the other guards will think we rode away as prisoners."

This was shrewd reasoning, and I promptly endorsed it. I would have preferred to have our mounts nearer the medicine cave, but that would invite discovery. If they were found in the pocket the savages would be none the wiser as to our whereabouts.

Richardson agreed to carry some blankets and the greater part of the dried meat to the medicine cave and wait for us to join him. I knew it required more courage for him to do this than it would to have fought the three remaining guards single-handed.

Had he been alone with me he would have confessed his hesitance. In the presence of Balise, whom he detested, he was too proud to betray his superstitious fears. Thus I have often found human nature show itself —frank to confess weakness to those esteemed, but willing to suffer rather than to encourage the sneers of those despised. He started with his packs, and the Frenchman and I began our search for the horses.

FORTUNATELY they were close at hand and easily located, and Balise was soon leading the way westward. I agreed that he had a keen eye for hiding-places when he led the way to a narrow slit between perpendicular walls, scarcely wide enough for two horses to ride abreast. This passage turned steadily toward the south, and after a quarter of a mile ended in a nearly circular basin. A narrow creek, bordered with grass, ran through the western side of the depression. Two men armed with rifles and plenty of ammunition could defy a small army to pass through the narrow, twisting defile.

The six horses trotted eagerly to the water, and we had no fears that they would wander from the basin. Retracing our steps, we made good time until near the cave where we had been held prisoners. Then we halted and spied the country ahead. There was no sign of life at the mouth of the cave, high on our right, but we could not deem ourselves safely on the way to the House of the Infants until we had passed it.

Balise hissed softly and dropped behind a mass of rock that was streaked with veins of very fine coal. I ducked low and took cover. An Indian, making for the cave, was momentarily in sight and then disappeared. A second man soon followed him, and at a greater interval the third.

I softly called out to Balise—

"We must be beyond the cave before they enter and find it empty."

"Go on! Go on!" he impatiently urged.

Crouching low and keeping in a hollow, I swiftly passed the danger spot and halted for a moment. I heard no soft *pad, pad* of the Frenchman's moccasins; nor did I dare wait for him to come up. I had supposed he was close on my heels. Obviously he had not followed me, but had swung out to one side to get better cover. There was no time to look for him, and as we had the same objective, and as there was an excellent chance of his having drawn ahead of me, I pressed on.

The cave had been out of sight for some minutes when a long wailing cry sounded behind me. One of the Minnetarees was signaling for the missing guards to indicate their new position. I could vision their bewilderment to find their companions and the prisoners gone. They would surely suspect that some new danger had prompted the sudden withdrawal; and what had been a menace to their companions would be a menace to them. Already they would be hurrying away from the place.

I picked up my heels and traveled rapidly until near the House of the Infants. It was at the edge of sunset, and even though I feared that the Indians might come up at any moment I was forced to stop. A Minnetaree woman, perhaps the wife of Long Lance, was ahead of me and was about to

consult the oracle. She was stealing up to the very mouth of the cave and frequently hesitated as though afraid to go on. But the maternal instinct triumphed over fear, and she advanced until she was at the narrow opening.

I saw her place something on the ground. Then she pulled a blanket over her head and hurried away. I dared not move until she was clear of the neighborhood; and back of me sounded the wailing cry which would never reach the ears of the missing guards. I waited until I dared wait no longer and then darted across an open space and up the slope.

In the very mouth of the cave was a ball made of bits of dressed fawnskin, soft and suitable for a baby girl to play with. Beside it was a bow and arrow. In the morning at sunrise she would be there, and if the ball were missing she would know she was to present her husband with a daughter; if the bow and arrow were gone, then it would be a son.

Not knowing how long we might have to keep in hiding, and not relishing a steady diet of the dried meat, I appropriated the bow and arrow. It was much smaller, especially the arrow, than the regulation weapon, but was large enough for knocking over small game provided I could fashion a point for the blunt arrow. To discharge a rifle would bring the enemy down upon us. I stepped into the darkness and was at once greeted by the hunter, who said:

"Powerful glad you've come, Mandan Ramsay. I don't like these medicine places. Seems if I could hear the chattering of the Little People all around me. They don't like humans, you know."

"Hasn't Balise shown up?" I asked.

"Nary hide nor ha'r of him yet. Thought he was with you."

"We separated at the first cave. The Indians were just returning, and we had to scout for it. He'll be here as soon as the way is clear."

But although we crouched by the low opening and waited we saw nothing of the Frenchman. Neither of us believed he had been recaptured, for there had been no sound of his rifle. It was more likely that he was later in starting than I had assumed, and had been compelled to fall back before the Indians emerging from the cave. They naturally had circled about for some trace of their comrades, and he might have retreated even to the valley of the lilies.

We made a supper of the dried meat and watched the light of the outside world fade. The bright stars lighted their evening fires, glowing with the intensity of planets. As we persisted in our lonely watch several meteors dropped below the horizon. The hunter insisted that these were evil signs.

"Two seasons ago I lost Hob Turner, one of the best beaver men ever come up the river," he whispered. "It was at the Three Forks of the Missouri. One night we seen one of them stars go shooting across the sky. Hob asked me—

"'Is it got your name or mine?'

"And the very next day the Blackfeet got him while he was visiting his traps."

"There are no Blackfeet here," I reminded.

"You don't know what's here, Mandan Ramsay. Wherever you see a shooting-star there's bound to be bad medicine close by you. I don't like this place. 'Pears I can hear whispering and chittering of the Little People."

It was useless to combat his superstitions, but I countered by suggesting that the evil signs were for Balise. This impressed him favorably for a bit, and he hopefully agreed:

"That may be it. And I won't wish no bad luck on a brave man. But if any white man must git into trouble tonight I'd ruther it would be him then you or me."

After a silence he became depressed again, and reminded me:

"But there was three stars. One for you, one for me, one for Balise."

To change his train of thought, I suggested that he steal outside the cave and gather some dry branches and bark to be used as a torch.

"We must scout the back of the cave to see if there is another way out," I explained.

Action appealed to him, and soon he had collected material for the torch. We lighted this and proceeded to explore the rear of the cave; for legend had it that it extended to the bowels of the earth. It did run back a considerable distance. The grade led upward at first and then dipped down at a sharp angle. As we warily descended I had the feeling we were approaching the brink of an abyss and were in danger of slipping and falling off.

We found no crevices, however, nor any passageways leading from the cave. We

did discover, against the rear wall, the mummified remains of an Indian, a bundle of skin and bones. There was a broken bow close to one bony hand and one arrow in what had been a quiver. There was an arrow through his ribs.

It was easy to reconstruct the running fight along the Knife; this poor shell of a fighting-machine retreating before great odds and compelled to take refuge in the cave. He had fought well, as was shown by the single arrow. He had been wounded before entering the cave and had crawled in there, unseen, to die.

Whether he was Minnetaree, Mandan, or Sioux there was no way of telling. The bow was larger than those made after the Arikara pattern. The mortal arrow had "blood," or "lighting" grooves, and suggested the Sioux product.

The hunter's spirits were greatly depressed by our find. As we hurried back to the front of the cave he gravely told me—

"If I'm wiped out and you git clear I'd like to have you have my rifle, Mandan Ramsay."

"All right. Take my gun if I go. But neither of us will go."

"There was them shooting stars," he stubbornly insisted. "They mean something powerful bad for us. Then we find a dead Injun. Nothing lives what comes in here. They call this The House of the Infants. Spirits of younkers live here afore they're born. But I'm telling you, Mandan Ramsay, that so far as humans go, only *Death* lives in here. I'd ruther sneak out and take my chances in the open."

"Nonsense, man!" I sharply rebuked him. "Any cave may hold the body of an Indian who's crawled inside to die and save his hair. We must wait here to meet Balise. He's a bad man, but he fought his bigness and slashed you loose in the cave."

"He knew he couldn't stir a peg without one of us to help him," grumbled Richardson. "I ain't saying but what he's wolfish 'nough in a fight, but if all them Injuns had been out the cave when he got loose he'd prob'ly cut our throats."

"We don't know that. I don't trust the fellow; but we're in the same boat, and he'll need our help and we'll need his. He doesn't feel the same toward us as he did when the Minnetarees called him their friend. We can't slip away and leave him. Besides, this is the safest place to hide in within a hundred miles."

The hunter grumbled and mumbled and then became silent. Half an hour passed before he spoke again. Then he suddenly declared:

"There's Death in here and all around, this place. I can smell it. My medicine has been trying to tell me something. I've just managed to figger out what it's been trying to tell me."

He paused. The darkness was so intense that we could not see a hand held close to the eyes unless it was in line with the opening, which was a shade less black.

"All right, Richardson. Have done with it. What's your medicine telling you?" I finally demanded.

"That Balise won't come, not even if we wait till —— cracks wide open."

"Perhaps he won't; but we're here, safe and sound."

"Mandan Ramsay, my medicine says that his not coming means that Death is coming."

CHAPTER XI

THE MEDICINE THIEF

DURING the night small animals stole to the cave, but quickly retreated on catching the man smell. It was their tiny tracks, seen at the mouth of the cave after a rain, that the child-hungry man and woman thought to be the foot-prints of the Little People. These tiny folks had a very wise pigmy for a leader, who permitted them to venture from the House only at night, when they would not be seen; and they depended on their sense of smell to avoid being observed.

Richardson forgot his woodcraft and attributed all sounds of night animals to the medicine infants. The dark hours were quite terrible for him.

With the return of the sun his spirits improved. The blackness of our hiding-place was diluted by a vague light, and the hunter believed we would be clear of the cave before the end of the day. As the sun climbed higher he proposed that we steal to some hiding-place near by, where we could watch for Balise and signal to him did the Frenchman put in an appearance.

I insisted that we remain where we were, and I reminded him that the Minnetaree woman who left the playball and bow and

arrow would be returning to get her answer. He grumbled under his breath and sullenly fished out his pipe. Before he could fill it I had a hand over the bowl and was warning him to draw back from the opening and keep very quiet.

The Minnetaree woman was stealing up the slope, her eyes gleaming with hope and fear as she kept her gaze focused on the mouth of the cave. She did not come quite to the opening but only far enough to see that the bow and arrow were missing. She wheeled and flung her arms widely, and ran down the slope leaping and bounding with the grace of an antelope, her heart rejoicing in the knowledge that the House of the Infants had set aside a boy to be born to her.

In halting my narrative of what were to be pivotal events in our country's history in order to mention the fulfilled expectations of that young Minnetaree wife I may impress my readers as weakening this recital. But I had felt so guilty after taking the bow and arrow, and the poor thing's faith in the oracle was so complete, that I will break the thread long enough to say that in the following season I talked with Long Lance and was proudly informed that the House of the Infants had sent him a fine boy.

To resume: Balise failed to appear. We ate the dried meat, which was far from being savory as well as very tough, and chewed the tobacco we dared not smoke. There was no water in the cave, and we suffered from the want of it.

When our thirst became almost unendurable Richardson insisted on leaving me and making a search. He crawled outside and to the foot of the slope. I stood guard at the opening, my rifle ready, but could discover no signs of the enemy.

The hunter was gone some time, and I became alarmed. However, he finally returned, trying to bring me a drink in his hat. By the time he reached me almost all the water had leaked out. After he had finished his enthusiastic description of the thread of ice-cold water, and how he had drunk and drunk, I could resist no longer.

Leaving him to stand guard, I slipped down the slope, took the direction he had indicated and soon came to the tiny stream. I drank and started to return, then went back and drank again. Inside half an hour after rejoining him I felt as thirsty as ever. We denied ourselves until after the midday meal and then repeated our visits to the stream.

When the sun passed into the western half of its journey Richardson renewed his urging. We could have spent the morning beside the rivulet, he kept repeating. We had been fools to remain holed up.

But now was the time for us to renew our caution. Whatever men and women were to visit the cave would come near sunset. I believed our fate was sealed should a villager glimpse us.

"What bad luck is waiting for us will most sartain catch us," the hunter grumbled. "Them shooting-stars weren't skyhooting just for fun. They meant business. They meant *us*."

He stuck by me, however, sucking a bullet to quell his unquenchable thirst. I was improving my leisure by renewing my rifle-flint when something moved among the rocks beyond the open slope. It was the suggestion of something in motion rather than a determinative glimpse. Richardson had detected it and cocked his piece. I slipped the flint in place and made ready to fire. We watched both sides of the rock.

An arm appeared above the rock, and I would have fired had not the hunter commanded me to wait. The arm was swinging slowly back and forth to attract our attention. There was no mistaking the sleeve of the Spanish jacket; yet we waited, unwilling to chance that a red arm was not inside that sleeve.

The arm was withdrawn, and we saw nothing more until Balise suddenly appeared in view at the end of the slope. His cunning in leaving the rock and approaching us without being seen spoke highly for his woodcraft. We showed our heads and motioned for him to come to the cave. He shook his head energetically and made emphatic gestures for us to join him.

"He has learned something we don't know about," I said. "We'll go down."

Richardson was too keen to leave the cave to offer any objections; and without bothering to gather up the robes and dried meat we glided down the slope and behind a rock, where we found Balise waiting for us.

"Where have you been?" I whispered.

"Avoiding the Minnetarees, *m'sieur*. They suspect nothing of the truth, but they are puzzled and seem to think the guards will bring us all back to the cave. I dared not make for here until this afternoon as

they were scouting between this place and their cave and might have stumbled upon me. They started back for the village, believing that we must have been taken there, and that gave me my chance."

"We can not go back to the first cave. This hole here is our best hiding-place," I said.

"*M'sieur*, I think otherwise. It *was* the best hiding-place, but a young woman has been here this morning. She found the medicine infants had taken inside a bow and arrow she had left here. She returns to the village, her heart rejoicing, and with a new song on her lips. She passed close to me, and I heard the new song she is making up to sing to her husband.

"In her song she tells of seeing footprints of a man near the cave. She believes the leader of the infants made it with magic to test her courage. She exults because she was brave enough to press on until she could see that the bow is missing.

"Now when that song is sung in the Minnetaree village it will be accepted as a new song by all with two possible exceptions. Le Borgne, now he knows of our disappearance, will wonder if one of us did not make the track. Tenskwatawa, if he hears about the song, will surely ask himself that. So *messieurs*, we have until the three guards have reached Hidatsa, and until the woman has passed around the village singing her new song, in which to find a new hiding-place. Perhaps it would be best to get our horse and ride for M'sieur Lisa's new post."

"I will hide until I can get a word to Red Shield, but I will not quit the country," I decided.

"He speaks for two men when he says that," growled Richardson. "And this old war-hoss is gitting —— tired of hiding. My notion is for us to sneak back to the village and enter it and openly call on Red Shield to stand by us."

Mr. Manuel's often repeated advice came back to me. How many times he has told me:

"Be bold. The red man hates a weak man or a coward. Be very bold and keep cool. Most men are hurt or killed because they're afraid."

I at once arrived at a new decision. Clapping the hunter on the shoulder, I exclaimed:

"That is what Mr. Manuel would advise us to do! We will return to the village and call on the Minnetarees to do us justice. They know nothing about what happened in the cave. We will say we were left alone by our guards, that they appeared to be frightened and talked of ghosts."

"Not the last, Mandan Ramsay," objected Richardson. "You can scare children at night by shouting *'nohidahil'** but you can not frighten grown people. We will say they left us hurriedly, as though scared of something or to go and look into something, but we'll not mention ghosts."

I promptly accepted this amendment to our story, for it was wisely thought of. The Indians believed in ghosts, but only the young held them in fear. The Minnetarees did not show as much aversion to the burying-grounds even at night as some white people I know of feel toward a cemetery.

"*M'sieur*, the big hunter has a better head than the two of us," warmly praised Balise. "He knows the red man and his ways as well as Lisa the *bourgeois*."

This was putting it too strong, for Mr. Manuel's success in dealing with the tribes was based on his thorough understanding of them. No man ever got at the red man's point of view more closely than did Manuel Lisa. Angered by his successes, a trader now and then would complain bitterly about Lisa's tricks, whereas he secured trade by seeing with the Indian's eyes and treating him fairly. So it was grotesque to pronounce Richardson the *bourgeois'* equal in comprehending the peculiar working of the red mind. But Richardson accepted the gracious speech as being no more than his due and was quite puffed up.

"I figger I can see through a Injun about as smart as the next man," he told Balise with an amiable grin.

Here was another example of a brave and loyal man finding more relish in the endorsement of one he knew to be a knave than in the approval of one who always had had his respect and had stood his friend.

Balise advised fast travel so we might reach the village before the report of the guards could crystallize into a determined hunt for us. He rightly insisted that the situation might be saved and the tables turned on Le Borgne if we unexpectedly appeared before any set plan had been agreed upon. I have seen red men as

*Ghost.

confused as children caught in mischief because of an unlooked-for interruption to their counsels.

Anything that promised radical action was satisfactory to the hunter, and he urged an immediate departure. We struck off with Balise trailing his rifle in the lead. Our course was parallel to the Knife, it being our plan to turn at right angles and make the village when we believed we had reached a point due west of it. In single file we covered a quarter of a mile, separated enough for two to escape were we surprized by a band of scouts.

I was second in line, and Richardson was not in sight when I saw Balise waiting in a narrow path that led through a growth of dwarfed timber. He waved his hand for me to join him. As I cut down the distance I glanced back and saw the hunter. Balise signaled for him to come on, and Richardson arrived at a run.

"Where be they?" he asked, thinking we had discovered some danger.

"All is well, *m'sieur* the big hunter," said Balise. "But once we leave this patch of cover we shall strike into open country. Except for the little hollows between the bare ridges, we will find poor hiding. I believe we should now keep together."

As he spoke he shouldered his rifle and faced me to hear my opinion.

"We know the country is open. We might as well keep together," I told him.

"If we're jumped I'm going to make a fight," warned Richardson. "If you folks want to knuckle under without having a fracas you'd better let me sneak along behind."

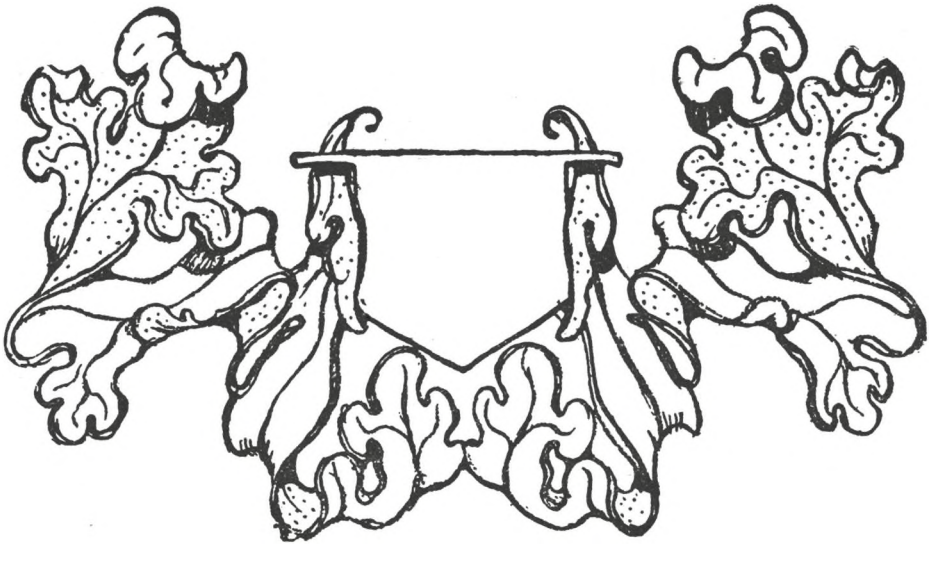
"Fight it is then," cheerfully agreed Balise. "It is time we remembered we are white men."

"There must be no fighting, no more killings," I insisted. "Let us plan to make the village unseen."

Richardson jumped about and glared into the growth on the south side of the path. I had heard it, a slight noise, but assumed it to be some small animal.

As I opened my mouth to reassure him I was horrified to behold three warriors leaping from the north side of the path a few yards from me, and hurling themselves upon my friend. With a shout to Balise to join in the rescue I started to swing my rifle about, and the scoundrel gave me the butt of his weapon, catching me beside the head and knocking me senseless. Only my hat and thick hair and tough skull prevented the bones from being caved in.

TO BE CONCLUDED



THE CLUE

by George Brydges Rodney

Author of "Adam's Earth," "Bad Medicine," etc.

THE Jenson murder set all Rain Valley on fire from one end to the other. Men riding in to the little adobe store and post-office met other men from the back ranges and argued and wrangled about it till it seemed that other murders were about to be committed.

The store where John Wilkes dispensed "air-tights" to a thirsty country-side was the center of the storm. Here John Wilkes, gathering news from the south and east, gave it out to the north and west and was genially cursed by men from all directions. The first said that they had been incorrectly reported. The latter said that John was a liar by nature and had added to his reputation by intention.

On a day late in July five men squatted about the porch of the store eagerly gleaning such scraps of information as Mr. Wilkes chose to impart. The blistering heat rose in little tremulous waves that made the adobe roof look like water underlying smoke. Ocatilla and cactus burned brown and drooped in the sun. Only a horned-toad squatting by a red-hot rock showed any signs of life. He enjoyed it.

Finally the group woke to life.

"There ain't no manner o' sense in ridin' twenty miles just to hear old John talk," quoth "Sinapism" Smith. "He ain't got no sense. He don't even know the difference between this an' that anyhow."

"Bet you a dollar o' anybody's money, I do." Mr. Wilkes suddenly came to life.

"You're took! What *is* the difference between this an' that?"

"Them!" said Mr. Wilkes triumphantly. "That's what you get fer never havin' studied grammar. Ain't I right Simmsy?"

Mr. Simms suddenly appealed to, did as all men in like case do. He acquiesced—and got cursed for it. Mr. Wilkes continued:

"An' the murderer is still at large. The police has got a clue the nature of which will not be divulged at present. It is probable that some arrests will soon be made——"

"It's the worst murder we've had for a month" said "Peg-leg" Oates judicially. "This place is gittin' as bad as New York. People are getting held-up every day. It was only last week that 'Slippery Elm' got his. He was on his way to be married when he was held-up. They took his pants——"

"Huh?" Mr. Smith came suddenly to life. "I've seen Slippery's pants! They ain't no good to anybody. I've seen Slippery hisself fall through the seat of 'em when he got up right quick. What fool took 'em?"

"Slippery don't know. He was drivin' his flivver down along Willow Water headin' fer the Rain Valley school-house where his marriage was to be pulled off; bride an' maids an' cook and the grub was all waitin' when a man jumps up on the runnin'-board, crams a gun in the pit o' Slippery's stomach an' tells him to stop.

Slippery done it—quick. So would you—er me.

"'I wants your pants,' says the man.

" 'So do I,' says Slippery. 'You got a pair right now. You don't need 'em half as bad as what I do.'

"Whoever it was he didn't pay no attention to Slippery's wails. He took his pants an' his spark-plugs. He took every derned thing from his armor-belt right on down, but he left Slippery his spurs. When the weddin' party was goin' home the bridegroom not havin' turned up they found him settin' there like a hen settin' on a door-knob cluckin' away to beat ——. The man had took his pants an' his plugs an' left Slippery lamentin'. That's why he's still a bachelor. What's new about the Jenson case?"

"They found Jenson lyin' out back of his house; between the house and the corral with a bullet right through the top of his skull and a pistol lyin' by him with a fired ca'tridge in the chamber. There wasn't no tracks. You see it was the night of the big rain. The storm came up about sundown. It rained and thundered and lightened so hard that nobody came out of their houses and of course the rain washed out all tracks that was left there. The ground was all wet.

"The case was plain enough. Somebody who had a grudge agin Jenson come up and called him outen the house 'n' shot him through the head. The queer thing was the way he was shot. The bullet went right down through the top of the head and come out between the jaws. Either the man shot him from above or else he shot Jenson when he was chargin' him like a bull. Then the man got scared and run away. The rain come up and washed out all trail-sign. They'll never find out who done it. There ain't any clue—in spite o' what the police says."

"There's always a clue if you got enough brains to foller it," quoth Mr. Wilkes. "The trouble is that most men ain't got heads that's good fer anything but to scratch an' hang their hats on."

"Well—they're a-wastin' their time huntin' fer 'Limpy' Stevens just because he had a grudge against Jenson."

"What fer?"

"Hold over from last year. They was both wantin' to marry Miss Rudd, the red-headed biscuit-shooter from Ash Fork, an' they couldn't make up their minds which should have the first chance to rope her. They shook dice to find out——"

"An' Jenson, he lost?"

"He did not. Jenson won. Limpy Stevens married her."

"Well; anyway if they'd used plain, common sense in this case they ought to have nailed the man before he ever got away."

"Maybe John here could help 'em" said Mr. Oates. "He's got brains. I know that."

Mr. Wilkes sobered up instantly and rubbed his chin.

"There's bound to be some kind o' stuffin' to his head" went on Mr. Oates. "It may be only excelsior or horse-hair, but it does the work of a brain fer him. Why don't you tell 'em what to do John? They need help."

"They sure do," agreed Mr. Wilkes. "And if they don't git it from me they're plumb out o' luck. You-all ain't got sense enough to scratch your own heads without help. I mind a case that was a good bit like this. There wasn't no clue at all the way it looked—till, I found one fer 'em. Then when I took holt it was all cleared up."

"That's what I thought—" Oates' tone was scornful. "Here's the sheriff now."

A PONY tripped up to the front gate. A goat-skin-chapped, sombrero-crowned man swung off into the dust and emerging therefrom demanded Mr. Wilkes.

"I'm a-settin' right here waitin' to help them what's in trouble. What ails you Jeff?"

"They've struck a blind lead on the Jenson case. Can't seem to git anywhere John. Stuck if you ask me."

Mr. Wilkes grunted, and the sheriff continued:

"An' then I remembered that you was mixed up in a queer case once—the Ives case. Ain't that right?"

"I kind o' figgered it out fer 'em," said Mr. Wilkes modestly. "When the detectives busted and the sheriff and the coroner was stuck I managed to put 'em right."

"Well—I wish you'd run over an' see what you kin make of this. The prosecutin' attorney wants to see you."

"What fer?" demanded Mr. Smith. "John ain't been doin' nothin.' He was with me."

"The body's in the Blue Front saloon, an' the jury's still a-fightin' over what verdict to return. Come on over there," the sheriff urged.

"Too hot," said Mr. Wilkes crisply. "Send his clothes over to me here."

"His clothes?"

"I said his clothes. Every derned stitch. You-all heard me right the first time."

"But the body——?"

Mr. Wilkes grinned.

"You kin keep his body. His Maker's got his soul an' the —— of a git He's got. All I want's his clothes."

The mystified sheriff disappeared with a dazed look in his eyes. Mr. Wilkes talked on reflectively:

"Now that Ives case that he was a-talkin' of, was one that reelly took brains an' that needed some powers of reflection. If a man's got brains an' sees just one drop of water, he kin figger out the existence of a reg'lar Niagara Falls. If he sees a dead body with a bottle layin' by it his first idee is——"

"That's he's been drinkin' home-brew?"

"I'm only mentionin' this so that even you sheep-men kin understand. Now I'll tell you:

IN THE Winter of '97 (Mr. Wilkes said) I was up in Balder, Montana. I went there fer my health an' I like to froze to death gettin' it an' when I got it, it wasn't worth keepin'. It was January when I got there and the snow was seven foot deep on the level. Only there wasn't no level. The whole place was plumb crazy over some new gold strikes that had been made. That was just four months after they made the big strike on Porcupine Creek an' every body was lookin' fer gold even in the ash-heaps. Ives—the only doctor in the place—was a bald-headed old man with a red nose and a loud voice. He knowed all about everything—just like you, Peg-leg! Nobody could tell him anything. Pettle was the only assayer in the diggin's, an' him and Ives was great friends—when they wasn't fightin'.

Both of 'em was always huntin' fer a chance to git in on the ground floor of any new strikes; grub-stakin' a man here; buyin' a claim there, or doin' some prospectin' on their own account when the weather was good; fightin' an' arguin' an drinkin' when they wasn't busy. When they got goin' good it sounded like the beginnin' of a Chinese street fight.

One day Ives was layin' up against the bar of the Palace of Sweets, toyin' with his nose paint, when in comes Pettle. He'd just come in from a prospectin' trip an' he was as dry as a salt mackerel. He listened to 'em arguin' an' fightin' over a lot of pieces of rock, and presently he dumped a handful of ore samples down on the counter.

"Count *them*," he says. "You that kin tell gold from feldspar. Take a look at *that*."

They pounced on 'em like a duck onto a June bug, but Ives grabbed 'em first. He smelled 'em, and tasted 'em, and weighed 'em, and handed 'em back with a grin.

"Huh!" he says. "Fool's gold." That was all.

Pettle went right up in the air like Ives meant him to do and they started at it hammer-and-tongs till the bartender had to lead Ives out by takin' him by the nose with the lemon-squeezer.

"You two get to —— outen here," he says, "and settle your differences outside. I'm plumb tired of your fightin' an' wrastlin' in here. You-all 're just like a cat-fight—all fuss and howlin' an' not a bit o' fur flyin'."

And he shoved 'em out into the snow.

Early the next mornin' it bein' Sunday—I remember 'cause it was my habit to get my first drink at nine o'clock at the Red Bull—a big holler broke out that Ives had been killed, and when I went in to the Dew Drop Inn I found a whole gang of prominent citizens debatin' an' arguin' over the right thing to do. 'Hard-rock' Parsons had the floor and he was speakin' by the book.

"What ails you all?" I asks 'em. "What's bit you?"

It was Hard-rock what tells me.

"Last night," he says, "I was settin' in at a small game across the street from Pettle's shack when we heard a shot. Nobody paid no attention to it, hopin' that it was just Pettle kickin' off, an' nobody wantin' to prevent him. You see him and Doc Ives was over there—had been ever since they was throwed out o' the bar. When they calmed down they went back fer another drink and just as they was leavin' I heard Pettle say:

" 'Come on up to my shack and I'll show you, you old pirate. I've got some *aqua regia* up there if you know what *that* is. It'll dissolve the gold.' "

"That started it all over again, but they went up to Pettle's house, and a little later Pettle sends his Chinese cook down fer a bottle o' liquor. In the early mornin' we found Ives' body lyin' in the snow-bank right outside Pettle's door. There was a hole in the top of his head. The point of Pettle's pick just fitted the hole. The point of the pick is all bloody and it was lyin' by the body. Ain't that enough?"

"'It's a plenty to hang Pettle,' says 'Peder' Pederson. 'When they ketch him.'

"They got him about noon where he was workin' on one of his old claims and they brung him back to town with his hands tied, and the muzzle of a rifle stickin' in the small of his back. Every time he tried to ask what was the matter, one of 'em 'd tell him to shut up; that whatever he said would be used against him—which was bad enough Lord knows, 'cause Pettle, he said quite a lot on the way back. Finally when they brung him into the saloon Big Frank says—

" 'Pettle, this here crowd wants to know what fer you killed Ives?'

" 'Ives?' says Pettle some took aback. 'Is Ives dead? That good old man?'

" 'Name o'——, Pettle,' says Big Frank. 'Did you think he'd live after you caved in the top of his head with your pick? Why you put a hole in his head that you could lay an egg in!'

" 'Quit your fool jokin',' says Pettle. 'I can't lay no eggs. I didn't even know Doc was dead, Frank.'

" 'How'd you reckon he was goin' to keep on livin' after you took half his uppet-shell off? Look a-here, man, and quit your lyin'.

"He shoved the prospector's pick in front of Pettle.

" 'Ain't that yourn?'

" 'Sure it's mine, but I ain't seen it since last night. Doc had it and he brung it back, sayin' that he had used it to kill a pig with.'

Well, sir, (continued Mr. Wilkes) that sounded so funny on top of what they knew, that they got to laughin' over it and had to order a lot of fresh drinks to cure the hiccups. After that they took a vote on hangin' Pettle and it passed unanimous—Pettle's bein' the only vote against it. They let him vote just for luck. Pederson come into the bar and told me about it and he says that Pettle was showin' some hard feelin' about it. I says to him:

"I'd kind of hold off on that hangin'-bee fer a while. What does Pettle say?"

"He says he never done it. That's all."

I went in and looked over the remains and it was then that the idee come to me. I seen it all just like it had been done before my eyes.

"Look here, Peder," I says. "You-all are sure barkin' at a knot. Pettle never done that. He never killed Ives."

They all crowded up to the bar with their mouths hangin' open.

"Ives done it hisself I suppose," says Pederson sarcastic-like. "Stabbed hisself in the head with a pick, huh?"

"Look at that swellin' behind the ear," I says. "Don't that tell you what it was that caused his death? Look how the skin is raised like on a new blister and is soft to the touch."

Every one of 'em looked, and you might have thought they all had eyes in their fingers the way they pawed Ives all over. Even Pettle perked up a bit.

"I told you I never done it," he says. "Me and Doc had a red hot argument last night. I hit him but it was only with the shovel. He cussed me a bit, and I cussed him back, an' then he went out and slammed the door and I never seen him again. I didn't even see the body when I went out to work because I went out by the back door this mornin'."

"That's the truth, and I'll prove it," I says.

I took 'em all over to the front door of Pettle's place and showed it to 'em.

"Look there," I says. "Can't you see that Pettle never done it?"

"What did kill him then?" asks Hard-rock Parsons.

"That's what done it," I says.

I pointed to the eaves of the house that was edged with icicles three foot long and as sharp as a tack. There wasn't one that didn't weigh thirty pounds.

"It's easy to see what happened after a man with brains has showed you," I says. "Pettle's story is straight. They had a fight last night, and Doc started home. When he left, he stopped to slam the door and that slam jarred loose an icicle—like this——"

I opened the door and slammed it and a big icicle come bangin' down and like to pinned the sheriff through the pants.

"That's what done it," I says.

"Where is it then?" asks Hard-rock. "It ought to be a-stickin' fast in his head."

"It would be," I says, "if the heat of the body hadn't melted it. Right now there's nothin' in his head. There never was much. If he'd ever had anything much in his head he wouldn't be a livin' here in January," I says. "That heavy icicle penetrated his skull and then the heat of the body melted it. That's why you couldn't see no sign. It took a trained eye. That's what give me the clue."

"What're you talkin' about," says Hard-rock. "There ain't no clue?"

"Look at his head," I says pointin' to the blister. "That there big blister is one sure sign of water on the brain. And that's an accident."

MR. WILKES subsided. In the midst of a breat-catching silence a man rushed into the room and laid a bundle of clothing on the table before him.

"Here's all that's left o' Jenson," he said placatingly.

Mr. Wilkes pawed them over as one who seeks a particular thing.

"Where's his shoes?" he demanded presently.

"Here they are."

Mr. Wilkes turned them over with a grunt of approval and presently laid them down.

"Just like I thought," he growled. "Case's dismissed. Expect to hold a man on a murder charge when that's clear fer everybody to see?"

The shoes passed from hand to hand as rapidly as a bottle in a Prohibition Convention. Mr. Wilkes sensed the inquisitiveness of his audience and beat it to the question.

"Is there a nail in em?" he demanded combatively.

"Nary a nail, but there's a lot o' little black holes where the nails was. It looks like they've been burned out. What do you make of it, John?"

In that tone there was a note of deference that made even Mr. Wilkes' ears burn.

"He was struck by lightnin'," he said slowly. "Of course you-all couldn't figger it out. You-all couldn't be expected to see it. But it's perfectly plain to me. It takes a trained mind—and one that kin fill in the gaps of logic," he added. "Jenson was struck by lightnin' while he was standin' on the wet ground out by the corral when the storm busted. It was that big lightnin' flash that got him. It hit him right on top of the head and run down his body and burned all the nails outen his shoes. Ain't that right?"

They examined gun, body, shoes. Evans was the first to speak—

"It looks like you're plumb right—but—John—Mr. Wilkes——?"

"Huh?"

"I don't see how you ever worked it out. What give you the clue?"

"I knowed Jenson," quoth Mr. Wilkes solemnly. "You see I've knowed him fer twenty years. You never could git anything into his head without blastin'. He's exactly like the rest of you-all up here. I knew he couldn't have been shot 'cause no bullet ever made would even have dented his head. It would take an act o' God to git even an idee into it—er into any of you! When I realized *that*, the rest was plain sailin'. Conan Doyle says that when you've cut out all that can't happen, what's left is the truth. Only the act of God could have made a hole in Jenson's head and the Lord don't handle six-shooters. Only a bolt of lightnin' could have done it. An' that's what it was. Just like the Ives case of water on the brain.

"Only—" he paused and carefully measured with his eye the distance to the door and his chance of making it—"only none of you fellers would have been touched if you'd been in Ives' place er Jenson's. To have water on the brain er to be struck through the brain by a lightnin' bolt you've got to have some kind of a brain to start with. Somethin' to have water on. Some place fer the lightnin' to get a toe-holt——"

The suddenly slammed door alone saved him.

"Was he lyin'?" asked some one in the resultant hush.

"Who? John? There's as much truth as there generally is in what he says."

"Huh! That's comfortin.' How much is that?"

"Jenson's dead ain't he? It may as well be lightnin' that killed him. That's what the jury'll say. They'll let it go at that."

They did.

THE ANGEL-MAKER

by

Georges Surdez

Author of "A Sore Loser," "Hell's Halfway House," etc.

DUGUAY, the wiry half breed captain from Reunion, was at the tiller.

The crew of Malagasy negroes, three in number, reclined on the deck planking, humming in unison a barbaric tune of their native land, a cadence which formed an undertone for the giant orchestra of wind and wave. The single mast rose against a dark sky, it's top lost among the stars—stars which seemed to swing overhead with every roll of the small vessel.

To the southeast lay Reunion, the port from which the brig had left the week before; to the west the oriental coast of Madagascar.

In the summery shelter of the fore half-deck, five men were playing cards—five white men. The lantern which hung from the ceiling moved in a circle, illuminating each face in turn with a ruddy glow. The warm wind blew through the stays, singing as the vibrant strings of a monster violin.

One of the white men spoke.

"When are we supposed to get ashore, Gujol?"

"I don't know—" Gujol returned.

Under the lantern, his naturally red face assumed a demoniacal hue. The hair growing low over the forehead, the heavy brows hinting at sullenness, did not give a prepossessing appearance. But the eyes, very blue, clear, were those of a child, and presaged the same quick tempers and quick liking, with an unfathomable, indefinite something added, that created the impression of relentless persistence.

"I guess I'll ask Duguay—" Gujol went on, rising.

He was tall and heavy-set.

As he made his way aft, with a question in his mind as to the future, he could not help but recall the events that had brought him here under the stars, miles from home.

Gujol came from New England. He possessed the somber mystical soul of the Puritan, and all the Puritan's intolerance, the latter a trait for which he had reproached the people in his tiny native village. They were intolerant of others. He was intolerant of them—and in a more positive way, for he had left home. Taking ship from the nearest port he had traveled and traveled, always striving to find a place to rest, where others would think as he thought. The real trouble was he could not adapt himself, but wanted others to mold themselves to his way of thinking.

Three years before the mast, rough living, a forced acquaintance with all classes and all races, had mellowed him. The pendulum of his mind had overswung. Not content to allow others to have their own ideas he fell into the greater evil of accepting their thoughts as his. When he at last decided to find a position ashore he was a far different Gujol from the one who had set forth.

At Saint Denis, in the Island of Reunion, he found work as overseer of a coffee plantation. There he toiled as hard as those of his

breed know how. He drove himself; he drove the natives. The "boss," an indolent Créole, could not understand the cause of this energy, and finally discharged him.

"He works too hard—the sight of him tired me—" the Colonial Frenchman explained. And so Gujol had worked himself out of a job—the beginning, however, of the Great Adventure.

Coming down from the plantation, he took abode in a little hotel within the town. There he smoked, drank, ate, until his money melted away.

His last franc gone, he strolled down the torridly hot streets, a heat unrelieved by the slightest breeze, to the docks. A liner bound for Australia, after traveling from Liverpool through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, was in, for provisions. Gujol aimlessly stood about, hands in pockets, looking, even in his white garb, what he was—an American.

There is a certain attitude that marks the Yankee. From the boat came four men. At first glance one could see they, too, hailed from the States. What was more natural than for Gujol to address them?

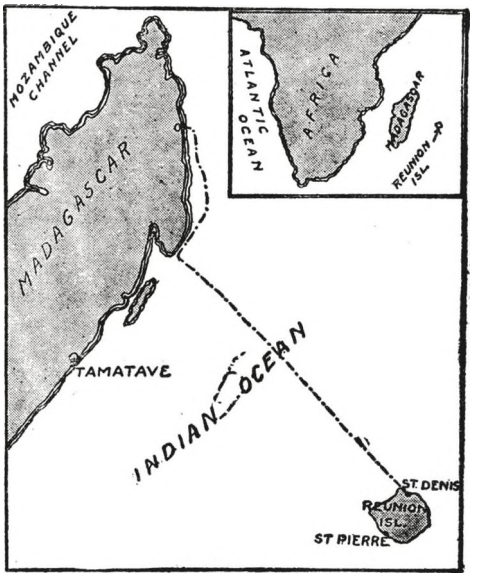
They were queer fellows. There was Crocket, a roly-poly man, short of stature, long of arm, and possessed of a marvelous singing voice and a repertoire of cowboy ballads. There was Evans, a tall lean devil with the face of Mephisto, who wore a gun under his coat; Elliot, a rangy specimen, who also toted arms; and Mouston, hybrid international mixture, one-fourth French, one-fourth American, the other half beyond possible conjecture.

Within ten minutes after meeting, the five were seated in the hotel café, the silent boys were replenishing glasses, the flies hummed about their ears, and before Gujol's eyes unfolded the plains of the Western States, the rugged mountains, the desert. The four were gold miners. The Gold States were overcrowded, they said, and so they had decided to try new fields. Gujol looked at the tanned faces, the calloused palms. Yes, they could wield pick and shovel.

He found himself whirled along into their spirit of search. He asked to join them. They assented readily—the port wine had been good. He was to have a fifth share and in return was to give his experience to aid them.

In 1890, Madagascar had not yet been taken over by the French. But that nation's covetous thoughts had aroused interest. Why should the French be so anxious for the island if all to be gathered there were malarias and assorted diseases? What other conclusion except gold? Gold—Many westerners found themselves in east Africa at that time, who later disappeared when the Klondike sent its clarion peal: GOLD! GOLD!

Crocket went on to explain that they had learned on board the steamer that the Hova Government, which at that time ruled



Madagascar, forbade the entry of white miners. This had raised difficulties, at the same time enhancing their belief that gold was to be found. And if it was there—well, they intended to find it.

Gujol, who had picked up certain information, informed them that the prohibition was not absolute, that by paying well the government official, they could enter. Fifty per cent. of their spoils, must, however, be turned as royalty to the Hovas.

From this, to the decision to enter without permission was but a step.

Gujol had found a vessel, called, poetically enough *Amourette*, whose captain and owner, Duguay, was said to be ready to make extra cash now and then. For two hundred dollars and a tenth of the proceeds, Duguay agreed to land the five in Madagascar in a location which he knew to

contain gold. The white men were to supply their own equipment and grub.

GUJOL found Duguay at the tiller, impassively staring ahead, his copper-lidded pipe between his even white teeth, teeth which shone beneath the black mustache in a perpetual bland smile.

"Well, Duguay, when do we land?"

Duguay puffed thoughtfully, shrugged.

"Eh—eh—I guess tomorrow——"

"It will have taken us nine days," Gujol remarked.

"Got to escape the gunboats—" Duguay explained.

"The gunboat—you mean—" Gujol laughed.

The Hova Government boasted of but one gunboat, a fashion of floating boarding-house for a clan of parasites in gaudy gold-laced uniforms. The cannon was not provided with ammunition. The coal-burning engine had no fuel.

Duguay laughed in his turn:

"Oh, miracles have been performed and they might get the tub running—" His English was as faultless as his French. His career as semi-pirate, semi-smuggler, had taught him many tongues. "Every time I see a smudge over the horizon I run away. It's better than to jeopardize the expedition by too great a hurry——"

Gujol had to admit his wisdom.

"We'll go through the reef tonight and maybe you can go ashore before morning—" the captain went on. "There's a wind coming up, and if the gunboat is out, she will take cover——"

Gujol lighted his pipe and squatted against the high railing, his eyes wandering over the billowing surface of the sea, the cascading waters which caught the reflection of the stars in fleeting glimpses, as elusive as will-o'-the-wisps. Out of this space breathed a colder wind that sang with terrific velocity through the stays—perhaps one of the "dry wind" storms of which Gujol had heard.

The swells shivered under the increasing force. Foam flew through the air, biting into one's face. The smack sometimes sank into the black water, then perched on the crest of a moving wall, bow hanging over the edge, bobbing lightly as a cork. There was no great danger with Duguay in command of his expert black crew, fellows who had learned to swim in this very ocean, who knew its every mood.

At times there seemed to be not a breath stirring, then the single sail would snap with the report of a field-piece and fill out. Gujol, who in spite of time spent on the sea, knew little of the technique, admired Duguay's cool manner.

When the wind rose to its climax and held, the little craft flew over the water. The western horizon seemed to move nearer, as the upraising curtain in a theatre. A line of foam appeared.

"The breakers—" announced Duguay.

Gujol asked for no more information, though he surmised that the *Amourette* would cross the reefs, enter one of the rivers, on whose shore the alluvial gold could be panned. He made his way now to his friends to impart to them the news. He found them intently looking out toward the north. There he suddenly spied a light, as though a star shifted in its course by some immense convulsion in the spaces between the worlds, had swooped closer to earth. The light almost immediately disappeared.

The breakers were closer now, and even against the wind, the surging sound of shattering waters could be heard. Speculation concerning the light ended with the coming of a more immediate interest. All knew that a slight deviation of the rudder could smash the flimsy hull like an egg-shell, on the razor-edged rocks. And so they grasped the rail and looked toward Duguay, and watched his crew.

Suddenly from out the sea came a cry—

"Help!"

Duguay shouted orders to his crew, swung the craft about and bore down in the direction from which the call had come. Darker against the somber surface, something was moving. Crocket took a rope, threw it out as the *Amourette* slid by. There was a tug.

"He's got it!" Crocket exclaimed.

And then from the sea came these surprizing words—

"I come, even as Jonah from the whale!"

In due time, over the railing appeared two great hands, which clutched at the woodwork, the muscles knotting beneath the skin. The lantern radiated a weak light to the spot, revealed a face, with long narrow features, the nose seemingly endless, the mouth cruel, the fearless eyes, glinting with resolution, bravado. The torso grew inch by inch until the beholders wondered if he

would ever come to an end. An elongated, tentacle-like leg, reached up and straddled the rail, another followed and the newcomer was on board.

He was unbelievingly tall and lank. The hair, which clung wet down the forehead, added to the impression. The hands hung somewhere near the knees. He remained silent. The others noticed more details. The fellow was clad altogether in black, the coat of an unmistakable clerical cut.

Mouston, who was impressionable, mumbled beneath his breath. Gujol was too stupefied to speak. The other Americans waited quietly. Duguay, who had relinquished the tiller to one of the blacks, came forward.

"Welcome—" he said.

The stranger looked from one to the other, until he had scanned all six faces, and, in the same sepulchral tone addressed them:

"I have cried and you have answered. Be blessed!" Then in a lower tone, "Got anything to drink?"

Reminded of the elementary courtesy due a rescued man they took him under the fore deck, and poured him a cup of hair-curling rum, which he swallowed at a gulp without a grimace.

"It warmeth the heart—" he said as he smacked his lips. "May I have more?"

The request being granted, the question arose as to clothes. There was nothing to fit him on board, so he must content himself with a pair of Gujol's trousers, which would reach a trifle below the knee, and a blanket. As he stripped, the men again marveled at his build. He proved to be six feet six, and absurdly thin. The ribs stood out under the yellow skin as those of a torn umbrella. The smooth coffin-like chest, melted without curve into the stomach.

He offered no explanation of his adventure.

"My name is Job—" he announced. "And my dungheap is the universe."

The Americans regarded each other in silence. Was the man mad? Further questions were answered in a similar manner. At length Gujol declared his belief that he had fallen overboard from the ship whose stern light they had glimpsed a few seconds previous.

"Fallen?" was Job's reply, in a tone of sarcasm and amusement.

Indeed this was poor behavior for a man just plucked from a watery grave. Further conjecture was brought to an end by the passing of the smack through the reef, where water was shipped by the ton. Job remained calm—did not even ask for information.

When the vessel was through, and had entered calmer water where on each side could be seen low sand banks, Duguay announced—

"We're there——"

MORNING found a thick cold mist enshrouding everything in a cloud of cottony vapor. Duguay, questioned, declared this to be what the natives call *erika* and would last but an hour or so. He pronounced himself against going ashore until the full appearance of the sun.

It was discovered that Job, also, hailed from the West. He was offered a share in the proposition, which he accepted with a few casual words. Mouston, in charge of the provisions was concerned over the quantity of rum the lanky fellow absorbed. Gujol, less materially inclined, watched the sun filter through the mist, wipe the vapor aside with long golden fingers, revealing an intense blue sky, in which one or two ashy clouds sluggishly moved with the morning breeze. To him, this was symbolic of his life. First, the dreary New England farm, then the glamorous tropics of St. Denis and the Southern Ocean.

The cases of equipment had been opened. Each man was dealt out a rifle, revolver, cartridges. Duguay possessed an old carbine, the stock of which had been broken and badly mended, but he seemed to have much affection for the weapon. The party, having entered a small boat, were rowed ashore by two of the blacks.

The trees on the bank of the river glowed intensely green under the sun, with huge patches of yellow. Red and browns glittered dazzlingly. Bright-colored birds rose at their approach, and the rush of animals through the underbrush could be heard. Gujol and Duguay conversed. The others were silent, absorbed in the contemplation of the bank, within the gravelly soil of which the half-breed captain declared could be found the precious metal.

"Is there any danger of the Hovas finding us?"

"Not unless some one warns them."

"Your blacks?"

"Don't worry. You know the Hovas

have an institution. *Fanampoana*, otherwise forced labor. Every man is supposed to work a certain period, from a year to a lifetime, according to the wish of the Government. Their army is recruited that way. All public works are done by *Fanampoaned* laborers. My three men have refused their service. The penalty is beheading. No, they will not denounce us."

The boat grounded.

Duguay stepped ashore, and the others followed him through the bush. The smell of wet vegetation was nauseating and the reddish soil underfoot greasy with decayed foliage. The birds increased in number and flew in and out of the trees, uttering weird cries in their anger at being disturbed. Presently they came to a clearing in the center of which stood a hut, raised on slim pillars from the ground.

"Your home—" Duguay indicated.

The floor of the dwelling was covered with dried grass. A few old tins of preserved meat, empty, were heaped in a corner.

"Other white men have been here," Gujol suggested.

"Yes, I brought them," Duguay declared. "And they left a few weeks ago."

Lean Job spoke up—

"If you know there's gold here why don't you get it yourself and reap the fruit of your labor?"

Duguay shrugged.

"No—I've got to live here. I have tried other places in the world and don't like them. Once a Creole—always a Creole."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"If the Hova Government proved I was mining they'd make it hot for me. As it is, I shall return to the *Amourette* and wait. How am I to know that you are breaking the laws? In this way I make profit and run no risks. If you are attacked by the soldiers you will be taken. But I will go away—see?"

"What would they do to us?" Gujol questioned.

"Do?" Duguay repeated. "Why, kill you——"

"We would appeal to the American Consul——"

"Officially you never entered Madagascar, so officially you can not be killed on Malagasy soil—eh?"

"Oh!"

"And the American consul here is a black man, who was born a slave. Being black themselves, the Hovas do not respect the far away republic of white men who send an ex-slave as a representative. They have slaves of their own and despise them."

"What will we do for food?"

"I'll leave a boy here. He'll go to the nearest village once a day. That's six miles. He'll buy pigs, chickens, eggs. He'll pretend to be hiding from the soldiers. You white men stay here and work. If you go near the village the people will inform the soldiers. They'll help a black get away from the authorities, but they resent white men coming to take the gold——"

"Where are we to work?"

"Where the small stream runs into the river. You'll find traces of workings. Proceed there—your friends ought to know how to go about it——"

"That's right——"

Duguay left.

WORK was started during the afternoon.

And before night, they had results. The gold, while not in great nuggets, sometimes attained the size of peas, and was plentiful. Besides the old pans of the white men who had come before them, the party found, in profusion, the rudimentary "rockers" of the natives. The natives did not work the placer steadily, for they feared the Government. They took enough for a few ornaments, a little cash, and kept quiet. For, should the servants of Queen Ranavalona III find the spot it would be farewell to the gold as far as the villagers were concerned.

Gujol's job was to fetch water and cook and exclaim now and then when one of the miners exhibited tiny flakes of dull yellow. Job did not make a pretense of labor. He sat aside with a bottle of rum in his hand. At regular intervals the slim throat would swell as the fiery liquid ran down. From the others' equipment he had procured a revolver, which dangled at his side. The combination was ludicrous: the heavy weapon contrasted with the scarecrow appearance of Job, and his peaceful, persistent tippling.

Supper that night consisted of roast pork disposed on fresh leaves, the fruits piled in the center of the floor. All were happy save Job, whose gloomy eyes had resumed their mechanical turning from one face to the other.

"Well, Job," started Evans. "Tell us about yourself?"

Job fastened his gaze upon the speaker. If the eyes are the windows of the soul, Job's immortal spirit must have been troubled. Muddy brown, yellowish around the edge of the pupil, they looked like the grounds of strong coffee left at the bottom of the cup.

"My son—" Job began. "It came to pass that you plucked me from a watery grave." He laughed sardonically. "Previous to that my life had been a long endeavor to convert men to Faith, and to punish the wrong-doer—" He paused.

Evans did not insist. Mouston, who had a passion for gambling, brought out a soiled deck of cards, and, with the others, started a lively game of poker. Job joined in without invitation. Whatever may have been his religious convictions, he certainly knew the game. He gathered all the loose coin in sight—French louis, English sovereigns, American eagles.

But luck shifted.

Evans began to win in his turn, and the coin issued from Job's pockets in endless stream. His thin hands clutched at the pasteboards, his lips worked, his eyebrows twitched. The others smiled at his dismay.

Suddenly he spoke—

"You cheated!"

Evans smiled. Then Job spawned a stream of invectives. Evans grew pale. The others discreetly kept silent. Evans was a good shot. He had often demonstrated the speed of his draw. To such words as Job used and an unjust accusation, according to their code, there could be but one answer. Gujol, alone was unsuspecting. He looked for a fist fight at most. On board ship these terms used by sailors resulted in an exchange of blows, at most a knife thrust.

Evans was mild—deadly cold. Job viciously spat his rage. Evans' hand moved toward his gun, deliberately, as though to warn the other.

There was a report. Job leaped backward against the flimsy wall. His gun was smoking in his hand. Evans, who had been seated, was looking at him in surprize, braced on his hands. Then his head sank on his breast. The upper part of his body toppled forward, and he lay, one arm outstretched, very still.

Gujol saw the back of his shirt darken; then the blood came through.

"The way of the transgressor is hard!" coolly remarked Job, replacing his gun.

Mouston approached the body, turned it over.

"Dead——"

Gujol looked at the others. Horror was written on their faces. The ruthless killing, in spite of their callousness, had shaken them. Elliot, who had been Evans' best friend, was trembling like a leaf.

"Why did you do that?" he questioned.

"I tried to break him of gambling by winning his money—when this method failed I removed him from temptation."

Elliot reached for his gun in his turn. Job waited until the weapon was half-out, then his own flashed down. The movement and the report were simultaneous. Elliot, in his turn, dropped his revolver; his knees sagged—he toppled forward.

"The way of the transgressor is hard—" repeated Job. Then to the others: "The instrument of Fate, that's what I am. Elliot had murder in his soul. He who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword. I have removed him. If I can not mend a man's ways, I kill him. Out in Cheyenne, they used to call me the 'Angel-Maker'."

He sat down again.

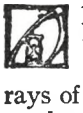
The bodies were taken aside by Mouston and the Malagasy boy who had been attracted by the detonations.

Gujol thought the scene unreal—a nightmare. Five minutes before Evans and Elliot had been alive; now they were dead. And the maniacal Job was still there, his deadly gun at his side. Who knew when he would start up again, with his muddy eyes shot through with red flashes? The speed of his draw was almost unbelievable.

Mouston was silent. Crocket, tears streaming down his ruddy cheeks, clenched and unclenched his hands. Gujol understood. The three were helpless. With a single move Job could intercept them, kill them.

So he laid down and tried to sleep as the others did.

Throughout the night he heard Mouston's even breathing, the half-sobs of Crocket, was conscious of the dead men in the corner, and the Angel-Maker, reclining in the dusky corner, his eyes open no doubt—for he never seemed to need to sleep.



ELLIOT and Evans were buried in the morning by the stream. As the last of the mist melted beneath the rays of the ardent sun, the final spadeful of earth was dropped into place. Mouston

evened the ground with his foot, and the final chapter was ended in the lives of the miners.

The Angel-Maker watched the ceremony, his expression a mixture of self-satisfaction and sadness. Was the man mad or just a devilish murderer! With sad hearts the two miners and Gujol resumed work. Job, the last bottle of rum in hand, oversaw and gave them instructions which they did not dare resent.

For several days this went on. Not once did Job get in a corner. Not once did his eyes lose their roving keenness.

THEN "Solomon" was caught by the Malagasy boy. And Gujol purchased him. He was a maki, of the lemur family, a tiny monkey-like animal. Gujol, who had an inordinate fondness for pets, coveted him on sight and named him to suit his wise little face.

Evans and Elliot had sunk into the background of hard work. Job hovered near like an evil spirit. He took his share of the gold at the end of the week when Crocket weighed the results on the small scales brought out for the purpose.

After Mouston's supply of rum had given out, the Angel Maker sent the boy to the village for more, of the native variety, which he drank down as easily. At night, when his dull eyes lighted and wandered from face to face, Mouston, Crocket and Gujol each felt as though a hand of ice grasped him by the throat. Yes, Job wanted a chance to quarrel.

Solomon grew in knowledge and was some compensation for the stalking death that permeated the hut. He gamboled and learned tricks. He brought Gujol's shoes; he stole fruit; he slept by his side, nestled in his arms. He would gravely pluck objects from gaping pockets, beg for food and perform the thousand and one cute stunts a quadrumane is capable of.

He instinctively disliked Job, kept clear of him, an attitude which Job resented. Ridiculous as it seemed he glared at the little beast with the same quality of hatred he bestowed on the men.

ONE night, Gujol and Solomon were playing. Mouston and Crocket were engaged in a game of cards.

Suddenly Job spoke—

"I'm going to the village."

"What for?" Mouston asked.

"Drink," answered Job. "The boy forgot it."

"The soldiers are there. He did not want to cause suspicion by showing the gold coin," Crocket explained.

"You'd better stay here," Gujol put in. "If they see you, they'll get you—and the rest of us."

Silence came again, broken only by the squeals of Solomon who was catching the nuts Gujol threw to him. One rolled close to Job. The little animal, humanly enough, paused and looked at Gujol. Gujol called him back, but the nut remained there. Gujol tried to distract the maki's attention, but in vain. Job silently stared at him. As though hypnotized by his glance Solomon drew closer and closer.

The Angel-Maker reached out, grasped him, and drew him to his side. He endeavored to stroke him, but Solomon trembled and struggled to get free. Gujol, it must be said, did not interfere. Angered at the maki's unfavorable reception of his caresses, Job attempted to force him to nestle, as he so often did with his master. Solomon, frightened, used his only means of defense—his teeth.

The Angel-Maker released him with an oath, and the monkey scampered away. But before he could reach Gujol, he was dead and Job again was braced against the wall, gun in hand.

The two miners looked up.

Gujol picked up his pet, held him close in his arms. Tears came to his eyes and the little fellow found strength in his agony to crowd his head closer to his chest. Gujol had no gun. He was helpless. Had he borne one he would have had no chance. So, he simply spoke:

"Job, I'll even this up. This little beast you had no excuse to kill."

"What will you do?" Job demanded calmly.

"Wait——"

The Angel-Maker strode close, looking him in the face.

"Remember—" he said. "The way of the transgressor is hard. Revenge is an unworthy feeling. Think it over while I go to the village."

With that he went out of the hut, and disappeared.

Mouston and Crocket, too, were angry. Gujol laid the little dead animal before him,

stroked the thick hair and mumbled dully, over and over—

"Wait—wait—wait——"

"We'll take a chance and try to get him tonight," Mouston suggested.

"No—" replied Gujol. "Wait——"

"Do you think he'll go to the village?" demanded Crocket.

"No," Mouston replied. "He's greedy and won't take a chance of losing the gold he did not work for."

MOUSTON was wrong.

The next morning the three were awakened by shots from the bush. Job, his long legs propelling him at tremendous speed, raced across the open.

"The soldiers—" he announced; took his tin of dust and made his exit, running down the trail toward the place where the small boat was moored.

The Malagasy boy was a loyal fellow and helped the white men gather their belongings.

From the outside came the howls of the oncoming negroes.

The three left by the rear window and took to the trail. They ran until their lungs seemed about to burst. And as they ran Crocket and Mouston made threats against the Angel-Maker who had ruined their expedition. It was an evil day indeed when they saved him, they declared.

Gujol said nothing.

It was at the second bend in the trail that Mouston fell. An hostile party had evidently crossed the bush at a tangent; Mouston, struck in the forehead, went down like a bag of meal. Crocket and Gujol threw away their packs, which impeded them, and ran on. No more shots came. The soldiers were evidently using muzzle-loaders. But spears fell close at hand. One struck Crocket on the shoulder. Gujol tore it out in spite of the barbed tip, and the mad flight was resumed.

At the shore they found that Job had taken the small boat and was already halfway to the *Amourette* which had swung her nose down-stream. In the water, swimming vigorously, were the two black boys, the one who had served them as servant and the other, who had been left to watch the boat. Crocket and Gujol dived in, and followed. As they dragged themselves on board, Duguay, at the stern clamored his orders; the negroes scrambled about like monkeys; the sail went up. From the shore came reports, and the heavy lead bullets tore through the stout canvas.

The *Amourette* stirred, gathered headway, and her slim nose cut down-stream at fair speed. The craft reached the mouth of the river, with the breakers just ahead. The wind fell and the anchor had to be dropped.

And while they lay becalmed, from the shore issued canoes, each manned by a dozen paddlers and bearing several gaudily clad soldiers. Duguay, in this emergency, departed from his assumed neutrality, handed carbines to his crew and to the white men. The modern weapons made ridiculous the attack. One of the Hova soldiers pitched overboard, men cried out as the bullets struck them, and the canoes drew off.

The natives perhaps planned a night rush that would carry the craft without heavy casualities. But when the sun, sinking behind the mountains of Madagascar, threw their long shadows over the lowlands, a fresh breeze came up, and the smack heaved forward. By night she was threading her way in and out of the coral reefs as if her prow wore eyes.

DUGUAY was at the tiller.

As on the night of their arrival, the Malagasy crew hummed an undertone to the wind and the mast swung beneath the stars. From the open sea came the fresh smell of space, bracing after the turgid atmosphere of the river side.

Beneath the lantern glow sat Job, Crocket and Gujol.

"Where are we bound for?" questioned Crocket.

"Back to St. Denis," Gujol answered.

Job smiled.

"We'll let by-gones be by-gones, eh?"

"No—" replied Gujol.

"Can't prove anything on me. The others reached first— Didn't they?"

"Yes—" Crocket had to agree.

"There is Solomon," Gujol remarked quietly.

"There is no law against shooting a monkey," retorted the Angel-Maker. "And in any case, you can't make much of a fuss, this outfit being after gold——"

"I didn't say you'd have to settle with the law," Gujol explained. "Your quarrel is with me——"

"Then where do you come off?" Job humorously demanded.

"You'll see——"

Gujol regarded his enemy somberly. The fierce indomitable spirit of his ancestors was behind him. He again was the Puritan, capable of wresting a home from the wilderness or of burning old women as witches. His intolerance had come back. Here was an evil doer, a man who had committed crimes.

"When do I get my punishment?" Job derided.

"Tonight—" With this Gujol reached over and grasped the Angel-Maker's shoulder.

Job reached for his gun. But Gujol had started his left hand before moving the right, and while the lanky fellow was watching the hand that held his shoulder, the other closed on his right wrist. The ex-farmer's grip was as rigid as iron. The struggle began. In spite of his height Job was light, while Gujol possessed a sturdy build. Yet, so great was the sheer nerve force of the Angel-Maker, that he actually gained his feet.

But once on the heaving deck, standing, Gujol's greater experience on shipboard told. He kept his balance while Job lurched this way and that. Duguay had relinquished the tiller to one of the boys. The reef broke under the keel. Step by step Gujol worked Job toward the rail. The latter, with his free hand, punched at the broad back, but his blows had no effect. The fanatical youth held him, and pushed him backward, further and further, until Job had the rail at his back with Gujol's superior poundage on his chest.

His long legs clung to the deck desperately. Then one foot lifted and kicked ridiculously in the air.

The watchers could hear the two panting heavily.

"For the love of Heaven!" appealed the Angel-Maker at last. "Don't—don't——"

"The way of the transgressor is hard——"

"Anything—anything—but don't throw me in there again—" begged Job.

The other foot left the deck. A brief heave, and Job's body was over the rail. But he still hung on, one hand clutched to Gujol—the other on the broad rail——

"Bread plucked from the water—" panted Gujol.

He freed his hand, and with his fist hammered on the clutching fingers on the rail. Job was howling now in inhuman tones. The negroes grinned. Crocket watched calmly, while Duguay, as bland as ever eased himself to the pitching and rolling.

A last punch and the battered fingers relaxed. There was a distant splash.

Gujol turned to the others, his face mystical in its tenseness. His white skin showed in the rips in his shirt. There was a resolution, a courage, never before seen in him.

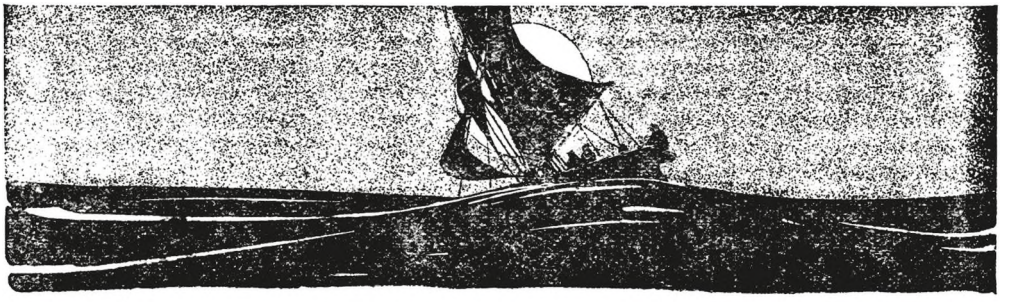
"Of such ain't the Kingdom of Heaven—" he concluded.

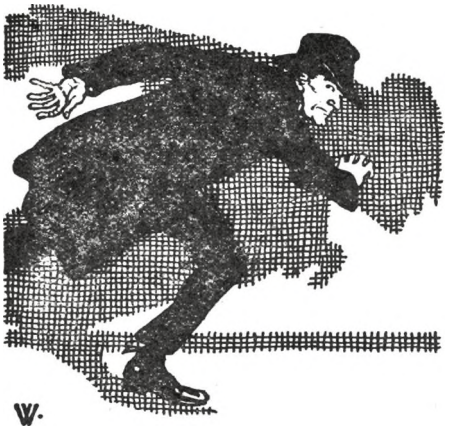
There was a faint cry behind. Then nothing.

Gujol's eyes wandered on the billowing surface of the sea, on the cascading water which caught the reflection of the stars in brief glimpses.

To the southeast, Reunion. To the west Madagascar.

At the tiller, Duguay smoked his pipe.





THE FAULTLESS ALIBI

by Charles Lee Bryson

YOU may call me old-fashioned if you wish. I have no desire to be considered ultra modern, either in my religious views or my moral code. I never preach. But I am a firm believer in the old adage that murder will out.

I do not admit that the cleverest man on earth can plan a crime so carefully, and carry out all the hundreds of details so accurately, that it will not some day be traced to him. It has been tried many times, and in the course of twenty-five busy years I have had my part in scores of the murder mysteries which thrill and horrify and delight the readers of the metropolitan newspapers. And never yet have I known a murderer to escape.

Oh, yes, I readily admit that not all murderers are hanged, nor sent to the penitentiary, nor even arrested. Nevertheless their crimes are traced to them, and they are punished. The press tells the public frequently, and in minute detail, of the crimes which are not openly avenged by the law. The public never knows, and even the press is not always on the inside, when a crime is punished by some other than the legally constituted powers. But I maintain that it always happens.

I am glad that I believe as I do. It would be very disquieting to me, standing as I do for law and order and the punishment of crime, if I were convinced that a shrewd mind could so plan a capital crime that it would go undetected. But I have never been so convinced, and I have seen much.

Every newspaper has in its reference room—its morgue, as it is irreverently termed—a list of "unsolved murder mysteries," and whenever a fresh capital crime is committed, and the police do not at once arrest some person and charge him with the offense, that list is dragged out and printed anew with the latest atrocity added to the old ones.

Some day I am going to let in the light on a list of murders which to my certain knowledge have been solved in all their details, and stern justice meted out, but which are still called unfathomed mysteries by those who do not know; or who, knowing, are not permitted to give out the facts.

I shall tell the true story of the poisoning of fifty of the most prominent men of the city, what time an archbishop was the guest of honor. I shall tell who did the poisoning and why; and of those who died I shall tell which were meant to be victims and which were mere innocent bystanders. And I shall tell what befell the murderer later.

Also there is the story of the death of the scion of one of the richest families in America. In the police records and in the coroner's books it is set down as a suicide, and is so accepted by the public. But I shall tell who really did the killing, and it will be seen that it did not go unpunished.

I could mention here, off-hand, a dozen cases in which the public still believes that the police failed miserably in their duty. In some instances the police themselves really do not know just what happened, though

they do know that justice was done and that they no longer need seek the criminal; in other instances they knew, but for reasons of policy permitted the public to believe that they had failed, and bore in silence the denunciations of the newspapers for that supposed failure. I could occupy several evenings telling of interesting affairs which it is no longer necessary to keep secret.

The story I now have in mind is of the murder of Burton St. John within a few steps of a busy thoroughfare, and the utter collapse of every clew the police ever found to his murderer. That is, so far as the public knew every clew collapsed. It is a typical unsolved murder mystery of the newspaper morgues.

Burton St. John was found stabbed through the heart, lying dead in a side street a few rods off Lake Shore Drive. His pockets were turned out, and several hundred dollars which he usually carried was gone. His diamond pin and ring were not taken. The police said this was either because the robber was afraid he was about to be interrupted, or because he was after money alone and would not risk taking anything which might later be identified and so connect him with the crime.

I have all the details, because in the first place I was at the time a police reporter and it was my business to find out all I could; and in the second place because I was a close personal friend of Martin Barry, through whose shrewdness the case was closed and all the circumstances kept secret.

Yes, I know all about the murder of Burton St. John. And I shall here set down, as clearly as I can, the story of the man who for months planned that murder, who rehearsed it night after night, who established in advance an airtight alibi—and yet who was caught.

True, he was never arrested and hanged, nor formally accused and taken into court to be tried, nor in any legal way made to answer. So far as the public knows and believes he has to this day escaped every penalty attaching to such an offense. Yet I now say to you that I had rather have been Burton St. John, myself lying dead as he lay dead, my sightless eyes staring upward even as did his at the murky, rainy, midnight canopy of Chicago, than be the man who sent him to his death.

II

THE tragedy had its beginnings away back in the early nineties, what time there was a great rush of treasure-seekers to the newly discovered gold fields of Cripple Creek, Colorado, over beyond Pike's Peak. Among those who followed it were two young chaps, Herman Sutcliffe and St. John Bristow. They met for the first time in the free and easy mining-camp and soon became close friends. Bristow was a mining engineer, and Sutcliffe engaged him to look after some promising mining claims he had staked out. This led finally to young Sutcliffe, who was not much of a business man, gradually turning over his affairs more and more to the young mining engineer.

In the course of time Sutcliffe built a cozy log cabin and brought out his wife and little girl from the East. And as Bristow was a bachelor, it seemed the most natural thing in the world for them to invite him to make his home with them instead of at the garish hotel where he and Sutcliffe had been living.

A "triangle" developed, as it so often does when a stranger is admitted to the home and is thrown much in the company of a young wife. I never knew—and it does not matter now—whether Bristow deliberately set himself to win the wife of his friend; or whether the head of pretty Vera Sutcliffe was giddy and she purposely made him fall in love with her; or whether it was one of those sudden flarings out of passion in the breasts of both, unexpected and unwanted by either.

However it came about, they were presently madly in love with each other, and everybody except Sutcliffe knew it. As usual, the husband was the very last to suspect anything, and nobody felt like speaking to him about it.

The first inkling Sutcliffe had that anything was amiss was when he went home one evening and found that Bristow and Vera had eloped. She had left the little girl in charge of a neighbor. Sutcliffe did not learn until some days later that Bristow had also used his power of attorney and had sold Sutcliffe's claims and taken the money.

Of course there could be but one ending if Sutcliffe could manage to come up with Bristow. And he was game to try. He easily learned which way they had gone,

and by the next stage coach he started in pursuit. He arrived at Colorado Springs in time to learn to what point they had bought tickets and to take a train only six hours behind them.

At midnight Sutcliffe came to the end of the trail. His train was stopped at a division point, and in answer to his questionings he was told that the track was washed out somewhere ahead. There were rumors of a wreck also, but the worried passengers could learn nothing definite. All the rest of the night they were held there, while other trains piled into the town and added to the congestion.

Nothing went forward except a relief train with surgeons and nurses—and coffins, a wrecking crew with its tackle and a work train with a load of tools and material and track layers.

When morning came and a train from the rear brought the Denver papers, Sutcliffe felt in his heart that the chase was over. This is what had happened:

It was late Summer, hot and dry and dusty. Up in the foot-hills there had been, the preceding day, a very violent local thunderstorm with a rainfall amounting to a cloud-burst. Such an immense quantity of water fell on such a small area that every hillside poured cascades into the gulches; every gulch ran brimful of turbid water, and the bed of the creek which drained that section, usually a mere trickle when it was not entirely dry, was carrying a wild torrent.

Out from the foot-hills and across the dry plain where no storm had been, roaring down the bed of a deep and narrow arroyo, swept a thick, dirty, foaming mass of mud and water, presenting the curious spectacle of a river at flood stage, tearing along at ten miles an hour, under a burning sun and through a land whereon not a drop of water had fallen in months.

How was the engineer of the Limited to know that the usually dry bed of the arroyo was level-full of raging water, gnawing and clawing and tearing at its banks, and that it had already undermined the piling of the wooden trestle? The sun shone, the dust billowed up about his train as he shoved her along at sixty miles an hour, and a flood was the last thing he could have imagined. Then he struck the trestle; it crumbled under him like a toy built of cornstalks, and the whole train dropped bodily into the coffee-colored waters.

It was nearly noon before Sutcliffe, bullying and pleading and bribing by turns, arrived at the scene of the disaster. He knew by this time that the train which had been six hours ahead of him was the one which had gone down with the trestle. He went directly to the improvised morgue. Almost the first face they uncovered for him was Vera's.

Bristow he could not find. With dry eyes and set face he looked at every corpse taken from the water. He stood on the bank and peered under each sheet as the searchers returned at intervals with another sheaf of the fearful harvest. All that day and all the next, and until the last crew gave up and said that they could find no more, did he stand guard. He had to be content with the theory—almost a certainty—that Bristow was one of the dozen or so of the missing who never were found. When finally he was forced to accept this conclusion he turned away.

There was no scandal. To the reporters Sutcliffe said that Vera had been on her way to revisit her little home town in the Middle West. And he took her back there, and buried her, and mourned over her and their shattered life, and the broken friendship which had led to it—and nobody knew the truth.

Then back to Cripple Creek just long enough to claim his baby girl and get away on the next stage-coach. Thereafter the camp heard about him only vaguely and at increasing intervals. He was said to be in the Klondike, growing rich in the gold diggings. Presently he had faded out of the minds of the few who had known him, and from that day forward neither the gold camp nor the old home town ever heard from him.

III

IT WAS fifteen years after the wreck in the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains that Seacliffe Harriman came to Chicago. He brought no letters of introduction, but he brought an ample fortune in securities, and he opened a large checking account with one of the biggest Loop banks. Presently he started a modest little bond and mortgage business and spent most of his days in his office. He joined two or three quiet clubs and led the regular life of a staid, respectable, middle-aged man

who is able to retire from business, but who chooses to remain in it.

He took a cottage on the South Side near the Midway, but he had no wife to preside over it. He was a widower with one daughter, and he had chosen that locality so that she might be near the university.

Even if there had been in Chicago any one who had known Herman Sutcliffe in the old days of the gold rush in Colorado he would never have recognized him in Seacliffe Harriman, the rich bond-dealer and clubman. And in all the city were few or none who had even heard of him.

Herman Sutcliffe had been fair, slender and good to look upon, with an open, sunny smile and an affable manner which won him many friends wherever he went. Seacliffe Harriman was burly of figure and muscular, with a face seared and roughened by Arctic winds, and sutured entirely across in two places with the livid weals of knife-scars. His once soft and wavy hair had become coarse and bristly, and his manner so aloof that he had the reputation of being bear-like—an impression which he took no pains to overcome, for he desired solitude.

And as fifteen years spent beyond the fringe of even semi-civilization had accustomed him to getting what he wanted, he had only what he desired of acquaintances in his clubs and his business life.

Seacliffe Harriman had been settled in his Midway home, his clubs and his bond and mortgage business about a year when from out the great West came another man to the city, Burton St. John. He entered a prominent law firm, joined a few clubs and made friends rapidly. Ordinarily St. John might have lived for twenty years in the city and not have come in contact with Seacliffe Harriman, who loved retirement and made so few acquaintances and no friends. But Fate willed it that one of the clubs which he joined should be one of which Harriman was a member.

Harriman's first sight of Burton St. John came one evening when he was reading in the club lounge. Several men came into the room together, and presently one of them addressed another as "St. John."

The sound of that name was as an electric shock to the nerves of Seacliffe Harriman, yet one observing him closely would never have suspected that he even heard it. He lifted his eyes from his book without moving so much as a muscle of the rest of his body. Well it was for him that he had been trained for years in the rigid school of the North, where life itself hangs on perfect self-control. Otherwise he certainly would have been startled by what he saw into an exclamation or a movement which would have attracted attention—and later might have been remembered.

As it was, he gave one keen, flashing glance, dropped his eyes to the page again and went on reading. No Indian could have been more stoical in expression as—apparently—he was reabsorbed in the volume. But his heart was leaping joyously within him, and to himself he was saying:

"I get my chance after all! St. John Bristow didn't go down for keeps in the wreck. One of the bitterest things in my life has been the thought that he died with Vera. It is sweet to know that was denied him. Sweeter to know that he shall now die at my hands. Now let's see how best to do it."

Even as he sat there, and his victim stood before him laughing and talking with his friends, Harriman began to lay his plans. First he would learn whether St. John, as he called himself, had a wife. If he had Harriman would set himself deliberately to win her away from him, or at least involve her in some terrible scandal. That, he told himself, would be a fitting start. Later he would kill St. John in some manner which should leave no clew to point to himself. Day and night, from that moment, he lived for revenge only.

The guarded inquiries which he made brought the information that St. John had no family. He had been widowed, he told his friends, by a railroad wreck somewhere out West, years ago. That added bitterness to Harriman's heart.

"Considered himself widowed by Vera's death, did he?" demanded Harriman of himself—he never confided anything to another soul, but kept his own counsel always. "Doesn't consider that I was widowed and that I may be still living. Thinks a change of name and profession a complete disguise. But the name is too like, the looks are the same, and I have even seen that mole behind the left ear which I remember only too well. Lord, but I'll pay him!"

St. John had taken apartments on the near North Side, on what the newspapers had named the Gold Coast because so many millionaires lived there. It was within easy

walking distance of the loop if one were not in a great hurry—and St. John seldom was. He formed the habit of remaining until late in the evening at one or another of his clubs, and then walking alone to his rooms.

The watchful Harriman soon knew all about this. He knew, then, at about what hour and at about what spot he would take his revenge. He knew, too, with what weapon. He always carried in a sheath beneath his left arm the long, heavy hunting knife which had saved his life on several occasions in the Klondike, and which at various times had cost the lives of at least three other men. With that in his hand only one blow would be needed; and well Harriman knew where that blow should fall and with what terrible ferocity it would be driven home.

SOON he began to work out the details, and he bestowed on them a world of pains. The North had taught him infinite patience. He would go for a drive on the evening St. John was to be removed. He would show himself at various places a long way from the Gold Coast until late evening. Then he would drive swiftly into town, park his car in a shady spot in the street next west of Lake Shore Drive, slip through a side street to the corner of the drive and wait until St. John came along. He would call him into the dark side street on some pretext, send home that one unerring blow—and two minutes later he would be in his own car gliding quietly to the Midway cottage.

But about asking St. John into the side street at night—he might refuse to come if he did not know the man who asked him. Harriman must make his acquaintance. So he got a friend in the club to introduce him, and by reason of the stern schooling his nerves had been through he was able to shake St. John's hand and look into his face without betraying a flicker of emotion.

In a way Harriman had wished for some such test. He wanted to be very sure whether St. John would, under any circumstances, recognized him as Herman Sutcliffe. He purposely made the ordeal a severe one by asking St. John whether he were a family man.

"If there is anything remaining in me to remind him of Herman Sutcliffe he will see it when I make him think of Vera," said Harriman to himself. "I'll try it."

St. John replied very briefly, with a momentary cloud on his face, that he had lost his wife in a wreck years ago, and that she had borne him no children. So that was safe.

Now to arrange a way of retreat from that little side street in case some one should come into it from the west just at the moment he needed to leave by that way. Harriman went for a daylight walk through the street to familiarize himself with all its details. He found, about midway of the block, a small cottage with a "For Rent" sign in the window. By inquiring among the clerks in his own office, he found one who wanted to rent a cottage. With this as a pretext he went to the renting agency and paid a small deposit to hold the cottage for a few weeks, gave the clerk's name and got the key. Then, to make this proceeding seem part of a *bona fide* transaction, he actually did rent a cottage in another neighborhood and turn it over to his clerk.

On another day Harriman went to the side street and let himself into the cottage to study the lie of the land from that viewpoint. He found that by going out at the back door and down a little walk he could reach a private alley which led to the next street west—the one in which he meant to park his car when the time came. That suited his plans exactly.

Then one night he went for a drive alone in his car. He toured the boulevards to the west until midnight approached. But at 10:45 he slid silently into the darkened street he had chosen and brought his car to a stop near the mouth of the private alley. He went down this alley and let himself in at the back door of the cottage, passed through and out at the front door into the side street and thence to the corner of Lake Shore Drive.

He idled about the corner, keeping well in the shadow, until he saw Burton St. John approaching. Turning his back so that he would not be recognized, he permitted St. John to pass the corner. Quickly then he made his way back into the cottage, out at the back door, through the private alley to his car and drove home.

On another night, and another, and yet another, Harriman went through the same program, until his every movement was made with the utmost precision and

certainty. There was no need for haste, for St. John had not the slightest idea of the fate that was preparing for him; and besides, Harriman was getting almost as much satisfaction out of the rehearsals as he anticipated from the actual deed. He could afford to be patient, and he knew how to be. None better. Oh, the North is a terrible teacher, and its lessons are never so lightly learned that they are ever forgotten. No, indeed! Harriman was a patient man.

Finally Harriman was satisfied with his rehearsals. He had planned for every contingency that the mind of a shrewd man could foresee. He fixed on a night when there would be no moon, when the sky was partly overcast and there was a probability of rain before morning. Before leaving his garage in the evening he deliberately punctured the tire of the spare wheel he carried, and he purposely took the road with a short supply of gasoline.

He drove leisurely about the parks and boulevards for a time, then took the westerly road to Desplaines. There he stopped at a garage for gasoline. His tank was almost empty.

"Have you the correct time?" he asked the attendant who was waiting on him. "I've got to be back in town by 10:30 and I didn't realize it was as late as my watch says."

"You won't be back by no half-past ten," replied the man, looking at his own watch. "It's a quarter past right now, an' the speed cops'll sure git you if you hit 'er up over a mile a minute from here in."

"I mustn't be any later than I have to be," said Harriman, handing out a ten-dollar bill. "Keep the change—I'd rather save the time than have the money."

He drove off at a speed which would have been sure to cause his arrest if he had kept it up long. But he did not. He had no mind to be arrested that night. He knew that the garage attendant would remember him from the size of the tip, and would be able to swear that Harriman could not, without an aeroplane, have covered the twenty miles to the loop that night by 10:30. A few miles out of Desplaines on the road to the city Harriman pulled to the side of the road and jacked up a rear wheel. With an electric flashlight he stopped the next big car going west, and asked for a match and the exact time.

"I've just got to make the loop by ten-thirty, and here I've a flat tire and I'm doubtful of my watch," he explained.

"Ten-twenty right now," said the man, handing him a box of matches. "You're sure out of luck. Anything I can do?"

"No, thanks. I can change wheels in a jiffy myself, but I'm afraid I'm going to trail into town about eleven o'clock."

A glance had told Harriman the number of the car he had stopped—which was what he wanted. Here was another witness who could be found if needed, and who would testify that at 10:20 that night Harriman was some sixteen miles from the loop and stopped for repairs. He needed no more.

He let down the wheel, leaped into the car, and at some actual risk from the motorcycle cops raced smoothly back to the city, turned down the darkened side street, slid noiselessly into the spot he had chosen to park and switched off all his lights. Not a soul was in sight.

With the coolest deliberation but with all his senses alert Harriman now set himself to the real task. Calmly and with the utmost quiet he walked down the private alley to the rear of the cottage. Without turning his head he watched every door, every back yard he passed, and listened carefully for any sound. He neither saw nor heard any person.

He let himself in at the back gate—he had learned to manipulate it without a sound—and started up the little walk to the back door. He had gone half-way when a piercing scream rent the air. Any other man, on such an errand, would have been startled into flight, or at least into a leap or an exclamation. Harriman merely stopped and stood absolutely motionless. Two cats, spitting and screeching, dashed from between the buildings and ran across the yard and into the obscurity of the alley.

Then he moved on, silently, swiftly, but without haste, as before. The key was in his hand as he reached the back door. Without loss of time or motion he inserted it in the lock, turned it carefully and opened the door. As carefully he closed and locked it, leaving the key in place. Silently he passed through the rooms to the front, where he paused for a full minute to make certain that there was no one passing in the side street.

Not a soul was to be seen. Not a sound was to be heard. Noiselessly he opened the front door and set the spring lock so that

it would not fasten when he closed it. Out into the side street, carefully but not stealthily he made his way until he stood at the corner of Lake Shore Drive. He lounged about with an idle air so that if he were observed it would not be suspected that he had any object in remaining there. He glanced carelessly at his watch—he was in ample time. It was just 10:50, a trifle earlier than he had ever known St. John to pass.

If there were any strain on his nerves the most careful observer could not have detected it. His whole air was as casual, as cool, as unconcerned as if he were undecided just what next to do. Yet he stood beside the Rubicon. He could yet turn back, and be a rich, respected, law-abiding citizen. Unless he changed his mind, the next five minutes would see him a murderer, in the shadow of the gallows, abhorred of men.

Live as long as he might, the statute of limitations would never run for him. He would be hunted all his days. At any moment some clew might develop in spite of all his care; he might in his sleep or in delirium betray himself; his conscience even might goad him into confession some day. Then the hangman's noose.

This son of the far North never faltered. Coolly and deliberately he waited there in the shadow until he heard the firm footsteps and saw the agile form of St. John approaching. Harriman stepped out to meet him.

IV

I WAS a police reporter in those days, and I was on night duty at the old East Chicago Avenue station when St. John's body was found. Some one passing through the side street after midnight on God knows what errand, stumbled over it lying there, the white face turned up to the drizzling rain that had begun to fall.

Call it fate, or luck, or predestination or whatever you will, but it just happened that Martin Barry was at the station that night. Barry was the man picked out by whatever power it is that arranges such things, to clear up the mystery of that killing, in spite of all the elaborate precautions that had been taken, and in the face of a faultless alibi. Barry had been a patrolman for a few years, then on the detective squad, and by his matchless nerve and shrewdness in solving murder mysteries he had won a lieutenant's star. But for years he had been taking a hard course of night study and was graduated from a law school about the time he won his promotion. So he resigned from the force to practise his profession. And that night, of all nights in the world, he was down at the police station looking after the son of one of his rich clients who had been arrested for speeding.

"Man found dead in Blank street close to Lake Shore Drive," announced the desk sergeant after answering a phone call.

There was a scurrying of detectives and reporters.

"Come along with us, Martin," I pleaded. "This may be a big case—in that neighborhood. Come and be assistant police reporter."

"Come on, Barry, give us a hand," called one of the men who used to work with Barry and valued his keenness where a crime was concerned.

"All right. I s'pose I'll never get the fever out of my blood any more than you nutty newspaper men. I'm always more interested in a murder than in my own bread and butter. I'll never learn any sense."

So Martin Barry piled out of the station with the rest of us, and in a few minutes we were in the side street where, even at that unearthly hour and in an increasing rain, a crowd had begun to gather. Some persons seem to spy out horrors as vultures do. Barry bent over the prostrate form and turned an electric flashlight on the features. He started back and seized my arm in a grip which made me wince.

"Good Lord! It's Burton St. John!"

"And who the devil is he?" demanded a detective.

"My friend, and one of my law partners!"

Barry went down on his knees to examine the body for any spark of life. There was little hope of that. Under the body and all around it and far down the asphalt pavement in a dark stream was more blood than I had thought one human body could have contained. The man was stone dead. That was quickly apparent.

Barry had no trouble finding the wound. He threw open the coat and vest, unbuttoned the shirt and undergarments and exposed the chest. There was a stab wound—just one, and surely no more were needed.

The coroner said afterward that the heart had been fairly cleft in twain by that blow.

"See if you can find the knife!" Barry ordered, just as if he were still in command. "He probably threw it into a yard somewhere close by."

Some of the men went to searching the side street and the yards for clews.

"Poor old St. John!" said Barry to himself as he resumed his examination. "Well and strong and happy today as any man you ever saw. And now this! Pockets turned out—look at that now. There's his wallet between his feet. Don't touch it for a minute."

Barry moved over and held down his flashlight over the wallet.

"Took out the money and stamped the leather into the dirt to spoil the finger prints," was his comment. "Some wise bird did this job."

He went on with his examination and his comment:

"Pin still in his tie, and ring on his finger. This guy was in some big hurry, or else he was afraid of being pinched with the rocks on 'im. He's going to be hard to find, for he's got a— Hello! What's this?"

Barry, talking in an undertone more to himself than to the rest of us, picked up an expensive gold watch from beside the body and stared at it. The crystal was shattered and the case dented as if it had been dropped on the pavement.

"Stopped at ten-twenty," muttered Barry. "Was about to take it and then thought better of it. H'm! I wonder now. Guess I'll hold this as evidence."

In a side pocket of the dead man's coat he came upon a white handkerchief smeared with blood. It was crumpled into a wad, but he slowly pulled it open and looked carefully.

"Sure was some cool and careful bird," his muttered comment ran. "Hadn't time to take a pin and ring, but started to take a watch. Had plenty of leisure to wipe his dagger on poor old St. John's handkerchief, and then stuff it back in a pocket where the white wouldn't attract attention. Some peculiar bird, I'll say. Guess I'll keep this too."

The handkerchief followed the watch into Barry's pocket.

The murder of St. John made just the kind of a story in which a sensational press revels. Here was a well-to-do young lawyer, on his way from a club to his rooms in a fashionable quarter, done to death and robbed within a few steps of one of the city's finest thoroughfares at 10:20 in the evening—an hour when hundreds were passing to and fro almost at his side.

Murder and robbery, and the police without a clew! Believe me, we made the most of it. And as day after day went by and the mystery was still unsolved, the editorial writers grew more and more sarcastic about a police force which was always raiding parlor poker games, concerning itself with matters of morality, when it could not protect human life or catch the murderers of prominent citizens.

But in ten days or so we had other big stories to distract our attention and keep us busy. The St. John case, while not forgotten, was no longer live news. It was fit only for watching in case there should be further developments. We had listed it with the other unsolved murder mysteries of the big city, and ceased to concern ourselves about it.

But because of my personal relations with Martin Barry, I felt a more than ordinary interest in the case. I knew Barry must be working hard on it, for he would never stop until he had done everything possible to avenge his partner. I could not get rid of the notion that Barry had found something. It really amounted to a hunch. So up to his offices I went one day and found him in his private office alone.

"Martin, I want the low-down on that St. John case," I said to him with the frankness that obtains between men who have worked together for years. "I'm plenty sure you've got to the inside of it, and I want it."

"There's nothing that can be printed, Horton."

"Come across with it and let's see," I challenged him.

"I think I've got it worked out," he admitted, deliberately, "and it's coming to a showdown in this room—" glancing at his watch— "in just ten minutes. Stick around if you like, only you don't use a word till I give permission."

"You're on."

That was all I said, and it was all that was needed. For while the general public believes that newspaper men rush to their offices and print everything they hear, and make up a lot they don't hear, presidents

and cabinet officers and judges and policemen and some business men know that a secret is never safer than when given to a newspaper man under pledge of secrecy. And Barry knew that my careless acceptance of his terms was as sacred as a bond.

 OUR TALK turned to other subjects, and it was exactly ten minutes from the time Barry had looked at his watch when Seacliffe Harriman entered the door. I knew him by sight, but not personally. Barry introduced us, not mentioning my business connection.

"You wanted to see me on some private matter?" he asked, with a glance toward me.

"Yes, but Horton is an old friend, and perfectly trustworthy. Besides, he knows most of what I have to say to you."

This was not the exact truth, but it served the purpose.

"Very well, what is it?" demanded Harriman, sitting down.

"Mr. Sutcliffe, I want to know the details of the killing of Burton St. John."

To the eternal credit of the mighty North as a schoolmaster be it said that there was not the twitch of a muscle in the face of Seacliffe Harriman as he heard the words which told him that his deed was known. He was addressed by the name he had borne before his Klondike days, and he was asked directly to account for the death of St. John; but his face was like any rock on Chilkoot Pass for expression.

"How am I concerned in that?" he asked impersonally.

Barry told me afterward that he had never seen a more splendid exhibition of nerve and self-control. He answered the question with another—

"Do you mind telling me where you were when St. John was killed?"

"Not in the least—that is, if I can manage recollect it myself. You see—" he smiled whimsically— "I'm not married, and I don't keep a diary so I'm not accustomed to having to account for every minute. Let's see—what date was that? Two weeks ago Monday night, wasn't it?"

"Wednesday," Barry corrected him tersely.

"Wednesday, was it? Probably I was at the theater that night. When I go it is usually on Wednesday evenings because—no matter why."

"No, you wrong your memory," Barry set him right again. "You were out automobile riding that night—alone."

"I am always alone when I drive at night. If that was the night I now recall, I must have been on the boulevards somewhere. I remember being out west of the city limits about that time, in some suburb—and running short of gasoline."

"Yes, I know all about that. You established your presence at Desplaines, some twenty miles from the loop, at 10:15."

"Then why trouble yourself further about me? I believe you gentlemen fixed on 10:20 as the hour of the unfortunate occurrence?"

Harriman worded the sentence as affirmative, but gave it the rising inflection of a direct question. Barry voiced no reply, but looked steadfastly at his man. Presently Harriman asked easily—

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. The hour of the unfortunate occurrence was set at 10:20 by the newspapers, but I think they were mistaken. I have taken the trouble to ascertain that you actually were in Desplaines at 10:15, and that you have a witness who will remember it—you gave him reason to hold it in mind. Also that you were only a few miles from Desplaines five minutes later—and that you can prove it by a highly respected business man if necessary. But that is not the point. Burton St. John was not killed at ten-twenty. It was a very few minutes before eleven when he was struck down."

"I think I remember reading that the dead man's watch had stopped at ten-twenty—that it apparently had been broken in the struggle, or had been dropped accidentally by the robber."

Harriman's voice was low and steady as he made this observation in a conversational tone, quite as if he had no interest in the outcome.

"Yes, the hands of the watch did indicate that hour, and it was stopped," Barry admitted. "But, unfortunately for the man who set the watch to indicate that hour, he neglected to push the stem in again. Thus he betrayed the fact that he wanted it to appear that the crime was committed at ten-twenty and not at the hour it actually was committed. That was part of his alibi. Then he threw the watch down on the pavement and stopped it. See, I have it here exactly as I took it from beside St. John's body."

Barry drew forth the watch and, taking the stem between thumb and finger, twisted it slightly back and forth. The hands moved in response, proving his point.

"Even so, I decline to be interested," said Harriman coolly.

"Perhaps this will arouse your interest."

Barry opened a drawer of his desk and drew forth the handkerchief, stained with blood, which had been found in St. John's pocket. Harriman glanced at it.

"I am afraid it does not."

"Then we will proceed. Observe the stains where the murderer wiped his blade after striking the blow. Here you will see that he inadvertently pressed a little too hard against the knife edge, which was very sharp. It cut through the handkerchief and made a slight wound in the hand of the man who held the knife. I see, Mr. Sutcliffe, that your hand has almost healed."

With magnificent nerve Harriman, without even a glance at his hand, looked steadily at Barry and said:

"I am afraid you still bore me. Is there nothing further?"

"Since you press me, there is. Do you recall that several days ago your barber, with unusual awkwardness, cut your face slightly while he was shaving you? Well, by great good fortune I know that barber well—he used to be one of my men. He preserved for me the towel with which he wiped away the blood from the little scratch he had given you. I have it by me now."

Barry drew from the drawer a towel with a rusty stain.

"Are you interested at all?"

"I begin to fear I never shall be, but I shall remain until the séance is over. Go on."

"Very well, since you compel me."

Barry pressed a button and an elderly man, rather shabbily dressed, came from an inner room.

"Mr. Sutcliffe, meet Professor Karl Heinrich Wagner, an eminent chemist. You really should cultivate him. Does the most remarkable things. Let me explain:

"Professor Wagner has originated a blood test which is now being used in scientific laboratories all over the country—and in a few detective headquarters including our own. He can positively identify any specimen of blood when presented to him in a reasonably fresh state.

"I had Professor Wagner examine the blood on the handkerchief that day our friend was found dead. He confirmed my suspicion that there was the blood of two men on that bit of linen—that of Burton St. John, and that of the man who had murdered him. Also I had Professor Wagner examine the blood from that little cut on your face. It is the same as that on the handkerchief. Professor Wagner will so testify under oath in the Criminal Court. Now do I interest you?"

"You win."

There was a note of admiration in the voice of Seacliffe Harriman as he admitted that Martin Barry had him cornered. There certainly was nothing of fear.

"Good! Now suppose you tell us all about it. I know the most of it, as you see, but I'd like to have it confirmed."

SITTING there in the law office, after Professor Wagner had gone back to his den, Herman Sutcliffe told us the story which I have already told, of the wrecking of his home by the man he had trusted; of his winning fight against the Far North for a fortune to leave his daughter; of his meeting and recognizing St. John and planning his death; and how that plan was carried out to the minutest detail. The one place where he had slipped was in failing to push back the stem of St. John's watch after setting it back thirty-five minutes to make his alibi perfect. He actually had pushed the stem, but not far enough. Everything else had been perfectly done.

"I don't blame you in the least for wanting to kill St. John Bristow," said Barry when he had finished. "In fact I rather admire you except for one thing—and there you have my deepest sympathy, for you didn't mean to do it. You killed the wrong man."

"What!"

Even the stoicism of the mighty North was not proof against this blow. Harriman leaped to his feet, shaking, and his face turned a ghastly hue.

"It is true," Barry went on. "The man you killed was really Burton St. John, a cousin of the man who stole your wife. Bristow doubtless was lost in the flood when your wife perished. I have been going over St. John's papers for two weeks and I know the truth."

"And I've got to hang for killing an

innocent man!" Harriman burst forth. "Bristow dead all these years—why, that can't be. I saw that mole behind his ear. Why, he told me himself—deliberately asked him if he had a wife, and he told me he lost her in a wreck out west! That was my wife—the poor, innocent little kid from a country town—and he turned her head and stole her from me after I'd taken him into my home."

"I know St. John Bristow did all that." Barry was cool and patient. "I know he did, and I'd be tempted to let you go right now, and never say another word, if you'd killed him. I'd have killed him myself in such a case. But he died when your wife did, so far as I can learn. The man you got was his counsin, and that mole is a birthmark borne by many of the family. Burton St. John's wife really did die in a wreck—some collision down in Kansas—years after your wife was killed in that cloudburst."

All his years and all the hardships he had undergone in the great North seemed to lay their weight in a moment upon the head of Seacliffe Harriman. All at once he looked bowed and aged as he stood there before us.

"My poor little girl!" he cried bitterly. "After everything I've done she'll learn now of what that —— scoundrel did to her mother. And now what I've got to go through with—it'll crush her, and I did want to leave her happy. Oh, ——, what a mess I've made of everything! Here—" holding out his wrists— "snap 'em on and let's get it over."

"Sit down," Barry's tone was positively gentle. "I've been thinking this matter over quite a bit. You've murdered an innocent man, my friend and my partner, and of course you've got to pay. You know the price. But do we need to wreck the life of your daughter? Does it have to be done publicly?"

Harriman's face lighted with hope. He looked at Barry, and glanced at the open window, twenty stories above the street.

"No, not that!" exclaimed Barry hastily, afraid of some too precipitate action. "That would be suicide, not accident! That would hurt your daughter unnecessarily, and maybe bring out the whole story. Suppose you go home and think it over for a day or two."

Harriman slowly got to his feet and walked out, a thoroughly beaten man. None of us spoke at parting.

Two days later the newspapers had another big story. A motor car, rapidly driven, had dashed past a police guard, broken the protecting chains, and plunged into the river when a bridge was opened to permit a lake steamer to pass. It was a dark night and the policeman was not able to make out the number on the car as it flew past him. Next day they fished the car from the bottom of the river. It was a sedan, and inside was the driver—Seacliffe Harriman.

It was Attorney Martin Barry who went out to the Midway to seek a girl student and break to her, as gently as might be, the news of the accident which had made her an orphan. And it was Barry who settled the estate and made the girl secure in the possession of the fortune her father had wrested from the wastes of the Klondike. The public never connected the death of Seacliffe Harriman with the tragic end of Burton St. John and the wreck in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains many years before. Barry took the chief of police just far enough into his confidence that the search for St. John's murderer was stopped, and that was all.

One day, after the papers had ceased to make any reference to the St. John case except when they republished their list, I was talking with Barry in his office.

"Martin," I asked, "what made you first suspect Harriman?"

"Something I found in St. John's papers about that cousin of his who betrayed a friend, and that the bereaved friend had gone into the Klondike. But I never could have shaken that alibi if he hadn't slipped on setting the watch back. And I couldn't have proved anything even then if it hadn't been for Professor Wagner."

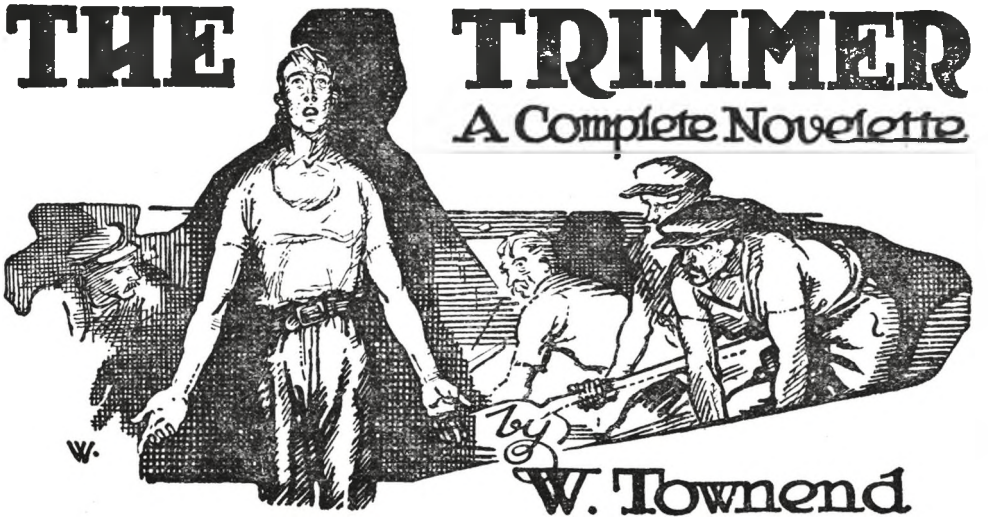
"Rot!" I exclaimed virtuously. "That Professor Wagner stuff was every bit fake. I've been inquiring into that, and I know—and you know—that blood can't be identified that way. Your case would have fallen flat in court. You were just bluffing."

"I know —— well I was bluffing," he admitted, "but I got a confession, didn't I?"

"You win," I replied.

THE TRIMMER

A Complete Novelette



by W. Townend

Author of "The Codfish," "Angel," etc.

THE donkeyman come into the *Trebizond's* engine-room from the stokehold, rubbing his hands on a piece of waste and smiling.

"You know that red-'aired trimmer, sir, Rawler!" he said.

The second engineer scowled.

"Rawler!" he said testily. "What d'you want to ask —— fool questions like that for, eh?"

The donkeyman grinned.

" 'E's gorn, sir!"

"Gone!" said the second engineer, even now not understanding what the donkeyman was wasting his time for. "Gone! How?"

"Gorn for good, sir! The firemen say 'e skipped out. 'E went ashore, sir, half an hour ago, an' told 'em he wasn't goin' to stay on a ship like this, sir; but they didn't pay no heed to him at first, sir, till they come to the conclusion, sir, seein' 'e ain't aboard, that he don't intend to go with us!"

The second engineer cursed the absent Rawler fiercely.

"—— it, donkey! We'll be leavin' in about a quarter of an hour! What's he playin' at?"

"Ah!" said the donkeyman with dry relish. " 'E told 'em 'e hoped we'd be short-'anded all the way to New York!"

The third engineer came down the ladder from the middle platform.

"Hullo, Mr. Lachan, what's wrong now? You're lookin' sad!"

"Sad!" said the second engineer. "Sad, ——! Here's that ruddy pickpocket, Rawler, skipped out, an' the stokehold hands hadn't sense enough to say a word till this minute! —— the man! If I could lay hold of him now, I'd just about kill him."

"No such luck, sir," said the donkeyman. "No, sir, 'e's gorn!"

"Well," said the second, "I'll go tell the chief!"

"He'll be pleased," said the third. "If there's time enough, Mr. Lachan, he'll write home to his wife an' ask her advice what he should do!"

Mr. Lachan grunted an acknowledgment of the *Trebizond's* favorite jest and made his way up the steel ladders past the middle platform and the cylinder tops and the steering-engine to the gratings and the door that led to the port alleyway.

He tapped at the chief's door.

"He's on deck, sir," said the mess-room lad. "Saw him just now, sir, talkin' to the captain."

The second engineer stepped out through the open doorway into the glare of the September afternoon.

The chief engineer was nowhere in sight.

He walked slowly forward toward the bridge, glancing shoreward with listless eyes over the port rail.

The day was very hot. Beyond the other tramps, moored stern on to the breakwater, like the *Trebizond*, discharging cargo into lighters alongside, with winches rattling and

half-clad cargomen running barefooted with baskets of coal along the swaying planks to the railway trucks, the city of Genoa lay white and dazzling in the sunshine; tiers of tall houses, climbing the steep hillsides, with church towers and campaniles and palaces, and clusters of dark-green trees, and the mountains, rugged and clear-cut against the blue of the sky.

The second engineer halted near the bunker-hatch and all of a sudden he was furiously angry. The firemen, —— them! Why hadn't they spoken sooner? They'd be the first to kick, too! He thrust his hands deep into his pockets and wondered by what miracle they could find a trimmer before they sailed.

And where the —— was the chief? Having a drink with the old man, of course!

Two deck-hands came slouching aft. He let them pass. The bosun followed. The chief! No, the bosun hadn't set eyes on him. The steward approached from the galley. Had *he* seen the chief? Why, yes, he had!

" 'E's in the captain's room, sir. I'm goin' there now, sir. Shall I tell him you want 'im, sir?"

"Yes, an' say it's important."

The steward hurried off in the direction of the lower bridge.

"I beg your pardon, sir."

The second engineer turned quickly and, instead of one of the crew, as he had expected, he saw by his side a pale-faced, worried-looking little man who was a stranger to him.

"May I speak to you, sir?"

The second engineer frowned and for a moment did not answer him.

The little man stared at him—meekly, it seemed; yet it came over the second engineer suddenly that the man's eyes, pale-blue eyes with small pupils, were not satisfied with inspecting his outward appearance but were probing into his innermost thoughts. He checked an inclination to resent this curious examination, dismissing it from his mind as being a mere fancy, and growled—

"Well, what is it you want?"

The answer came in a mournful, almost sorrowful, tone of voice.

"You want a trimmer, sir."

"How the —— did you know?" demanded Mr. Lachan. And then he remembered. "Haven't I seen you before somewhere?" he said.

A faint smile passed over the pale face and vanished.

"Yes, sir. Two days ago, sir. I asked if you could give me a job, sir, and today, sir, I met a man who told me he'd just come away from the ship—and he'd never go back—so I thought, sir——"

The explanations died down to a dull muttering. The little man's eyes never wavered. The second engineer felt that the minute inspection of his character, his impulses and thoughts, continued. He wondered whether the result would be favorable or not.

"Are you a trimmer?" he snapped.

Without a word the little man produced from the inside pocket of his shabby jacket a discharge-book.

The second engineer took the book and read the name.

"William Horace Smith," he said. "Is that it?"

The little man nodded.

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir."

"What's the matter? Eh, Mr. Lachan, what's the matter?"

The chief engineer had arrived from the captain's room. The second explained what had happened; he told him that Rawler had deserted and that here was another trimmer who wanted a job.

"H'm!" The chief grunted. "So Rawler's gone, has he? No so bad!"

He took the discharge book into his own hands and flipped the pages carelessly.

"All right, Mr. Lachan, mebbe you'd better get back to the engine-room. I'll deal with the matter myself."

The second engineer turned away.

"Have you got your sea-bag?" he heard the chief engineer say. "An' yer bed?"

"My bag, sir, but no bed."

" 'E SES he's from Newcastle, but he ain't! I know he ain't!"

"How do yer know?"

" 'Ooever 'eard a Geordie talk like 'im, eh?"

The firemen were talking about the trimmer. The conversation came clearly to Mr. Lachan as he passed, stooping, between the boilers.

"Don't believe he krows where he does come from! Don't believe he knows nothin'!"

"So long as he does his moldy work, 'oo the —— cares!"

The second engineer entered the stokehold.

A fire had just been cleaned. The air was pungent with fumes of sulfur. A fireman poured a bucket of water over the mass of white hot ashes and clinker on the metal plates. Clouds of steam ascended with a hissing noise.

The second engineer looked at the gages, threw open one of the furnaces, peering into the fierce blaze of flame, shielding his face with his arm, slammed the door to again, and turned to the fireman nearest him.

"Chaymore, steam's been gettin' away from you. Don't let it drop!"

The little trimmer who had taken the place of Rawler came into the stokehold from the starboard side bunker-door and stood under the ventilator, gasping for breath, and gazing stupidly, like a man bewildered by his surroundings, at the red glow of the ash-pits.

The second engineer watched him curiously. There was, he felt, something strangely pitiable in his appearance. He seemed so small and helpless and out of place; so different from the other men who, like himself, had turned to watch him. And yet—where that difference lay, it was impossible to decide! His garments, an old singlet, a pair of trousers far too big for him, held in position by a soldier's belt, a pair of heavy shoes, a battered cap with a broken peak, were the garments that a trimmer would wear in any ship. He was no weakling; his shoulders were good, his bare arms were muscular.

"Well, Smith!" said the second engineer. "How are you?"

And once again it flashed into his mind that the trimmer's pale eyes were searching deep into his thoughts.

The little man had not answered.

The second engineer frowned. Doubts became certainties. Smith was not the man's name. Who was he? What was he? How did a man who looked like this little man, come to be on the beach at Genoa?

"Don't you know your own name, Smith?"

Frawdell, one of the two firemen on watch, a big, broad-chested man, with a bristly black mustache and bad eyes and a big chin, marked with a diagonal purple scar, a man whom the second detested, went up to the trimmer and gave him a dig in the ribs with his fist.

"Wake up! You're dopey!"

The trimmer blinked, as if in actual truth the fireman had guessed his secret.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said in his soft voice. "Were you speaking to me, sir?"

The two fireman roared. Splendid! What would he say next? Talking like that! ——! He was comic! The most comic thing ever seen outside the Cardiff Hippodrome!

"Ever been to sea before?" Mr. Lachan asked.

There came into the trimmer's eyes a sudden look of consternation. He put his hand to his mouth and tapped his fingers on his lower lip and grinned feebly.

"How else could I be here, sir, if I hadn't!" he said.

Mr. Lachan considered. The man was right. How else could he be in the *Trebizond's* bunkers, unless he had been to sea before? How else could he have been ready to take a pier-head jump ten minutes before the *Trebizond* sailed? How else could he know his job? And he did know that, anyway! This puzzled the second engineer as much as anything else.

"What were you doin' in Genoa?"

"I came across from Philadelphia, sir, in the *Joanna*, sir, and fell sick and couldn't complete the voyage."

His face broke into a smile.

"It's all down in the discharge-book, sir."

"Is the book yours, though?" Mr. Lachan asked.

"Why, yes, sir. It's my book, sir. They took it from me, sir."

And again the firemen roared.

The second engineer went back to the engine-room. He did not know why exactly, but the trimmer's presence on board the *Trebizond* worried him. The man was a mystery. Perhaps he was feeble-minded, even! Perhaps— But that was absurd! He was no imbecile, and yet he was wrong somewhere.

THOUGH Smith was not a strong man, nevertheless by some strange output of energy from some hidden source he managed, day after day, to keep the two firemen of his watch, Chaymore and Frawdell, supplied with coal.

In the forecastle the hands gave as much time to asking him questions and considering his answers as if he had been supplied

for their special amusement to relieve the tedium of the voyage. They were like children, examining some new toy. Everything that he either said or did was new and exciting and strange.

Smith did not know, apparently—this was the cream of the jest—that they were making fun of him. He would sit and listen to their questions with an air of patience, his pale eyes staring into space, a little smile on his lips, his forehead wrinkled. What he really thought in the recesses of his mind no one knew.

Frawdell, the big fireman, was particularly amused. He invented for Smith a fictitious set of female relations—two or three wives in different parts of the world; cousins, aunts and sisters; and would demand intimate details of their lives that would have been met by any of the other men with a drive in the stomach with a hob-nailed boot. Smith, however, made no protest. Frawdell, he would say, was mistaken. He had no sister, or no wife; but even as he answered there was in his face such a curiously bewildered expression, as if he were asking himself could Frawdell possibly be right, that he became more of a mystery and more of a joke than ever.

Gradually the men accepted him as one of themselves; a freak, perhaps, but harmless and too good-natured to be really funny. Frawdell, alone, continued to torment him. Never before had a man like Smith come within reach. He was soft. That the trimmer showed no resentment at his obscenities, goaded him to fresh efforts. His amusement at Smith's stupidity gave way to hate. He took a delight in making him miserable. He detested him so much that he felt an impulse within him stirring him on to physical violence—words made no impression on the trimmer's mind; therefore he would see what he could do with blows and sly kicks on the ankle and trips in the dark. Smith did not retaliate. When Frawdell placed a filthy hand on his face and shoved him out of his way he would merely look puzzled and frown as if bent on discovering from introspection what there was in him that had made the fireman hate him.

One night the second engineer came into the stokehold when Frawdell and Chaymore were arguing.

"You oughter leave him alone, Fred!" said Chaymore. "It ain't fair!"

"Huh! I'll boot the grease out of the little beast before I'm done with him. You see!"

Mr. Lachan stood, staring at Frawdell.

"Who are you talkin' about?" he growled.

Frawdell growled back that he warn't talkin' about no one.

"Smith, wasn't it?" said Mr. Lachan. "I'm not deaf an' I'm not blind. It's gone far enough, d'you hear?"

"He's off his 'ead!" said the fireman sulkily. An' what the —— was Lachan interferin' with 'im for?

"He's not off his head," said the second. "An' if he was, what's that got to do with it, eh? He's not a strong man or a big man, but he's doin' his work all right, an' that's more than I can say about you! You lay off hazin' him, or I'll just about knock your teeth down your blasted throat! See!"

And there was something in the second engineer's tone of voice and his scowl that sent a cold shiver down Frawdell's spine. He was no good, that feller! Interferin' with others always! What'd he think he was? Only a ruddy second engineer! He'd better mind out! One of these days he'd find himself where he didn't expect—and so on. Frawdell muttered inaudibly to himself, or to his sweat rag, as he flung coal on to the fire.

The second engineer watched him for a moment, then he took a colza oil-lamp and made his way into the bunkers.

Smith was shoveling coal into a barrow, working slowly, steadily, clumsily, using his shovel so as to ensure the maximum amount of effort.

All at once he straightened his back, dropped the shovel and raised his arms.

The flickering light of his lamp cast a huge, grotesque shadow on the blackened bulkhead.

"Oh, God! God! God!"

He gave a little moan as if he were in deep pain, then he picked up his shovel once more and set to work furiously.

"Here," said the second, "you, Smith!"

He clambered over the coal to where he worked.

"Gimme that shovel! Now, you want to use it like this!" He drove the broad blade under a mound of coal and finished filling the barrow. "Make your back do the work for you! See! Not your arms!"

"Thank you, sir," said Smith. He seemed astounded at the simplicity of what the second engineer had shown him.

"Try it! Isn't it easier?"

"Why, yes, sir," said Smith.

"Funny you never learnt that before!" said the second engineer. "—— funny!"

THE *Trebizond* loaded copper-ore at Huelva, in Spain, for New York. For two days after leaving port on the long run across the Western Ocean Frawdell left Smith in peace. What Mr. Lachan had said had had an effect. The little worm, he reflected, wasn't worth worryin' about! Later, perhaps, when he felt more in the mood, he would sock the life out of him! He'd teach him! Crawlin' to ruddy officers! He'd give 'im somethin' to crawl for! Blast 'im!

Frawdell brooded over Smith's weaknesses and imperfections until he was seized with an overpowering desire to prove to him, once and for all, how big and how strong he was and how capable of frightening a little dock-rat like him out of his wits! That Smith was weaker than himself made him all the more bitter against him.

Smith was a worm—Smith must be trodden on—Smith—err'gh! How he hated him!

On the third night after leaving Huelva there was trouble in the firemen's forecastle.

At one bell in the middle watch, a quarter to four, the stokehold hands for the morning watch were called.

Frawdell lay in his bunk, cursing sleepily. He turned over and yawned. Then he caught sight of Smith who had already climbed out of his bunk and was almost dressed.

A sudden rage swept over him. Smith, putting his boots on—Smith, ready for work—Smith, with his sneaking, quiet ways and his queer eyes, looking at him!

"What the —— are you lookin' at me for, eh?" Frawdell growled.

Any excuse was, perhaps, better than none. Smith had looked at him! —— his eyes! Looked at him!

He slid feet first out of his bunk, made a sudden dash at the trimmer, and with the palm of his hand against his face, sent him reeling backward against the bogie. Then he tore the blankets and mattress out of the little man's bunk and hurled them at him as he sat where he had fallen.

"You pig!" he shouted. "You lousy Whitechapel scum!"

He threw a pair of boots at him.

"Take that, —— you! I'll learn yer! Look at me, will yer! Take care I don't kick yer lights out yer!"

He tore the arms off a flannel shirt and flung the pieces away from him. Then he made a dive at the little man's locker which was open and scattered his belongings all over the forecastle, cursing and blaspheming, his voice getting louder and louder, until the men who had come off the first watch four hours before woke and cursed him in turn and told him to shut up his ruddy noise and let others better than him sleep.

"—— you! Look at me, will yer!"

That was it, of course—Smith had looked at him with those —— eyes of his, that saw right through you.

" 'E stood lookin' at me!" he said.

Smith rose to his feet and began, methodically, to gather together his things.

To the other man Frawdell was all of a sudden a wild animal, so mad with rage that he had ceased to have any sense left. He glared at the trimmer, shook his fists at him, cursed him and dared him to try his strength and get knocked stiff as a corpse.

The little man glanced at him, almost curiously, then, with a smile, stooped and picked up his bed.

"You'd better make haste," he said, "or it will be eight bells."

Frawdell's voice broke shrilly. His rage was wearing him out.

"What's it to do with you, eh? You —— interferin' little snitch! Tell on me, would yer! I know yer! I know what yer are! Who was yer mother, eh? I know what she was, if you don't! You're no more'n a——"

Leaning forward, his hands on the table, his voice hushed to a low snarling whisper, Frawdell uttered the one deadly, unforgivable insult of the tramp forecastle.

And now, at least, Smith might show whether he had any manhood.

The little man blinked. His eyes had in them a strange earnestness. He looked at Frawdell as if he were something unclean.

"Frawdell," he said, "I wouldn't be you. You've said things. Evil brings evil. I'm sorry for you, Frawdell. Tonight, you'll be punished! And some day—in the future—in the future——"

All of a sudden he looked frightened. He stooped once more and picked up a boot.

"There's no future," he said.

"What the —— does he mean?" said Frawdell. "What the ——. 'Ark at him!"

But somehow his boisterousness had gone. He was dejected. His wish to batter the trimmer's pale, lined face went. The trimmer had threatened him. But with what! Evil brings evil! Rubbish! What the —— had that to do with it? Evil brings evil! ——! He shivered.

Chaymore finished dressing.

"Fred," he said, "one o' these days you'll get the juiciest lickin' you ever knew! You're askin' for it, hard!"

"You'll give it me, I suppose, eh!"

Chaymore merely laughed.

Frawdell went out into the wet night, muttering that one of these days he'd get his own back. Pickin' on him, —— them! He'd show 'em! Smith, first of all!

Two hours later when raking out a furnace, a blazing mass of clinker disturbed by his rake, or the roll of the ship, flew out of the fire and fell on his bare forearm.

He howled with the pain. There was a smell of scorching flesh in the stokehold when the second engineer came in.

"What's wrong?"

Frawdell was whimpering, holding his burnt arm, walking to and fro, stamping his feet in his agony.

"I'm burnt—burnt——"

"Evil brings evil!" The little trimmer spoke from the door that led to the bunker where he was working. "I warned you, Frawdell. Hell-fire scorches, Frawdell! Like that!"

Later, when Frawdell was having his burns dressed, Chaymore told the second engineer what had taken place in the forecastle.

THE *Trebizond* pounded her way across the Western Ocean. In bad weather, as in good, the trimmer, Smith, did his work, methodically, unskilfully, persistently, uncomplaining, silent, and to all appearance very thoughtful.

He seldom spoke about his work or the ship, and never about himself. A more silent man had never been known. His entire absence of curiosity about the things that were talked of was amazing, almost uncanny.

In the forecastle where in the course of a long voyage men are stripped of their pretenses and revealed nakedly more surely than anywhere else under the face of Heaven, the firemen, unable to pierce his reserve, baffled by his silence, his superiority of speech, his gentleness of conduct, his indifference to what they said of him, came to believe the worst of him. He had committed some crime. So it was hinted. A terrible crime that had changed him.

"What were you, Smithy? What made you come to sea?"

Again and again the question was asked. But he never answered. He would shake his head mournfully and perhaps sigh and gaze into space with his pale eyes puckered into two slits, and that was all! What had he done? Why had he come to sea? Impossible to say!

And then, though who first whispered it, no one knew, the rumor spread—Smith was a murderer. He had killed—his wife, his sweetheart; his pal—and had fled from the police! Smith was a murderer! Smith, with pale eyes that could see into a man's heart, had killed some one!

The firemen, rough, hard men, living a hard, rough life, uncouth, uncivilized—this was the second engineer's opinion always—regarded the little trimmer with a kind of pity. But though Smith was pitied, so also was he shunned.

A murderer! That took some swallowing. Who could tell but what some night he might not take it into his head to murder again! What about that?

Suppose—a lot of things!

"Smithy," said one of the men, "when we get to New York, I know of a place where yer can drink o' the best; drink—ah! what can't yer drink? Would yer like me to take yer?"

Smith did not answer.

"—— it!" said the man. "Don't yer know wot I mean?"

He shook his head and stared at the man as if what he had heard conveyed no meaning.

"It makes yer creepy to watch 'im! Smithy, for the love o' —— don't look at us like that!"

One bell in the afternoon watch had struck. Smith rose to his feet with a smile and went aft to the stokehold.

Toward the end of his four hours watch Frawdell, his right forearm still bandaged, crept into the bunker where he was working by the light of his lamp, shoveling coal for dear life, stooping and coughing.

" 'Ere, Smith!"

The trimmer whirled round swiftly and raised his shovel, as if prepared to strike should he be attacked.

"Orl right, chuck it!" said Frawdell uneasily. "I wanter speak to yer."

The little man lowered the shovel.

"Remember that night when the clinkers burned me! Well, then, what'd yer mean when yer said that about the future—there was no future—eh?"

The trimmer stared at him blankly, his face horribly earnest in its mask of coal-dust, lit by the flickering slush-lamp. He shook his head.

Not for worlds would Frawdell have said anything to any of the other firemen, but he was worried. Worried more than he liked to think! That little rat who had said that he would be punished, —— him, had begun to say something about his future and had ended without finishing.

"I've a good mind to——"

And there he stopped. He had intended to say—lick him within an inch of his miserable little life; but what was the good? He turned, afraid of what was in store, and went back into the stokehold.

In New York, he would leave the ship. He would take his discharge and go. He could, in the U. S. A., and he would. But that bit about the future—it worried him!

MR. LACHAN, the second engineer, a whole-hearted student of detective fiction, had come to regard Smith, the trimmer, as his own personal problem, to be solved somehow or other before the *Trebizond* should have finished her wanderings around the seven seas and have reached home ports once more.

The thought of the little man having to live in the forecastle among the other firemen troubled him. It was wrong. Why wrong, though, he did not know. He was always expecting to hear that he was unable to turn out on his watch; either he was ill, or he had cracked under the strain, or something. But day after day, placid and unconcerned, aloof, silent, the trimmer was in the bunkers, shoveling coal as if that was all that he had ever done in his life.

Again and again, in the mess-room, or on the after well-deck in the sunshine, before going down to his watch, the second engineer would talk of the trimmer.

The man was a mystery. What was he doing on board the *Trebizond?* Where had he come from? Until the other officers, deck and engine-room, grew tired of listening and laughed at the second engineer and told him that he and his trimmer were just about matched.

"The man's crazy!" said the old chief. "A lunatic, escaped from an asylum!"

"No," said Mr. Lachan, "he's as sane as I am."

There was a laugh.

"Well, or as any one else. He's clever. He's been better educated than any of us, I know. But there's something troubling him. That's what I can't understand. He's worried. He's a good little man, too. He doesn't smoke, an' he doesn't drink, an'——"

"Wait till we reach New York," said the chief dryly. "It's amazin' the virtues you'll find in men when they're at sea, an' there's no temptations to tempt 'em from the strait an' narrow way! An', besides, Mr. Lachan, the man without some kind o' vice don't exist!"

"What's the use of worryin', anyway," said the mate. "In New York, soon as we get there, he'll take his discharge an' go. I know."

The second engineer shook his head.

That evening he asked the storekeeper in the engine-room if he had heard how Smith, the trimmer, was doing.

"How's he makin' out in the forecastle with the others?"

"Well, sir," said the storekeeper in a hoarse whisper. "It's this w'y. They don't trust 'im. They're afraid of 'im. That bit what he said to Frawdell, now, an' the clinkers burnin' him, they didn't like it a bit! To tell you the truth, sir, 'e don't act rational."

AFTER the second night in New York the second engineer was inclined to agree. He left the ship for an evening ashore with Mr. MacCorrance, the mate.

They had no particular plans. Perhaps they would go to a show—a theater or the pictures. Perhaps they would have something to eat.

For a time, however, they were content to drift aimlessly along, watching the people and the clanging surface-cars and the motors, more motors than they had ever seen at one time in their lives, limousines and sedans and coupés and flivvers, and the lights of Broadway flashing their wild appeals into the night.

And then the mate saw ahead of them,

walking slowly, his hands in his pockets, a small, square-shouldered man, in a shabby blue suit and a soft hat, and both suit and hat were too large for him.

"Look," said the mate; "isn't that your trimmer?"

"By gum!" said Mr. Lachan. "It is."

"Come on," said the mate, "now we'll see where he's bound for. Let's follow him!"

"What's the use?" said the second. But he was curious, none the less.

The trimmer turned down a side street.

Mr. Lachan wondered whether the little man had any idea where he was going or not. He walked in front of them, pausing at times and gazing into shop-windows, unmoved by the clamorous life ebbing and flowing about him. Now and again he would hesitate, standing on the edge of the curb and glancing from left to right, before plunging across the street.

They reached a district of tall tenement houses, little fruit-shops, cigar-stands, grocery stores, sidewalks crowded with men and women and children, dark-skinned and happy and noisy, chattering away at the tops of their voices, laughing and gesticulating and screaming with excitement.

"We're back in Genoa," said the mate suddenly. "Dagoes!"

"That's it," said Mr. Lachan. "An' they're talkin' Italian!"

Presently the little trimmer halted at the corner of a narrow alley and stood, apparently lost in thought.

The mate and the second engineer waited, too.

"Gettin' tired of this carry-on!" said the second.

The mate spoke a few words of Italian to an old woman who was seated on a doorstep—words that he had picked up from a lady of his acquaintance in a café on the Genoa waterfront and had treasured for future use.

The old woman answered in English, or what passed as such.

"You spika Italiano too mosh; you getta da poonsh on da bean—hey!"

She cackled with laughter, obviously pleased. "Whaffor you calla me *bella*, hey?"

"Sweetheart of mine in Genoa——"

What! He had been in Genova! The old woman had come from Genova, too! She rose to her feet and patted his hand and chattered. From Genova, hey!

"Yes," said the mate.

"Look!" said the second engineer. "He's coming back."

And as he spoke there came from the open doorway the clatter of heavy feet running down-stairs. The mate pulled the old woman to one side, and a young man, broad in the shoulder, bare-headed, without a jacket, burst out on to the sidewalk and darted off at a run.

Two little girls, not much more than babies, were approaching slowly, carrying, each of them, a bottle of milk.

The bareheaded young man, racing toward them, thrust out an arm and swept them out of his path. They fell, screaming, in the gutter. The bottles of milk were smashed.

"My God!" said the second engineer.

The trimmer had stooped suddenly and flung his arms around the young man's knees and had brought him down on top of him on the greasy sidewalk.

They struggled desperately.

The young man was trying to free himself from the trimmer.

"Look out for his knife!" yelled the mate.

Another man, also bareheaded, but elderly, stout, red in the face, bull-necked, came clattering out of the tenement. He saw the men on the sidewalk, struggling, and he shouted.

The young man whom the trimmer had brought down tore himself loose, spurred on, it seemed, by the roar of rage from the bull-necked man, jumped to his feet, trod heavily on the trimmer, and the bull-necked man caught him by the belt and, by some miracle, held him fast.

A shriek of excitement went up from the crowded street. People came flocking out of the doorways. Windows were thrown open. The young man and the bull-necked man were fighting. A woman was screaming from a grocery-store. Knives flashed in the light of the arc-lamps. The trimmer had risen to his feet and the second engineer forced his way through to him and grabbed him by the arm.

"You —— fool, Smith, come away at once!"

The trimmer blinked at him, as if he had been some stranger.

The old Italian woman had rescued the two babies and was soothing them.

The trimmer stared at them, with the same puzzled look he had had in his eyes when he saw the second engineer. And

then, a sudden smile twitched his thin lips, and he patted the little girls on the cheeks and dug his hand into his pocket and gave them some coins.

Shouts from the crowd announced the arrival of the police.

"Come on!" said the mate. "First thing we know they'll grab us for witnesses!"

When they reached a quieter street the second engineer turned on the trimmer.

"What the —— did you do that for, eh?"

"Do what, sir!" said the trimmer.

"Interfere with that dago!"

"A terrible city!" said the trimmer without making any attempt to answer. "A terrible city! Cruel! Wicked! They were hurt!" He broke off with a sigh. "I think I'll go back to the ship, sir."

"Do you know the way?"

"No, sir," said the trimmer.

"Do you know where she's lyin'?"

Nor did he know this, either.

The mate was amazed.

"Don't he know anything? What were you doing down that part at all, eh?"

Smith looked scared.

"I don't know," he said, under his breath. "Looking for something——"

"But for what?"

He smiled and did not answer.

"He's crazy!" muttered the mate. "Tell him the way to Erie Basin, for Heaven's sake, an' let's go to a show!"

THE *Trebizond*, rolling persistently, plunged southward through heavy seas, past Hatteras, bound from Boston with a general cargo to Buenos Aires.

Under the influence of a sufficient quantity of bad liquor to bring him to the verge of delirium tremens, Frawdell's fears had vanished. Why should he be afraid of what a miserable little toad like Smith had said! All ships were hell-ships, of course, but the *Trebizond* suited him well enough! He'd be —— if he'd be driven away if he didn't want!

And so he was still on board when the ship left Boston. He had even invented an entirely new set of female relatives for Smith—their adventures were followed in breathless interest by the forecastle. A certain lingering caution, however, prevented him from relating these adventures in the trimmer's presence.

Once when Smith and one of the other men had been fetching the firemen's dinner from the galley he arrived in the forecastle just as Frawdell, with inimitable gestures and relish and much droll head-wagging, had told of the sad end of a cousin, Gertrude, in a harem in Constant. The yell of laughter was cut short. The men felt uncomfortable, almost as if they had been detected in some underhand meanness.

After a short silence Frawdell yawned deliberately.

"An' that's that! Poor Gertrude! You know who I'm talkin' about, don't you, Smithy? You didn't mind me tellin' the crowd, did yer?"

"No," said the trimmer in a low voice. "No. Why should I?"

He was soft, of course. Nobody doubted it. A man who would spend all his spare time in New York on board ship, reading, was little less than a blinking lunatic! A madman! A non-smoker and a teetotaler: that was Smith. Why, bless yer! when old Nuthawl had brought a bottle of gin on board, almost the real stuff, too, and had offered it round, generously, Smith had refused a drink!

He wasn't thirsty, he had said. Thirsty! Smith wasn't thirsty! The joke lasted the forecastle for days. Smith was despised. And yet the curious part of it was he gave no sign that he either knew or cared.

Only Chaymore believed in him. And even he had moments of doubt.

Once when they were waiting at the fiddley gratings for the ashes he gave him some good advice.

"You know, Smithy, others don't understand you as well as me. Others do things, you don't! You oughter be more like 'em!"

"Why?" asked Smith.

And that was the —— of it! Why? Why should he be like the others? Chaymore was taken aback! Bewildered, unable to answer! That was the worst of Smith. He was a mystery. Why should he be like the others? —— it! Now, why should he?

"If you go round with the fellers, they like you! If you don't, they ain't got much use for you. Next port we're at, B. A., why don't you pop ashore with us? Or, anyway, do something to get yourself liked! It 'ud be better. You see, Smithy, they think now, that you're not quite—quite——"

"Quite what?"

"Quite right in the 'ead!"

The little man sighed and stared out through the doorway.

Frawdell's voice called up the ventilator shaft.

"Ashes!"

The bucket was wound slowly up.

"Do somethin' to make them like you! See!" said Chaymore. "That's what you want to do. Make yourself liked!"

Smith looked bewildered and hurt and said nothing.

Chaymore felt bitterly that he might as well talk to the Samson-posts or give good advice to the salinometer as try and help any one so dull and stupid.

Next day in the forenoon watch the *Trebizond* sighted a three-masted schooner on the port bow, flying signals of distress. The *Trebizond* changed her course, and with the wind due astern steamed toward her. As she came up the schooner signaled that she was sinking, her sails had been lost, the bulwarks were gone, the crew wished to be taken off at once.

The sea, though not heavy, was rising. Great gusts of wind came from the northwest, with showers of rain—the sky was dark.

The port lifeboat was lowered in charge of the second mate. As the men were struggling to pull clear of the ship, those left on board saw with horror the boat caught broadside on by a big sea and flung right over in a swirl of white foam.

Orders were shouted from the bridge, the telegraph clanged, there was a rush of men for the boat-deck, level with the engine-room skylights, the *Trebizond* was brought round, and the starboard lifeboat, now on the lee side, screened from the force of the wind, was launched.

The men who had been thrown into the water were clinging to the capsized boat, all save one who was swimming toward the ship.

Chaymore, who with Frawdell and Smith and the other stokehold hands not on watch stood on the bridge-deck by the fiddley, was the first to see him.

"Look!" he shouted. "See that feller! That's Ginger! What the ——'s he playin' at!"

The carpenter came up with a heaving line in his hand. He tied one end around the rail and stood with the other men, frowning impatiently.

"We maun be ready to thraw the puir fella a rope," he said.

The third mate's boat was now very close to the men in the water. Seas were breaking over the schooner which seemed to be settling deeper each minute. The man who was swimming, the deck-hand, Ginger, was now near enough to the ship for the men on the bridge deck to see the expression in his face. He appeared to be tiring rapidly. Already his strokes were shorter and less powerful.

Smith tugged at Frawdell's sleeve.

"Will he do it?" he asked. "Will he do it?"

Frawdell looked at him in contempt.

"Why the —— don't yer go below if yer can't stick it! Shut up!"

Smith tugged at his sleeve once more.

"Surely we're going to do something to help him!"

"Dry up!" Frawdell snapped. "Leggo my arm!"

He cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted:

"Come on, Ginger! That's the boy! Come on!"

But Ginger was finished. He gave a weak cry that carried to the *Trebizond's* deck and threw up his hands. Without a word, Smith took hold of the end of the coil of rope that the carpenter had tied to the rail and jumped into the sea.

His head came to the surface. A lifebuoy was hurled after him from the bridge. He swam steadily toward the drowning man, avoided his frenzied clutching, and tied the rope under his arms. He waved his hand and the men on the bridge-deck hauled Ginger aboard. Another rope was thrown and the trimmer followed. He reached the deck, apparently none the worse for his swim.

"Here!" said the chief engineer. "Away you to the fo'csle an' get those wet clothes off! Sharp!"

The trimmer walked slowly away. Chaymore followed him.

"Man," he said, "no one could have done nothin' better'n that! I'm proud of you, Smithy! Understand!"

They halted on the forward well-deck and stood by the bulwarks watching the starboard lifeboat, with the rescued men from the port lifeboat safe on board, returning. The distance was not great, as the *Trebizond* had been brought still nearer to the sinking schooner but was still to windward, acting as a breakwater against the seas to make it easier for the men pulling at the oars.

The captain yelled from the bridge:

"Make haste now! Mr. Jones—" Jones was the name of the second mate— "you an' your men come aboard! Mr. Hesketh will take his boat across to the schooner!"

"Mayn't I, sir?" called the second mate. "I'm all right, sir."

"If you want to!" said the captain. "Don't argue about it, anyway! Make haste!"

"Man," said Chaymore, beaming at Smith. "It was splendid!"

He was as pleased as if he had saved Ginger himself.

"What was!" said the trimmer who was staring through half-closed eyelids at the schooner.

"You was!" said Chaymore. "You, of course."

He patted the trimmer on the shoulder.

"Smithy, they'll like you now! D'you understand? They'll think the world of you!"

"I wonder," said Smith, "if they'll be able to take those poor fellows off! It's terrible——"

His teeth chattered, though the day was warm. His face was gray. Water dripped from his clothes.

Ginger, the man he had saved, came limping down the ladder from the bridge-deck.

"They give me a drink of rum," he said blissfully. "Ah! ain't you had no rum, Smithy? You go back an' say you want some. See!"

And he, like Chaymore before him, patted Smith on the shoulder.

"You saved my life, Smithy! Go back an' say that you want some rum!"

The little man looked at him with such a wild expression in his face that the deck-hand was startled.

"Let me be!" said the trimmer. "Don't you know those men on the schooner maybe are drowning!"

He did not move from the forward well-deck until the *Trebizond* had been brought to leeward of the sinking schooner and her crew had been rescued and were safe on board.

AND now the trimmer of the *Trebizond* became more of a mystery than ever before.

No one attempted to understand his motives or his moods or temperament. He had proved himself brave. He had risked his life in order to save the life of a drowning man. And yet, to all appearance, nothing could have worried or tormented him more than that any one should mention or refer to what he had done.

"Almost you'd think 'e was ashamed of it!" said the forecastle.

And, although the firemen and the deck-hands did their best to show that they were pleased with him and admired him and wanted to make up perhaps for any unkindness or neglect that he might have suffered, Smith treated all their advances with a curious timidity and shyness.

Even Frawdell, incapable of going against the tide of popular opinion, became almost effusive in his offers of friendship and his promises that as soon as they reached port he would take him ashore, him an' Chaymore, an' give him a good time.

He would close one eye and wink solemnly and dig Smith in the ribs, perhaps, and say in a loud whisper, intended to be heard by every one else in the forecastle:

"Ah, ha! Smithy, my boy, you an' me knows a thing or two, eh? You wait! You wait till we cuts loose among the gals, eh! An' the drink! Oh, Smithy, we'll show 'em! We'll show 'em!"

And Smith would draw away from him and frown and look at him from under his eyebrows and show in his expression contempt, indifference, anything save the wish to accept his friendship. And Frawdell, though he might pretend that he liked him, though he might talk in front of the others as if they were pals, Frawdell hated him from the depths of his black, distorted nature. He wanted to get his two hands around the trimmer's neck and choke the life out of him.

The second engineer, who in a degree regarded himself as being responsible for Smith being on board the *Trebizond* at all, asked him how he was.

"Smith," he said to him one night in the stokehold when he came on the little man, stripped to the waist, standing under the ventilator, panting for breath in the heat, "Smith, you did something —— fine the other day! How are you feeling?"

Smith smiled under the coal-dust nervously, and rubbed his hands on his trousers, reached for his shirt, and said nothing.

"A good swimmer, too," said the second engineer. "Where did you learn?"

There was a look, almost of pain in the little man's eyes.

"And that night in New York when you tackled the dago—I meant to ask you—you've played football, haven't you?"

"Football!"

The little man shook his head.

"I don't know, sir."

And then he glanced longingly toward the bunkers.

"I'm a bit behind with the coal tonight, sir, I'd better be going."

He caught up his lamp and moved off.

Mr. Lachan, as usual puzzled by Smith's manner, turned. The two firemen were grinning at Frawdell— Mr. Lachan felt he disliked Frawdell intensely; the man got on his nerves; there was something unclean in his smile, underhand, mean, sly, and his eyes were the eyes of an old hog, small and twinkly and set at the wrong angle; and his teeth were too sharp, like a dog's, and the diagonal scar on his chin was like dried blood— Frawdell flung a shovel of coal into the furnace and slammed the door:

" 'E's dotty, sir, that's wot he is! Looks like 'e's 'arf asleep. That time when 'e jumped after Ginger, sir, mebbe he didn't know wot he was doin'. When we reach port, sir, we're goin' to take 'im ashore an' give 'im a good time, anyway!"

Mr. Lachan, not particularly interested in what Frawdell was saying, nodded and went back to the engine-room.

AT A table in a waterfront café in Buenos Aires, hot and noisy and crowded, the firemen of the *Trebizond* sat and drank luxuriously, deeply, of a fiery spirit that burned the throat and set the blood tingling in their veins and was sold as whisky and most certainly wasn't. But little they cared. This was pleasure! This was what they had thought of, talked of, looked forward to, since leaving Boston! The sea was merely an interlude, monotonous and hard, between wild bursts of physical gratification ashore. This was life—booze and the presence of girls and music and dancing and, perhaps, if the liquor was strong, a fight at the end. What pleases in Shadwell or Limehouse pleases equally in Buenos Aires.

To the firemen the dingy, low-roofed, uncomfortable room, that smelled of hot bodies and stale spirits and tobacco-smoke, was for the time Paradise. The drink was nectar. The girls, dark Spanish girls, olive-tinted, coarse of feature and figure, blowsy, full-bosomed, who took their orders, brought them their drinks, laughed and talked with them loudly and shrilly in their strange waterfront English, were wonderful, adorable creatures, perfect, the realities of their dreams.

Between Frawdell and Chaymore, silent, pale, his eyes glancing continually from side to side, as if he were puzzled, sat Smith, the trimmer, the man who had saved Ginger. In front of him was a glass of cognac, untouched.

Chaymore, bent on seeing that he enjoyed his evening, pressed him to drink.

"Come on, Smithy, ol' bean! You ain't in the bunkers now, yer know! Have a good time! Drink hearty!"

Frawdell was openly contemptuous.

"Bring 'im in 'ere, an' 'e don't know what to do with 'isself! 'E makes me sick!"

Chaymore, not altogether at his ease, drained his glass to the dregs. Poor little Smith was shy, maybe! If they let him alone, and didn't worry him, and gave him time, he'd come to himself and drink with the best of 'em.

He leaned across Smith and spoke to Frawdell.

"Fred," he said, "you let him be! See! He's all right, Smith is! You let him be!"

"Aw! Shur'rup!"

The liquor was, as usual, having its effect on Frawdell. He glared at Chaymore and then his coarse lips curled into a smile under his black mustache, revealing his sharp teeth, and a look of malice shot into his small eyes.

"Shur'rup!"

He turned to Smith beside him and clapped a huge hand on his shoulder and shook him violently.

"Drink, you frog-faced little pi-can! Drink, d'you 'ear? What d'yer think that you're doin' 'ere? Prayin'!"

He snatched up the little man's glass, put a hand around his forehead and forced back his head and poured some of the cognac down his mouth. The little man spluttered and spat out the liquor, and the firemen yelled.

Ol' Fred was comic orl right, wasn't 'e?

Chaymore, however, was angry.

Smith wiped his wet face, apparently unmoved.

"Frawdell," said Chaymore, "if you try

any of yer stinkin' Liverpool bucko tricks 'ere again with Smithy I'll bash yer!"

For all his size and his width of shoulder and his undoubted strength, Frawdell was afraid of Chaymore. He looked at him and winked.

"Orl right! Orl right! 'Ere, chum, I'm sorry—see!" He was speaking to Smith, grinning at him. "I beg yer pawdon, chum, d'yer hear!"

"That's quite all right," said Smith. "Quite."

But there was in the pale-blue eyes, that seemed always to see so much more than there was to be seen upon the surface, a look that was strange and disquieting.

"I beg yer pawdon, Smithy! No offense, see!" Frawdell nudged him. "Why don't yer shake 'ands!"

They shook hands at once.

Frawdell chuckled.

"Now, you enj'y yerself an' don't be silly!"

And all at once it came over him that the little man had received his apology coldly. He resented his look. He glowered and studied him, finding in his appearance much that he disliked.

"To tell yer the truth," he said presently, after he had had something more to drink, "you're too stuck up! By a —— sight! Too full o' yer own himportance—you mongril pup!"

Ginger who sat at the next table interfered.

"Here, if you're talkin' to Smithy, shut up! Or I'll give you a wipe on the jaw!"

"Yer will, will yer!" said Frawdell. "Yer couldn'."

He pounded his big fists on the table.

"I'm strong'n you. Strong'n any one 'ere!"

He felt that there was within him a tremendous power, capable of enabling him to overcome any one. He had reached the point where he knew that he was better in every way than any one else. He was boss of the stokehold, boss of the forecastle, boss of the ship! He was Fred Frawdell, the slugger, the scrapper, the lover of women, the drinker—what wasn't he? And with all his pride in himself and his powers, his contempt for the rest of the crew of the *Trebizond*, the need to express his hatred of Smith increased each instant, so that his fists ached to pound the thin white face by his side, to blot out the staring eyes, to take the smile off his lips.

Chaymore was watching him anxiously. There was trouble ahead. That was the worst of Fred: give him a few drinks, put him within reach of a girl or two, and he was like a madman! Chaymore, still sober, grew thoughtful.

Smith was staring vacantly, with a dull expression in his face, across the room to where in an open space on the floor between the crowded tables men and girls were dancing to the music of a jangling piano played by an old man.

The atmosphere of the room was stifling. The noise was deafening. Men yelled at each other, clawed at the girls, upset their drinks, roared drunkenly. The fat proprietress, known as Isabella along the waterfront, her heavy face so thickly powdered that at a distance she looked like a corpse dressed in a black silk gown, stormed in a furious patois of Spanish and English. Her anger was greeted with cheering.

A dark-haired girl, younger than most of Isabella's attendants, and by reason of her youth and a certain freshness of complexion and manner, prettier and more alluring, approached the table where the *Trebizond's* firemen sat.

Frawdell, shouting at the top of his voice, rose to his feet unsteadily.

"Hi, girlie, come 'ere an' talk to me!"

He stretched out his arms.

The girl laughed at the ugly man with the narrow eyes.

"You too dronk!"

Frawdell leaned across Smith and caught hold of her arm and dragged her toward him.

For some reason or other the girl resented his roughness.

She pulled herself free, her cheeks flaming.

"You—no goot!" she said. "You hurta me!"

On her bare arm were red finger-marks.

"Pore li'l thing!" said Frawdell. "Is 'at't, eh? 'Ere, girlie, come 'ere an' I'll gi' yer kish to m-ma'k'up f'r'it! Come sit down!"

He took hold of the back of Smith's chair and tilted it.

"Smis', you ge't'—— out 'ere. Let the girl have yer seat! See! Sick o' sight yer!"

Another girl, the girl who had been waiting on their table the whole evening, thick-set, stout, older, came up, jabbered something in Spanish to the younger girl and waved her away.

" 'Ere, wha' blazsh!"

Frawdell reached forward and grabbed her once more.

The older waitress slapped the fireman's hand and spoke to him sharply.

"You wanta da troub'. I know you. Shot up!"

Frawdell gave her a sudden shove, without releasing his hold on the younger girl who was struggling fiercely to free herself. The woman staggered back against the men seated at the next table, her hand to her breast. Frawdell dragged the younger girl to his side.

"Now, you li'l hussy, si'down'n be'ave!"

Some of the men were laughing, others were angry. What the —— was the use of having a rough-house as early as this! Did the —— fool want to be turned out or run in by the police or what? Even to the hands of the *Trebizond* there were well-defined limits of conduct beyond which it was inadvisable to go!

And then, as Frawdell and the girl were scuffling, and by now she was frightened, Smith rose to his feet, white and trembling, and with his eyes wide open, as if he had seen something almost too terrible to bear, and with greater strength than any one had imagined he possessed he seized the fireman by the wrist and arm, wrenched him away from the girl, and sent him reeling back against the wall, much as in the forecastle Frawdell had sent him reeling backward over the bogie.

"You coward!" he said. "What do you think you are? I'm ashamed of you! I wish to God that men like you were wiped off the face of the earth! You're not fit to be at large among clean-minded men and women! You're a danger to humanity! A pest! It's your kind of vermin that drags mankind down to a level lower than the brute beasts of the field! That makes man accursed before God!"

The men stared at him in amazement. The words filled them with a sense of awe. He was not actually swearing and yet it seemed as if he used language more terrible than they used themselves.

Frawdell had clenched his fists. He did not move. He seemed astounded. To those watching him curiously it was as if any attempt at asserting himself had been rendered impossible by what he had heard.

Chaymore was also standing.

"Fred," he said, "you chuck it! Smithy's right. Understand what I say!"

Dazed and dejected, and much too drunk to argue, Frawdell dropped back into his chair, breathing hard, his nostrils expanded, his face as pale as the trimmer's, so pale indeed that his scar on his chin was almost black by contrast.

"Gimme a drink!" he said hoarsely.

Smith, still on his feet, was gazing blankly around the room.

Isabella, like an avenging fury, was sailing toward him. The girl he had saved from Frawdell threw her arms around his neck and gave him a kiss.

"Zank you," she said simply. "I like you ver' moosh!"

The tension broke in a riot of applause.

"Got off at last! Oh, Smithy! I'm surprized at yer!"

Smith looked at the girl with alarm and fear in his eyes, and then—and this was the climax, the most terrible moment of a trying evening for Chaymore and the other firemen—they saw that he was weeping. He stood by the table with the broken glasses and the pools of liquor, tears streaming down his thin cheeks, his chest heaving—sobbing in the sight of the whole room!

Frawdell stumbled to his feet, yelling in derision.

"My ——! look at him, fellers! Look at him!"

The little man staggered, almost ran, between the tables and out of the door.

"Wot about that!" said Frawdell. "Hi, yi, yip-ai!" He screeched drunkenly at the girl who had kissed the trimmer.

"'Ere, Polly, now you gimme kish, sam'sh you gi'm! Tha' stiff'sh no be'r'n seaman'sh mish'n!"

Chaymore was furious.

"Frawdell," he said. "I'm sick of yer!"

THE second engineer and the mate of the *Trebizond* leaned over the bulwark rail amidships and gazed at the city and the moon and the pale stars and the blue sky and smoked their cigars and felt too peaceful and contented to talk.

And at last there floated across the dock eight clear strokes of a ship's bell.

"Midnight!" said the mate. "That's some feller more particular than we are, strikin' eight bells in harbor this time o' night!"

The second engineer yawned.

"Time to turn in," he said. "Field-day tomorrow. Lord! I'm sleepy!"

A small man came quickly along the quay and ran up the gangway. As he reached the deck he glanced suspiciously, as it were, around, and peered at the two officers.

"Good night, Smith!" said the second engineer.

The little man passed without speaking.

Afterward the second engineer remembered the haggard look in his face; his pallor, his air of dejection; he seemed like a man who was suffering torments as he shuffled away, his head bent, his hands in his pockets.

"What's he been up to, eh?" said the mate.

"Dunno," said the second. "Been ashore for a change."

The mate laughed.

"Then he's got over that night of his in New York when he collared the dago!"

"Queer little cuss!" said the second. "Fancy him divin' in after that deck-hand, eh?"

"Comes out occasionally, doesn't it!"

Presently they said good night and went to their rooms.

A quarter of an hour passed. The second engineer, in his shirt and trousers, was stretched out on his settee, reading a magazine and smoking, when all of a sudden he heard heavy feet racing along the deck.

He took the pipe out of his mouth. Some one in a hurry! And now what was the matter?

The feet came nearer. Whoever was running turned into the alleyway. There came a heavy pounding on the door of his room.

"Mr. Lachan! Mr. Lachan—sir! For Gord's sake, sir!"

The second engineer got from the settee and opened the door. In the alleyway stood old Nuthawl, clad in a shirt and a pair of shoes, his thin legs bare.

"Sir, Smith's gorn mad!"

"What's that? Smith, how much?"

"Gorn mad, sir! Me an' Sarran, sir, was settin' in the fo'csle, gettin' ready to turn in, an' some o' the other fellers has just come aboard, sir, when all of a sudden, sir, Smith who'd been talkin' to 'imself, like, he ups an' starts yellin' he was goin' to kill us, an' then, sir, Sarran, 'e ses: 'Why, 'ere's a nice state of affairs!' an' Smith, 'e picks up the coal 'ammer, sir, an' throws it. Sarran ducked almost too late, sir, but 'e ain't hurt much. Smith, 'e slammed the door, sir, after us!"

The second engineer put on his slippers.

"I'll come an' see what's happenin'!"

As he descended the ladder that led to the forward well-deck, old Nuthawl at his heels, he saw a group of men clustered around the number 1 hatch in the moonlight. From inside the firemen's forecastle there came the sound of hammering and the smashing of woodwork.

"What the ——'s the matter here?" said the second.

"It's Smith, sir," said the donkeyman.

" 'E's gorn crazy!" said one of the firemen. "An' when 'e slammed the door, the 'andle fell off, an' we can't get in!"

"The perishin' madman! 'E just about laid ol' Sarran out!"

Sarran, a thick-set melancholy West-countryman, obviously half-drunk, was leaning against the bulwarks, blood on his forehead.

"Aye, he'd be a ravin'! He thrawed hammer an' near killed me!"

"Any one know what he was doin' this ev'nin'?" asked the second engineer. "Who was he with?"

"Me, sir," said Chaymore. "He wasn't drinkin', though, sir."

The mate came along the deck in pajamas and uniform cap.

"What's all this about?" he said. He saw the second engineer. "Hullo, Mr. Lachan, what's the trouble?"

"That trimmer, Smith, Mr. MacCorrance. Seems to have gone off his head."

The mate went to the door.

"Smith!" he shouted. "Come out o' there at once!"

There was no reply. Apparently Smith was smashing up the bunks and barricading the door.

"He said he'd kill some one before 'e died, sir," said old Nuthawl.

"Smith, open this door immediately! Understand!"

The captain and the chief engineer had arrived, and the second and third mates.

"Mr. MacCorrance," said the captain, glaring right and left, "what's the meaning of this disturbance? Why are all these men sitting around here, eh? What is it?"

From his manner the captain might have thought the mate personally responsible for everything. When he heard that one of the trimmers had suddenly gone mad, he cast a reproachful look at the chief engineer.

"Gone mad!" he said. "Mr. Livison, this is ridiculous!"

He strode to the door of the forecastle and knocked angrily.

"You inside! Open that door!"

From the forecastle there came a chuckle of laughter.

"Too late, Satan! Too late!"

The hands roared.

Red in the face, the captain turned and beckoned to the chief.

"Mr. Livison, we'll have the steam on deck, please, at once! We'll turn the hose on him through a panel. We can't have this kind of thing. It's absurd! Pah!"

He clapped his hands.

"Mr. MacCorrance, send some one ashore for a doctor! Mr. Hesketh, you! You go! And where's the carpenter?"

The carpenter, a small Scotsman, and he also, like most of the crew, had been drinking, but was, by some miracle, not sufficiently drunk to be incapable, was thrust forward and stood, facing the captain, swaying a little and smiling.

"Get an ax and smash open one of the top panels in the door. Understand! What's wrong with you, man? Are you ill?"

"Ma heid aches!" said the carpenter. "I'm no' vera weel! It's the dis-dis-dispepsy!"

"Get out of my sight!" said the captain.

"Smith'll kill some one," said old Nuthawl, "sure as fate! 'Ooever goes near 'im he'll kill!"

"What's that?" roared the captain, his temper thoroughly aroused. "What's that man mumbling about?" He saw Nuthawl. "He's got no trousers on! Why haven't you got your trousers on, eh? What's the meaning of it, eh?"

Nuthawl, terribly embarrassed by this publicity, subsided into the background.

The only sound from the forecastle now was the voice of the trimmer talking to himself and at times rising into a kind of singsong chant.

Chaymore thought of telling the second engineer what had happened at Isabella's, and then he decided that it might be better to hold his tongue. He would wait, at least, until Frawdell returned on board.

The panel was broken in by the bosun with the ax.

"Why!" He turned. "He's got the bedplanks jammed right up ag'in the door! See!"

The captain shouted at him.

"Well, then, force 'em back, can't you! We don't want to be foolin' aroun' here all night! Good Lord! Seems like some o' you wouldn't know enough to come indoors at meal-times! Help him slide those boards back, some one! Mr. MacCorrance, can't you do something?"

They cleared a space at the back of the broken panel.

"Where's that hose?" said the mate.

And then as he looked over his shoulder toward the well-deck a seven-pound jar of pickles came hurtling through the gap and smashed on the hatch coaming.

"Look out, sir!"

A razor flashed in the moonlight, just grazing the mate's cheek. Another razor followed.

The trimmer was shouting defiance, yelling at the top of his voice, madly, chanting that before he was dead, he would kill! Before he was dead, he would kill!

After the razors came lumps of coal.

The nozzle of the hose was thrust through the broken panel and the water turned on. The madman gave a scream of rage. But in spite of the flood poured in on him he went on hurling coal.

There was a smashing of glass and the light vanished.

"Break open the door, bosun!" said the captain grimly. "I've had enough of this! Make haste!"

The bosun said—

"Stand clear!"

The hose continued to drench the forecastle. With each stroke of the ax the woodwork splintered. "Can't do no more, sir," said the bosun at last.

The men tugged and heaved at the bedboards that blocked the doorway. At the back of the boards there was the table upended—beds, benches, blankets—these also had to be hauled out to clear the entrance. The madman was still throwing coal, still shouting defiance, still threatening that before he died he would kill.

"Wonder what made him go that way!" said the mate.

"Dunno!" said the second engineer.

That Smith should have done something queer before the end of the voyage did not surprize him exactly, but he liked him and he was sorry.

" 'E's an 'omicidal maniac!" said the storekeeper gloomily.

At length the doorway was clear. The hose still poured a fierce stream of water

into the blackness of the forecastle. The mate flashed an electric torch and by the light the trimmer, silent now, was visible, crouching in the far corner.

"Smith," shouted the second engineer, "Smith! Chuck it! Don't be a —— fool!"

A piece of coal hit him on the knee. He swore and limped away.

"Lay him out, some of you!" said the captain. "Don't be scared of him!"

No one stirred. No one was willing to face the risk of rushing a madman.

The men clustered on either side of the doorway and waited for some one else to move.

The captain growled.

"What's keeping you back, eh?"

And then, while they were hesitating, arguing, jostling each other, some one trod on the hose, and the stream of water was shut off. A yell came from the corner where the trimmer was crouching. He jumped to his feet and made a wild rush. The second mate, who was nearest the doorway, ran forward and hit him over the head with the windlass lever. The trimmer fell on his face. The water poured into the forecastle once more.

"Shut that —— water off!" roared the second mate.

They carried the unconscious trimmer out on to the well-deck. The second engineer, lame still, approached and stared at him. The little man's face was like death. On his temple was a smear of blood where the second mate had hit him. His expression was more calm and peaceful than at any time during the voyage.

"B'lieve he's dead!" said Chaymore. "Here, Smith, ol' son! Smithy—what's up?"

"An' now what are we goin' to do with him, eh?" said the chief engineer.

A doctor from a big steamer moored near the *Trebizond* came on board. He gave the trimmer a hypodermic, bound up the wound in his head, and said he could do no more for him. The man would be quite all right until morning, but they would have to report the matter to the Port Health Authorities as soon as possible.

Four of the hands carried Smith to the wheel-house where he was tied, hand and foot, to the wooden grating. Here he was left in the charge of Chaymore.

IN THE morning the second engineer went up to the wheel-house.

Smith still lay stretched out on the grating.

"He ain't moved, sir, all night," said Chaymore. "I hope he ain't dead, sir."

Smith opened his eyes. He stared at the second engineer for a moment and then looked at Chaymore and closed his eyes with a little sigh.

"I'm dead," he whispered.

"——!" said Chaymore. "It's horrible!"

"Where was he last night?" asked the second.

"With me, sir, an' the other firemen."

"Anything happen to him?"

"No, sir. He'd a bit of an argument with Frawdell, sir, about nothin' in particular, an' he seemed kind of broken up about it. Frawdell was drinkin' heavy an' slingin' his weight around. You know how it is, sir, when you've had a few drinks, sir. An' then Smith, sir, he didn't like it, an' he got up an' went out an' left us."

The second engineer was puzzled.

Later on in the morning Smith was taken ashore to hospital. By night word was brought to the ship that he was raving. The blow on his head had caused him to lose his memory. He had forgotten the *Trebizond*. He would be unable to finish the voyage.

Frawdell, also, was missing.

Chaymore and the other firemen had, they said, left him in Isabella's café, seated at the table, drunk. They had gone to another café before returning on board.

That was the last they had seen of him.

The third engineer and the third mate, however, had met him arguing with a woman who, as they approached, turned and made off. Frawdell had walked on by himself. He was drunk, of course.

The chief engineer said he would be happier than he had been for months if he never saw him again. The man was a bad egg. Probably he had deserted.

The day before they were due to sail, however, Frawdell's body was found in the South Basin. There were no marks of violence on him. He had, it was presumed, lost his way in the darkness, and being too drunk to see where he was going had fallen into the water and been drowned.

And so the *Trebizond* put out to sea. Frawdell was dead. Smith was insane. Two other men were signed on in their stead.

Nobody saw Smith, the trimmer, again.

The second engineer was sorry he had gone. He had hoped that before they reached England he would have discovered his secret. And now he would never know.

Smith had been an enigma—out of place in the stokehold; the strangest trimmer that had ever signed on for a voyage in a tramp-steamer; quiet and unassuming and hard-working and honest—a gentleman in the truest and strictest sense of the word, who through all his troubles had never once showed that he was afraid or disheartened.

With Smith's departure something seemed to have passed out of the life of the ship. There was a gap that the mere signing on of another trimmer could never fill.

At sea trimmers are cheap—cheaper than either shipowners or officers or shareholders; but Mr. Lachan, a cynic in his estimate of human nature, felt that he was the better for having known Smith, the trimmer. He would think of him with regret always. He had liked him and pitied him.

Smith was a failure, certainly. How else would he have been content to work in the *Trebizond's* bunkers? He was a criminal, perhaps. And yet he was one of the few men that the second engineer of the *Trebizond* had met in his life whom he would never forget, whose story would puzzle him as long as he lived.

IN A street in a desolate suburb of South London, Mr. Lachan, now chief engineer of the S.S. *Erzerum*, a little stouter than in the days when he was second engineer of the *Trebizond*, but otherwise unchanged, was waiting for a bus or a taxi to take him back to his ship that lay in the Surrey Commercial Docks, discharging cargo after a Western Ocean voyage.

The night was very cold. Mr. Lachan thought with a certain amount of pleasure of his warm and snug little room on board.

"Br'rh!" He shivered.

And then at the corner of a dark side street opposite he saw a crowd. In the center was a flaring acetylene gas-jet, and a man speaking. His voice carried to where Mr. Lachan was waiting. Drawn like so many others by curiosity, he crossed the street.

The speaker was a small man with gray hair—bareheaded—dressed like a clergyman.

"Friends, the weight of our sins lies heavy on our hearts! Can any of us, looking back into the dead years that are past, say that we have never sinned? Can we say that there is nothing of which we are not ashamed? Friends, we are all of us sinners! Repent, for the time is drawing nigh——"

And then the speaker turned his head. In the light of the acetylene gas-jet his face was, though worn and wrinkled and sad, the face of Smith, the *Trebizond's* trimmer.

Mr. Lachan listened, without hearing what he was saying, lost in a whirl of emotions and memories. He had met Smith, at last, after all these long years! Smith, poor little Smith! And now he was a parson, a street preacher, talking about his sins!

A tall young man in glasses, whose manner was that of one determined to do good at whatever cost to his feelings, and obviously a helper—part of the show, Mr. Lachan decided—was going from man to man in the small and rapidly diminishing crowd, offering what appeared to be tracts or pamphlets. He reached Mr. Lachan.

"Brother!" he said, holding out one of the tracts. "Will you accept one of these?"

Mr. Lachan ignored the gift.

"Chuck it!" he said. "I'm a seafarin' man. Listen!"

He laid a heavy hand on the young man's arm. The young man's expression was sweeter than honey, and about as sticky.

"Anything I can do, brother, will be a pleasure!"

"Is that Mr. Smith speakin'?" Mr. Lachan asked.

"No," said the young man. "That's Mr. Spridgeon. The Reverend Alfred Spridgeon."

"Spridgeon!" said Mr. Lachan. "Are you sure?"

"The Reverend Alfred Spridgeon!" said the young man stiffly, adjusting his glasses.

"Oh!" said Mr. Lachan. "How long's he been preachin'?"

"He's been spreading the Light one way and another ever since he came down from Oxford. A scholar and an athlete. He played for his varsity. Stand-off half."

The young man became almost a human being.

"Wonderful tackle. Scored against Cambridge from his own twenty-five. It's a privilege to be associated with him. People who've known him longer than I have tell me he's not had a day off his work for the past twenty years!"

"Do you mean to say he's doin' this kind o' thing with no lay-off or holiday all that time?"

"I believe so," said the young man.

"I don't," said Mr. Lachan.

The mystery, that had never been solved, seemed suddenly to have grown deeper.

The service ended in a short prayer.

"Good night, friends, and thank you!"

The little man with the sad eyes and the gray hair stepped down from the box on which he had been standing.

Mr. Lachan approached him, certain even now that this was Smith, the trimmer of the *Trebizond*, who had gone mad at Buenos Aires.

"Mr. Spridgeon," he said. "Do you remember me?"

"I'm afraid I don't," said the little preacher brightly.

He held out his hand.

"But you know me, eh? May I ask you your name?"

"My name is Lachan. I used to be second engineer of the *Trebizond!* Now do you remember?"

Again there was the shake of the head and the faint smile.

"The *Trebizond!* I'm afraid I don't. I'm delighted to meet you, anyhow. I've a tender place in my heart for all sailors, engineers, especially!"

Mr. Lachan stared at him blankly and then lowered his voice.

"Smith," he whispered, "what are you playin' at? You know —— well you were trimmer on the *Trebizond!* We left you in hospital in Buenos Aires!"

An expression of fear shot into the pale-blue eyes of the little preacher. He put his hand to his throat. And all at once he looked anxious and depressed.

"Mr. Lachan," he said, "we must have a talk."

He laid his hand on his arm.

"Wait one moment, please, and I'll be at your service."

He spoke to the young man in glasses and two other older men who were waiting with the acetylene gas-lamp and a small harmonium, said good night to them and turned.

"Now, Mr. Lachan," he said, "I'm ready. I know of a place where we can talk without being disturbed. You're not in a hurry, I hope!"

He led the way to a little eating-house, very clean and plainly furnished, where there were small tables, bare of table-cloths, and benches with high wooden backs, and a counter on which were pieces of cake and bread and a cold ham and a big copper tea-urn.

A stout woman came forward as they entered.

"Why, Mr. Spridgeon, 'ow are you? You're lookin' poorly!"

"Good evening, Mrs. Cooper. I'm quite well, thank you! Is the back room empty?"

"Walk right through, sir," said the stout woman. "Will it be coffee, sir?"

He nodded and smiled.

"Please, Mrs. Cooper."

When they were seated in the little parlor at the back of the shop his smile faded.

"Now," he said, "Mr. Lachan, tell me! What is it?"

He looked older than in the days when Mr. Lachan had first known him, older and not so robust. His frame seemed to have shrunk; there were deep grooves in his face; his hair was gray and thin on the temples.

Mr. Lachan felt all of a sudden terribly nervous.

This was Smith—Smith of the *Trebizond;* and yet—what did it mean? The mystery oppressed him like some physical discomfort.

"Mr. Spridgeon," he said, "is that your real name?"

The little man nodded.

"Well, I knew you as Smith. You know that I did! Don't you remember me? Lachan, that used to be second!"

"No," said the little man. "No, I can't remember. What did you say was the ship?"

"The *Trebizond!* We signed you on in Genoa. You'd been ill—and left there."

He frowned.

"What was the ship you'd been on before now? The *Joanna*—from Philadelphia. Do you mean to say you've forgotten?"

"I can't believe it; and yet—yet——"

He ended in what seemed a gasp of pain.

The door opened and Mrs. Cooper entered with two cups of coffee and a plate of pale-looking buns on a tray.

When she had gone the little man, Smith or Spridgeon, whatever his name might be, continued—

"How d'you know that I'm Smith?"

"If you're Smith," said the engineer, "and you are, you've got a scar on the side of your head, just over your ear, where the

second mate hit you with the windlass lever!"

"Hit *me!*" said the little man weakly. "Why—what for?"

"Have you got that scar?" asked the engineer.

"Yes," he answered. "Yes, it's there. I've felt it often and wondered."

"Wondered!"

And then a great light burst upon Mr. Lachan. He understood.

"Mr. Spridgeon," he said, "I think I know. After you were hit—you forgot everything—you didn't know where you were; you didn't know any of us on board ship; and they told us afterward, when you'd been taken to hospital, that——"

A sudden disinclination to hurt this poor little man came over him. He hesitated. And then, knowing that he must go on with the explanation, now he had begun, he plunged.

"After you'd been taken to hospital, they told us you'd lost your memory! You understand, Mr. Spridgeon, and so you've forgotten the *Trebizond!* But you were once a trimmer on board and your name is Smith!"

The little man was leaning forward, his elbows on the table, his hands covering his face.

"Smith!" he said.

Then he looked up.

"Smith, is that who I am?"

"Old man," said the engineer, "you're not to worry! Mebbe I shouldn't have told you. But I felt I had to. Don't worry! You're Spridgeon, so far's I'm concerned, from now on! What's it matter even if you did start your life under the name of Smith, eh? Names are nothin', anyway."

And then, with a feeling of dull bewilderment, he remembered what the young man with the glasses had said. Spridgeon, the famous Spridgeon, who had been preaching ever since he came down from Oxford! Spridgeon, who had played football for his varsity! Stand-off half! Then, who was Smith? Where did Smith, the trimmer of the *Trebizond*, come in?

The little man sighed.

"Mr. Lachan," he said slowly, "you've filled a blank in my life which might never have been filled but for my meeting you tonight. Spridgeon's my name. But——"

Again he gave a deep sigh.

"But some years ago, Mr. Lachan, I had a breakdown. That's how I put it."

He broke off and stared at the engineer with a troubled expression in his pale eyes. So had he looked when Frawdell had hurt him, laughed at him, in the stokehold.

"I lost some one," he continued, "who was very dear to me! It was not her fault—no, not her fault! Humanity, Mr. Lachan! Humanity! Poor humanity! She went away with another man. Left me. I never knew what happened afterward. I remember reading her letter. I remember walking for miles in the rain. I remember nothing more, Mr. Lachan, till I was in hospital in Buenos Aires.

"Do you understand? Walking in London in the rain, the East India Dock Road, and waking in hospital in Buenos Aires! And of the years between—nothing, Mr. Lachan: nothing remained! Not a trace! They called me Smith! Smith was my name! I'd had a blow on my head! They thought that my memory had gone, but it hadn't, Mr. Lachan—it hadn't! It had come back to me! I was Spridgeon, a preacher of the Gospel: Alfred Spridgeon—not Smith at all! And I never told them. No, I never told them. I couldn't. They wouldn't have believed me! And, Mr. Lachan, do you know, two years had passed! Two years had gone out of my life! And I didn't know what had become of me, where I had been, anything, except I was called Smith and had been a trimmer or fireman! Yes, and the *Trebizond* was the name of the ship! And I couldn't remember. Mr. Lachan, when I reached home, I told them I'd had a breakdown and had been away for my health."

He wiped the beads of sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief.

"My God!" said the engineer. "Then all the time you were trimmin' coal in the *Trebizond's* bunkers, you didn't know that your name was Spridgeon!"

"No," said the little man. "I was Smith. I remember nothing, only—only——"

A spasm of what seemed some terrible fear or horror shook him.

"An' you don't remember Genoa, Huelva, New York, Boston, eh? You don't remember moonin' around New York by yourself, an' upsettin' a dago who'd knocked over a couple of little girls, an' the mate an' I draggin' you out of the crowd, an' the police, eh? You don't remember the time we sighted a schooner in distress an' put out the port lifeboat an' it turned over an' we put out the other, an' you jumped over

the rail an' saved the life of one of the deck-hands, eh? You don't remember nothin' of that, eh?"

The little man shook his head.

"All gone," he muttered. "All of it!"

"But how did it happen you came to take on a job as trimmer, eh? How could you do the work? How did you get hold of a discharge book?"

"I've always been interested in the sea, Mr. Lachan; most of my work lay down by the docks. I'd been for voyages in tramp-steamers as a passenger, for the experience. I'd studied the life—made friends with the men—watched them in the stokeholds and bunkers—questioned them. I can understand all that Mr. Lachan, but the discharge book—" he gave a shrug of his shoulders—"that I do not understand! Things happen at sea, I know." He smiled wearily. "And I managed to do the work, did I?"

"Yes," said the engineer, "you did. You worked hard. You didn't seem strong, not for coal-trimming, but you stuck to it! We admired you, Mr. Spridgeon, all of us!"

"Mr. Lachan," said the little man in a low voice, "tell me! What kind of a man—what kind of a man was I when I was a trimmer on board the *Trebizond?*"

"How d'you mean?"

"I know what trimmers and firemen are! Their temptations are many. Mr. Lachan, was I—" a dull red flush came into the pale cheeks—"was I straight?"

The engineer felt a sudden sympathy stirring within him.

"Mr. Spridgeon," he said, "I wish to God when my time comes I could know I was one-quarter as good a man as you were when you were Smith!"

"You shouldn't say that, Mr. Lachan. It's not right. It's not fair on yourself. But you see, Mr. Lachan, I didn't quite know—how could I?—what kind of a man I became when I lost my memory! I might have been anything. Thank you, Mr. Lachan."

The little man sat with his head propped on his hands, his pale eyes staring into space.

There was no sound in the little room. From the outer shop there came the chatter of voices and laughter and the clink of cups.

Presently the little man dropped his hands on to the table.

"Mr. Lachan," he said dully, "there's just one thing. I've worried myself almost out of my mind." He smiled once more. "Out of all those missing months, only one thing remains—only one suggestion of something remembered—something evil! It's killing me! Mr. Lachan, tell me! Did I ever do any one any harm?"

Mr. Lachan was troubled.

"Why, no! What harm could you have done?"

And still the little man seemed no happier.

"You promise you'll tell me the truth?"

"I promise," said Mr. Lachan.

"Mr. Lachan, this is what I remember. Or see. Or dream. There's a man I hate. A big man. A horrible man. And he hates me. And there's a girl. All very vague and shadowy. The man is unkind to her and bullies her. I feel I've got to do something. The world will be better for all of us when that man is out of it! You see, Mr. Lachan!"

The engineer nodded his head.

"And I'm waiting for this man in the night. But it's light, for the moon is in the sky, shining on the water. And this man comes walking along, drunk—yes, drunk—reeling, from side to side. And I go to him—this is what I see—go to him and put my arm through his and he laughs at me and calls me bad names and says things, horrible things, about me. I tell him we're going back to the ship. But we're not. I take him away from the ship, in the other direction, talking. And all the time I'm waiting my chance. And then, Mr. Lachan, I lead him to the edge of the quay—it makes me afraid even to think of it—I lead him to the edge of the quay—" his voice was so low that it was difficult to hear him—"and I give him a shove and he falls into the water—and never comes up. And I stand and watch the ripples in the moonlight, the circles growing larger and larger. And I know that he's dead!"

The little man ended abruptly and sat gazing at Mr. Lachan with a look of despair in his pale eyes and his face white.

The engineer's mouth was dry, and his heart was pounding, and he could scarcely speak.

Nevertheless he forced a smile and he shook his head, almost as if he were much amused.

"That's nonsense, Mr. Spridgeon, of course! Nonsense!"

"And it isn't true?"

"True! How could it be true? Why—what was the man like that you see?"

"A broad-shouldered man, Mr. Lachan—broad, with black hair, and a black mustache and horrible little eyes, close together, and a big purple scar on his chin. I can see him as plainly as I see you, Mr. Lachan. Was there any one like that on board?"

He waited, his face quivering.

"Was there any one like that on board!" repeated Mr. Lachan easily. "Why, no, Mr. Spridgeon! No one at all!"

He broke into laughter that sounded, in his own ears, harsh and unreal.

"The idea! It's something you dreamt, Mr. Spridgeon! It never happened to you, anyway; that I swear!"

"Thank God for that!"

The little man bowed his head. "Thank God! Thank God!"

When he looked up again, there were tears in his eyes.

"I'm free at last," he said, "free from the burden that was killing me!"

And Mr. Lachan knew that though the murderer of Frawdell, the fireman, sat facing him across the table, yet he had spoken the truth.

For the murderer of Frawdell, the man who had pushed him into the water and drowned him at Buenos Aires, was Smith, the *Trebizond's* trimmer, and the man who had told him the story was Spridgeon, who preached the Gospel to the heathen down by the docks!

CHESTNUTS

AN INCIDENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF MOHAMED ALI

by George E. Holt

Author of "A Transaction in Heads," "The Hand of Friendship," etc.

"Love your enemies—and use them."
Proverbs of Mohamed Ali.

NOW it came about that Mohamed Ali, outlaw and Descendant of the Prophet, in his retreats among the Anghera Hills, secured many followers, who admired him for his daring, respected him for his justice, and more or less worshiped him for reasons utterly unconnected with his ancestry. And, having this strength, it came into his mind to make use of it in the near future in an attempt to overthrow his enemies and regain his power in Moroccan affairs.

But there was one problem to be solved before such a move could be made: his followers were loyal and brave and would go cheerfully to Paradise for him, but they were most illy equipped as regarded arms and ammunition. Mohammed Ali was a seasoned warrior and leader, and he knew that a good rifle could make a brave man of a coward, and a raging devil of a brave man. He believed earnestly in *morale*—but even more earnestly in guns; he esteemed bravery, but placed high value upon ammunition. And having observed, while basha of Tangier, the effectiveness of French machine guns, he reflected that the

weakest of his followers, behind such a gun, would be a score of men—and his bravest an army.

Thus, being wise and well-posted in modern methods of warfare—as applied by the French to the *Pacific Penetration* of Morocco—Mohamed Ali realized keenly that any coup he might attempt to execute must be prefaced by the securing of arms to replace the antiquated or unserviceable ones now possessed by his followers.

This was a problem. The usual sources of war supplies were all closed to him for one reason or another. Importation was forbidden—and prevented—by the new and notorious Act of Algeciras, which, in diplomatic language, said that guns to be used by Europeans against the Moroccans could be brought into the country, but that guns to be used by Moroccans against Europeans were contraband. He could secure a supply from French agents—if he would become a French sympathizer—and from German agents on the mere promise that he might favor the aspirations of the All-Highest: but Mohamed Ali set some store by his word and by his reputation, and preferred not to have his name whispered about by either French liars or German swine.

Nor could he solve his problem by recourse to the most common of all military supply stations in Morocco—the Spanish fortresses at Ceuta and Melilla, where the soldiers for decades (and especially since the beginning of Spain's "Little War" in the Mar Chica district, against the Moors) had carried on a very profitable traffic in selling Spanish Government rifles and cartridges to the enemy. From them could Mohamed Ali buy guns and shells for just their weight in silver, which was not expensive, considering the fact that his friends had a very secret silver lode among the Anghera Hills, but to buy them would only be to replace worn-out, antiquated or damaged guns by other worn-out, antiquated or damaged guns. Besides which the Spanish Government contractors were now putting so much sand in the powder that, as he reflected, presumably their munitions works had been moved to the beaches of Trafalgar Bay.

Reviewing these facts, Mohamed Ali was led to broken speech with himself.

"Now Allah, in His wisdom, ordained that the human mind could not conceive impossibilities. That is a true thing, I think. Only the inconceivable is impossible; therefore—unless the *f'kees* lied when they taught me logic—therefore the conceivable is possible. Now, then, I conceive of securing this-and-this. If my logic is true, it is possible for me to secure this-and-this. Good. We progress.

"Now, I can not conceive of getting, in this country, the things I need. Therefore, that is impossible—dismiss it. And, therefore also, I must get them out of this country. Good. That can be arranged. It is only a matter of money. I might go to a shop-keeper of any one of those nations, place a bag of gold upon his table and say, 'I am Mohamed Ali, outlaw, and I wish to buy guns and cartridges with which to shoot some of your people.' He would take the gold *first*, give me that which I desired, and bid me go with his God's blessing. That is Europe——

"It then remains to get the supplies into this country and into my hands—to arrange so that they will not be suspected and seized. Bribery? No; others bribe also: the infidels taught us *that* game. Hm! I can not conceive of Mohamed Ali bringing them in. Ergo, Mohamed Ali can not bring them in. Therefore some one else must do so. Now—having conceived that, it must be possible—or I should return to the *madrassah* for a further study of the laws of logic. Now—who?"

He fell into a reverie, during which he chuckled—once.

A few days after Mohamed Ali's reverie, one of his lieutenants quietly left the Anghera hills, went to Tangier, and there boarded the dinky little "Djibel Dersa," which rattled its way across the Straits to Gibraltar. Thence, in due course, the traveler found his way to London—where, although a Moor, he had attended college, and consequently knew his way about. His native garments lay in the shop of a friend in Gibraltar; his English tweeds were of the best quality. And in one of his coat pockets was a draft for a substantial amount of English money. Very shortly after this draft had left his pocket, a large number of heavy cases left an English port, consigned to Hadj Larbi bel Ghardi, basha of the insignificant little port town of Arzila.

This was somewhat surprizing, in view of certain matters. The heavy cases contained machine guns and rifles and ammunition, which had been bought by Mohamed

Ali's agent, paid for with Mohamed Ali's money, and needed by Mohamed Ali's friends. Yet they were destined to a basha who was an enemy of his.

HADJ LARBI BEL GHARDI was a person of a little wealth and a little importance and a little power. But he was a fool. In that he considered himself much more wealthy and important and powerful than he was, and dreamed useless dreams into the bargain. He was not a plotter—because he had never had the opportunity. The nearest he had approached to it was when he had joined Mohamed Ali's enemies, when the clouds were gathering over Mohamed Ali's head. Even his small influence was important at the moment. This act, which had brought him the basha-ship of Arzila, also had served to put his name upon Mohamed Ali's book of enemies—and Mohamed Ali was as conscientious in punishing an enemy as in requiting a favor. But Hadj Larbi often dreamed—dreamed of the opportunity which would make him a great basha—a vizier even. Wherefore he was a fool. Which was known to Mohamed Ali, and which was involved in his chain of logic.

Before the cases had reached Arzila, Mohamed Ali's messenger was back again in Angera—or, rather, had been back in Anghera, but had forthwith proceeded to Arzila, for purposes of observation.

Hadj Larbi was most surprized when the chief of the almost-forgotten customs house came rather breathlessly to tell him that there were some twenty cases of goods for him, which the P. & Q. had just lightered in. But he was still more greatly surprized when he and the customs official (who, incidentally, was his own *khalifa*, or vice-basha, and therefore his abject slave) opened one of the cases and looked upon its contents. While he was counting the cases, each marked plainly with his name, a dream came and took possession of him.

Thus he lied to his *khalifa*, saying that he had just remembered having asked a friend in England to send him these guns, which were intended as a present for His Majesty the Sultan. The *khalifa*, who was also a fool, swallowed the lie. And shortly Hadj Larbi, having given explicit instructions as to the care of the cases, went away to figure how many men he could arm with this gift of Allah—and what he could do with them after he had armed them. Quickly it dawned upon him that the cases must not lie in the customs house: they must be removed to a safe place—a place where they would not attract attention.

Now Hadj Larbi had a small *casbah*, or foretress, about two miles from Arzila. Of this *casbah* he was very proud, although it was the jest of his friends and enemies alike. "Some day," Mohamed Ali had once said, "I'll kick it into the Atlantic." But, to the eye of the basha of Arzila, it was a fortress, wherefore were stored in it, by the following day, the cases of arms and ammunition. This fact being promptly reported to Mohamed Ali, certain things resulted. For one thing, Mohamed Ali dispatched a *rakkas*—a runner—to Fez, with a letter addressed to a friend who was a friend to the Vizier of War.

A reply came in five days, whereupon Mohamed Ali called to him a half-dozen bronzed, bare-legged, shaven-headed Riffians, in coarse brown *djellabas*, and outlined a program which brought six sets of white teeth into view. At sunset the six filed merrily off toward the west, and beneath each brown *djellaba* swung a rifle and a belt of ammunition. They were happy children—for they were on their way to rough-house the quiet town of Arzila. Not very many miles behind them rode Mohamed Ali and a handful of others. And behind *them* trotted a dozen sturdy mules, bearing big but empty *swarris*, or panniers.

While this exodus was taking place from the Anghera Hills, Hadj Larbi basha of Arzila, sat upon big cushions in his *casbah*, listened to the chatter of his handful of guards in the courtyard, and pondered as to the most effective use to make of the guns which Allah had dropped into his hands, and which now lay in their cases in a little room of the *casbah*. Hadj Larbi had succeeded in a task of autohypnosis; he now considered the possibility of defying even the Sultan himself—of perhaps establishing a new dynasty for the Shareefian Empire. Mohamed Ali had spoken truly when he said that a good gun makes a brave man of a coward. He might have added that a hundred good guns often make a fool of one. The basha was drugged with dreams, as by *opia*, or *keef*.

From his dreams, Hadj Larbi was abruptly awakened by the sound of shots—and more shots. He arose and went into

the courtyard. A silence had fallen upon his guards; they, too, were listening. Again a rattle of shots—and the sounds came from the town, two miles to the westward. Then began a constant, swift gunfire which clearly intimated that things were stirring in the town of which Hadj Larbi was basha. He called reluctantly for his horse: it behooved him to go and see what it was about, little as he liked to do so. Hadj Larbi was not a swashbuckler.

But scarcely had he mounted when a rider galloped up to the closed gate and called loudly upon him.

"Come at once, Sidi!" he cried. "There is trouble in the city. You are attacked. A great number of Riffians are fighting your soldiers—robbing the houses—" He paused for breath, for he was a good actor, this man of Mohammed Ali's.

The basha rode slowly through the gate.

"Come—come all," cried the newcomer, turning upon the guards. "There is need for every man," he flung at the basha, who hesitated—thinking of the cases that lay in the little room.

"And you will need a strong guard yourself," added Mohamed Ali's man.

This decided the basha.

"Follow me," he ordered his men. "But close the gate behind you." And they rode off toward the noise of battle. As they rode, Mohamed Ali's man fired two shots into the air, close together. The basha turned quickly to stare at him, at which he grinned shamefacedly, and said:

"I am excited. Let us ride more swiftly, so that I may sooner use my gun upon those shaven-headed devils who attack us."

And he spurred up, for he saw that the basha was at last about to ask who he was.

The two shots echoed across the plain, and Mohamed Ali and his horsemen rode out from behind a hill in the east, and approached the *casbah*——

An hour later Mohamed Ali and his men rode back into the Anghera Hills, leading a dozen sturdy mules, each of which carried two big cases in its *swarri*, and the basha of Arzila was making useless inquiries as to what had actually taken place in the town. The best he could get was that there had been a raid of some sort—but that was obvious even to him. Several men had been hurt, but none killed. There had been a vast amount of excitement, chiefly because the darkness had made it impossible to tell who was friend and who was enemy, and a vast deal of shooting at shadows, or at nothing at all. And then suddenly matters had quieted down. No one had seen the six Riffians ride swiftly away, nor had heard their jests and laughter.

And so Hadj Larbi, muttering, turned his tired face toward his *casbah*, where he shortly was snoring peacefully and dreaming that he was sultan, with four fly-swatters to wave fans over him, instead of two, as the present Commander of the Faithful had.

He was awakened at dawn by the clatter of hoofs and a harsh banging upon his gate. A voice demanded immediate admittance in the name of the Sultan—and secured it. Very shortly Hadj Larbi faced a big, flashing-eyed *kaid* from the Sultan's household, who demanded vigorously to be placed in possession of certain cases of guns and ammunition—before he took the *casbah* apart, and made Harj Larbi eat the pieces.

Now was the basha scared half out of his senses, and so made denial of knowing anything about the guns and ammunition of which his visitor spoke. The *kaid* wasted no further words, but gave an order to his men to find the things he desired. They scattered and began their search. The *kaid sat* down upon a cushion, lighted a cigaret, looked at Hadj Larbi with sympathy, and remarked:

"I suppose, after all, it is not very painful. Still——"

"What—what is not painful?" asked Hadj Larbi.

"To have one's head cut off," replied the *kaid*. "In a flash—it is all over."

"But—why speak of such things?" inquired the basha.

"True; there is no need. Only—I was just thinking—that by this time tomorrow you undoubtedly will be in Paradise."

Hadj Larbi started violently, then sank upon his cushions.

"But—but—you jest."

"Oh, do I? Perhaps. People's ideas of humor *are* different, that is true. But my idea of a joke is *not* to have my head cut off from my neck, and hung up on the city wall."

Now was Hadj Larbi white with fright. He licked his lips and wiped the sweat from the palms of his hands.

"I—" he began. "I—will show you where the guns are. I—was going to take

them to the Sultan—as a gift." He struggled to his feet.

"Humph!" grunted the *kaid*. "You lie with as much cleverness as you plot." But he arose, also. "Show me—and at once. And *then* you may try to explain how you, a servant of His Majesty, came to have such a supply of guns in your miserable *casbah*. We know you planned some fool thing—but you will not have long to regret it. How many cases are there?"

"Twenty," said the basha, in a hoarse whisper; his throat ached with fear.

"Twenty? Yes; that is what the letter said."

"The letter! What letter?" gasped the basha.

"The letter, dog, which informed your master, the Sultan—may Allah grant him long life!—of your treachery, of your plotting, of your twenty cases of guns."

"But—but who wrote it?"

"That," answered the *kaid*, "is none of your affair. Besides—I don't know."

They had now reached the little room. The basha turned a key in the lock.

"Here they are," he said, throwing open the door.

Every corner of the room threw back the light: it was empty, save for one shattered case, from which Mohamed Ali's men had equipped themselves with nice new rifles. Hadj Larbi clutched at the doorway for support; the *kaid* called to two of his men.

"Bind this man," he ordered. The soldiers seized the unfortunate basha.

"Now—what is this?" The *kaid* dragged the broken case into the courtyard, and studied a charcoal scrawl upon the top board.

"The respects," he deciphered slowly, for he had not much teaching, "The respects of Mohamed—Mohamed Ali—to Hadj Larbi."

"*Ai! Ai! Ai!*" wailed the basha. "He has stolen them from me! The dog! The thief! *Ai! Ai! Ai!*"

"Save your breath," curtly commanded the *kaid*. "Even though it be as you say—and I am inclined to believe it!—*that* does not explain why *you* had them. I seek not Mohamed Ali, for I am no fool, as you are. We ride—and, as His Majesty has just been annoyed by two or three *other* little conspiracies, I would advise you not to bother to take with you any of your belongings. I think that you will have no need for them."

The *kaid's* opinion was correct. One of Mohamed Ali's men a few days later recognized the head hanging over the Fez gate. It looked depressed, he thought.

FIRST GOLD IN CALIFORNIA

by Eugene Cunningham

THE gold-rush of California is intimately associated with the names of James Marshall and Captain Sutter. But Marshall's find, in January of 1847, was the *second* discovery.

In 1841 a *ranchero* named Lopez, who knew something of gold, set out from his ranch on Piru Creek to hunt strayed cattle. At noon he dismounted to rest and while sprawled on the bank of the creek—a branch of the Santa Clara—pulled up some wild onions. At their roots he found pyrites. He began to examine the ground closely and found gold in paying quantity. This at San Francisquito, thirty-five miles northwest of Los Angeles.

With word of the discovery the region swarmed with diggers, but in comparison to the vast output of the mines after Marshall's discovery the southern diggings produced but an infinitesimal amount.

The product of the northern mines in the first six years is estimated at two hundred and fifty millions. As late as 1910 the year's output was reckoned at twenty-one millions.

And all this yellow flood may be said to have its earliest source in the tiny hole made by a lazy brown herdsman, who jerked a wild onion to season his unsalted *tortilla!*

TAMING THE FOUR BAD-MEN

by William Wells

Author of "A Death Fight," "The Raid," etc.

"IT DON'T make any difference how bad a man is, sooner or later he's going to get tamed," remarked 'Timberline' Johnson oracularly.

"Did you ever see it done?" inquired the tenderfoot.

"Did I?" Timberline told him, "I saw four of 'em tamed at one crack, and it beat anything ever heard tell of."

IT WAS back in the days [continued Timberline] when these here empire builders were stringing railroads all over the landscape, riling up the Injuns and scaring off the game. One of those Wall Street financiers would take a look at a map of the Rocky Mountains, see a blank space, make some marks on it with a pencil and tell his hired men to go out and build a railroad. It got to be so that you couldn't go anywhere without seeing some young guy in a big hat and high-laced shoes, perched up on a pinnacle looking through a telescope set on three legs; and making sign-talk at some other guy holding one of these poles with red and white stripes on it way off in the distance. And lots of times you'd think you was a hundred miles from anybody, and all at once you'd run into a gang of rough-necks in a cañon blowing —— out of the walls to make a grade, and busting themselves wide open to get it done before some other outfit came along and took the right-of-way from 'em. Some of those grades are there yet—they never did finish the railroad.

It cost a lot of money, but the empire builders didn't care three whoops in ——. They'd flim-flammed it out of those smart men back East, or out of those Dutch bankers that's always looking for a soft snap, and it sure spread plenty of cash where a hard-working rustler could get his paws on some of it.

When you build a railroad you have to have cross-ties to lay the steel on, so one time I said something to the right party, got a tie contract and went up on the head of a river that run across where one of the railroads was going to be, putting up a camp close to good timber. Pretty soon the tie-hacks and river-hogs began to drift in—we had to run the ties down river—and in a month we were banking ties to beat the band and getting ready for the first drive.

Then one day four *hombres*, that I knew, rode up, and they were plenty hard citizens. Two of 'em had been bouncers at the old Palace Theater in Denver, when Ed Chase ran it, time of the Leadville excitement, and anybody that could bounce those miners when they were down on a bust was some bouncer. The third was 'Stuttering Jack' Twichell, that killed the three gunmen in the street fight at Granite on the old Leadville trail, never being touched, though they started shooting first, and the other was 'Big Ed' Morgan, that was some hard nut his own self.

"Hello, fellows," says I, "get off and look at your saddles. I'm glad you came—I need a few more good choppers."

Ed grins.

"Nothing doing, Timberline, we've come up to open a saloon and give those hoboes of yours a chance to relax from their labors once in a while, or else you'd work 'em to death. We've got a couple of freight wagons with the lay-out trailing along behind."

Now tie-hacks get so much a tie and work when they get good and ready, so that was a josh, and it was hard to talk 'em into making ties fast enough without having 'em lit up half the time—but I couldn't help myself.

"Where are you going to put up your dump?" I inquired.

Ed looks around.

"Right alongside your commissary shack," he says. "It looks like a good place."

"No you don't." I tell him. "It's hard enough to make 'em be good now without having 'em full of the rot-gut you'll dispense. You go across the river and camp."

Ed looks at the river, which is a hundred yards wide and running like the mill-tails of ——, and don't like it.

"Supposing we don't?" he says.

"Do you want to argue the question?" I ask.

Ed looks ugly, but my storekeeper, along with his clerk and the bookkeeper, are standing just inside the door of the commissary, each of 'em with a sawed-off shotgun on account of not knowing just what's up, so Ed grins again.

"Keno, you win," he says. "No hard feelings, is there?"

"None at all," I tell him. "Put your horses in the corral and come in and have dinner."

So when the wagons come they pull across the river, hire some of the tie-hacks and put a log-building on a knoll a hundred yards back from the water, and the tie-hacks rig up a bridge, if you can call a line of six-inch poles strung on trestles a bridge.

Of course, walking a six-inch pole is easy for a tie-hack or river-hog, with their calked shoes, but not so easy for common folks. Some of the tie-hacks would fall off when coming back loaded, especially at night, but they always got out again—you can't drown those birds. It was a wonder they could navigate at all, though, with the kind of cargo they carried.

It was a long haul across the desert and hard to get whisky freighted up, it being mostly water when it arrived, on account of the freighters having cramps in the stomach from the alkali water, and getting snake bit. So Ed and his gang had pure alcohol sent in—the freighters not being able to get away with so much of that—and doped it up with tobacco, red pepper and such junk. One drink would make a man holler like a wolf, and after two I've seen a tie-hack climb a tree to the topmost branch, perch there and hoot like an owl, daring anybody to come up after him. That stuff was sure invigorating.

So on a Sunday, when the tie-hacks came in after their week's grub, after being all by their lonesome, or maybe with a partner or two, up in the timber, and the punchers came in from the Summer line camps, and maybe some trappers or a bunch of Indians, my camp was a lively place.

But the four being tough, they kept things pretty peaceful around their dump, what with using ax handles freely and shooting up a few around the edges—nothing serious. But if you know what tie-hacks and river-hogs are you can see that anybody that can keep 'em anywhere near peaceful when they're full of chain-lightning like that gang sold, was a hard crowd to handle.

Everything was drifting along lovely when one day a skinny little woman, her and her man having a ranch down the river a piece and selling eggs and truck to the commissary, walks into the saloon and speaks to Big Ed.

"Mister," she says, "if my man comes in and wants a drink please don't give him any, for when he gets drunk he acts kind of mean and might come home and try to beat me up."

"What sort of a looking duck is he?" Ed asks.

"About as big as me, with a sandy beard," the old woman tells him.

"All right," says Ed, being kind-hearted to the women, especially old ones, "we won't." And he calls the other boys and tells 'em to look out for this guy and not sell him a drink, and the woman thanks him and walks out.

ALONG in the middle of the week, business being slack and no one on the saloon but the four partners, in comes a dried-up little man that answers the description the woman gave. Ed is back of the bar, leaning on it with his

elbows and reading an old Salt Lake paper that a freighter has brought in, and the others are playing monte over in a corner, so nobody pays any attention to the newcomer and he walks up to the bar.

"Shove over some of the cup that cheers, I'm feeling down-hearted," he says, and Ed, being interested in something he's struck, pushes over a bottle and a glass without looking up.

The little man pours out a slug that would strangle an elephant and downs it, and Ed, still absent-minded, reaches out and pulls the bottle back. The little man shivers all over as the stuff goes down, and bats his eyes a few times—for that dope sure gets quick action—then reaches for the bottle again, but it ain't there.

He rubs his eyes and takes a look, but the bottle is out of his reach.

"Hey there, you big slob," he says to Ed, "pass that bottle back or I'll come after it."

This kind of wakes Ed up, and he looks at the little man, sizes him up, and remembers what he promised the old woman.

"Run along," he says. "Your old woman left orders not to let you get lit up."

"The —— she did," yelps the little man. "Cast them bat-eyes of yours this way, you cross between a worn-out saddle-blanket and a hole in the ground, and tell me do I look like a hen-pecked married man. You send that bottle back before I tear you limb from limb," howls the little man, frothing at the mouth, "and plaster the mangled remnants on the roof of this haunt of sin."

The little man speaking so earnest, the others look up, but not seeing anything they think Ed can't handle, go on with the game.

"Well," says the little man, still ferocious, "do I get that drink?"

"I said no, and that settles it," Ed tells him.

"It does, does it?" yells the little man, going loco, and he lights on top of the bar and busts the bottle over Ed's head, who goes down nice and easy with the little man on top.

Twichell was looking straight at 'em when it happened, and he said he never saw anything so quick. One moment there was Ed on one side of the bar and the little man on the other, and the next there was nothing but the bar all by its lonesome.

The three of 'em make a break to rescue Ed, for from the sounds the little man is tramping him into the floor, but they never get half-way. Back of the bar is a shelf with a row of bottles covered with fancy labels on it, so as to make the tie-hacks think they're getting the real stuff—but all full of the same dope—and one of these bottles takes Twichell square on the nose, smashing and filling his eyes with tobacco-juice and such truck, so that he's as blind as a bat, clawing at his eyes and cussing horrible.

That bar fairly erupts bottles—that little man must have been a ball-pitcher sometime—and he has those two bouncers' faces running blood and whisky and as blind as Twichell in less than two seconds, busting a couple of bottles on each of 'em.

Then he dances out into the middle of the floor, a gun in each hand that he's found under the bar, and lets out a Comanche war-whoop.

"Get to —— out of here," he screeches, cracking a couple of caps just to show 'em he's heeled. "Head for daylight and keep a-going," he yells, cutting loose at their feet and knocking a boot-heel off one of the bouncers.

All three of 'em head for the door—they can see the light-spot.

Over at the camp we hear the shooting and run out and here they come, the three legging it and the little man right behind 'em, letting go with first one gun and then the other and yelling like a dozen Injuns on the war-path—he's certainly got 'em stampeded.

"Hit the bridge a running," he whoops, and they did, single file, making maybe ten feet before they fell off, not being tie-hacks and having slick boots, and away they go down stream, the little man standing on the bank and cheering 'em.

"Ten to one the black-haired one drowns first," he hollers, meaning Twichell.

And all three of 'em would but the current set in close to the bank in a bend below, and some tie-hacks by hard running beat 'em to it and got 'em out with pike-poles they'd grabbed up, tearing 'em some, not having time to be careful where they hooked 'em.

When the little man sees they're saved he makes out like he's weeping, then waves his hat at us and goes back to the saloon. Pretty soon he comes out herding Ed, who acts kind of dazed, but the little man trails

Ed down to the bridge, holding Ed's own gun in the middle of his back.

"Go across and see how your partners feel, and the next time I come into your dump try and act polite," he says, giving Ed a poke with the gun.

But Ed has sense to get down and coon the pole, so he don't fall in, the little man abusing him shameful for being afraid to stand up like a man, while he's doing it.

We plaster up the four of 'em where they're cut with the broken bottles and where the pike-poles made holes in 'em when they're being fished out, and they're awful tame—plumb buffaloed.

About this time, the little man having gone back to the saloon, he comes out with a chair, a bottle and a Winchester. He leans the Winchester against the wall where it's handy, sets down the chair, holds the bottle up so we can see it, and takes a long pull, then tilts back against the wall. When Ed sees the bottle he cusses.

"Loan me your field-glasses, Timberline," he says, and I go get 'em.

After Ed takes a look he cusses worse, if possible.

"That sawed-off runt's found our private cache," he hollers—the gang had brought up a supply for their own use on the first wagons.

In a minute or so the little man gets up, throws the bottle into the air, takes a crack at it with a six-gun, busts it, goes in and brings out another and does the same thing over again.

This is too much for the gang and they borrow my shotguns, having lost their guns when they fell in the river and the little man having Ed's, and start bombarding him. But it's too far for buckshot and the little man picks up the Winchester and makes everybody take cover. He busts all the windows on that side of the commissary, punctures a lot of canned goods on the shelves and rips a lot of blankets and such, so I hang out a white flag—it's none of my war.

WHEN he sees the white flag he goes in, coming out with a white shirt—the gang bunk back of the saloon and have some good clothes—ties it on a stick, waves it and cheers, and just about this time here comes a half-dozen punchers with a *remuda* and pack outfit going into the mountains to start the beef round-up. When the little man sees 'em coming he brings out an armful of bottles—all private stock—and makes 'em welcome.

This is more than Ed can stand and he takes my flag and makes for the bridge, waving the flag and making the peace sign.

When the little man sees him he takes the shirt, picks up the Winchester, fills the magazine out of a box he's found, and wanders down to the bank, weaving kind of erratic. He's got all three guns stuck in the waist of his pants, a butcher-knife in his hat-band, and looks warlike.

"What's on that weak mind of yours?" he hollers at Ed.

"We want to make a peace talk," Ed hollers back, the river making considerable noise.

"What's your terms?" the little man wants to know.

"All you want to drink, and no come-back," Ed tells him.

"Go fall in the river, like your partners did, and see if it will clear your head," the little man says, sarcastic. "I got all I want to drink now, and if you ducks think you've got a come-back coming, go ahead and put it over. I licked all four of you single-handed, and now I've got an army," he says, pointing at the punchers, who're diminishing the private stock awful fast.

"Your terms are insulting," he continues, "and if there wasn't three bridges, and three of you standing at the other end of 'em ready to take me on the flank when I got over I'd come across and whale —— out of you for making 'em."

He goes back to the punchers.

Ed comes back near crying—

"What'll we do, Timberline?" he asks.

"Search me," I tell him. "It looks like he's got a straight flush, ace-high, and it won't do you any good to call."

And just then here comes the little old woman that had warned the gang, driving a couple of broncs to a buck-board and having some eggs for the commissary.

She looks at Ed, and across the river, where the little man is up on the chair, orating to the punchers and being loudly cheered, and takes it all in.

"Didn't I tell you not to let my man have anything to drink?" she snaps at Ed.

"Yes, ma'am, you did," says Ed, meek like, "but he got one before we noticed."

"Now I got to go across the river and get him," she says.

She ties the broncs to a tree and walks the poles without a wabble.

Nobody sees her until she gets right close, then the little man notices her and stops orating, and that draws the punchers' attention and they stop yelling—"silence descended like a mantle," like I read somewhere in a book. All you could hear was the river, until the old woman began, and then you hear a plenty, even at two hundred yards!

The punchers climbed on their horses and oozed away careful-like, and the little man sheds his artillery and starts for the bridge, with the woman right behind explaining things to him. When he reaches the bank he hesitates.

"I don't reckon I can make it," he says, pitiful-like.

"Get down and coon it," she tells him, adding a lot more.

And he does, just like Ed had.

She takes him to the buck-board, makes him get in, takes the eggs in to the commissary, comes out and drives away.

"My ——," says Big Ed, "and she told me he might try to beat her if he got lit up."

THE WATER WIZARD

A Complete Novelette

by

J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Yellow Head," "The Black Banner," etc.

VILA, which is the capital of the New Hebrides, is on the island of Efaté, which is sometimes called Vaté and sometimes Sandwich Island, even as Vila is often known as Port Vila.

There are not many more beautiful harbors than that of Vila, with its blue and green of wooded peaks and clear water, its vivid light and shade, its jeweled islands scattered on the crystal bay where the flying-fish are almost always—not playing, but planing in grim earnest to escape the rush of their hungry enemies.

The British High Commissioner shares the rule of the islands with the French High Commissioner and each has an Assistant Resident Commissioner who live on separate islets. Most of the Mission stations are located the same way, also certain small native villages. It is both fashionable and pleasant to live on an island in Vila Bay and elsewhere in the group. It is cooler, and the sea is better than a fence when the tribesmen go on a raid.

There are few uglier people in the world than the natives of the New Hebrides. They are built for strength and not for comeliness. They have club noses in which is set a ring or a strip of bone; the distended lobes of their ears reach their shoulders and are pierced for use as receptacles for most of their possessions. They have woolly hair and woolly beards. They wear a gee-string and a wide bark belt which carries cartridges that foolish traders give them for use in antiquated Tower rifles. They are cannibals and use poisoned arrows, clubs and spears, besides their muskets. They

make mummies of their dead and effect collections of skulls. Their women are abject slaves.

For choice they wear a boar's tusk hung like a locket, and a freshly severed pig's tail as an ear ornament. The wizards rule them, and none is supposed to die a natural death. Death is to be revenged, and the wilder parts of the dark, mysterious bush are death-traps where a native vendetta is in perpetual progress.

They are vicious and treacherous, sullen and lazy. Their one redeeming trait is cleanliness. A village is scrupulously clean, stone-walled, swept, decorated with flowering and bright-leaved shrubs, with bamboos growing on the tops of soft coral fences. Nevertheless it is a Place of Death.

There are some more peaceful colonies of Polynesian origin but, for the most part, the natives are natural murderers and eaters of human flesh. Back in the dense bush they defy castigation, though it occasionally overtakes them. There are spots called by such well-earned names as "The Traders' Graveyard," which should be sufficient warning to the wary.

Traveling between the islands on the steamer that, like an accommodation train, stops here and there and everywhere, you may see through glasses—the best manner of viewing—a group of herded women bathing on an open beach guarded by flat-faced warriors bearing guns and bandoleers of cartridges, ready to stall off or drive back a rush from bush neighbors. Quakes shake the group; live volcanoes spout. It is a wild, wild place, inhabited by wild, wild people. Savages in a savage, magnificent setting.

Step off the beaten track, turn your back on your own laborers, weaken a constant watchfulness and restraint and you pay the ultimate penalty. Your skull, decked with crude clay modeling in caricature of your features, will be a main exhibit in a grass-thatched *hamal*. Your flesh may be passed about the village from chief to still suckling infants. This is not so certain, as the white long-pig is not esteemed as *kai-kai;* and even black-skinned flesh is eaten with medicinal red berries, like tomatoes, lest it prove overrich and bring about indigestion.

For all this, there are worse spots to live in than Vila. It is the Little Paris of the traders and the planters who come to its one struggling street and deal at the stores, before they gather at the Café—Restaurant Français—where the food is fair, if over-spiced for some palates, and one may drink thin claret, gin, whisky, grenadine or absinthe across the little tables and almost imagine himself back in God's Country. Which the New Hebrides, with all due respect for the efforts of the missionaries, is most distinctly not.

Saunders sat at the table with Haley and Stone, who were playing dominoes for the drinks. Saunders and Haley were in coffee, beyond Melé Beach, thirty-odd miles away. Stone grew corn and millet, closer in.

They had dined, and they had downed several rounds of drinks. They had discussed trade and the ridiculous situation of laws laid down by the Commissioners without means to enforce them. They had talked of their own affairs and the general plantation gossip and—below their breath, because there are two Frenchmen to one Britisher or American in Vila—they had aired their stale views concerning the dual government and the dirty deal the French gave the rest. And they fervently hoped that some one else they knew would drop in so that they could make up a game of bridge or poker.

Already they were a little sick of each other, knowing themselves so well. Always they came to Vila as an oasis that loomed bright and verdant from plantation distance, but it invariably palled after a few hours, so that they were glad to get back to work again. Taking it both ways, it worked out very well.

It was not steamer day for a week, and there seemed scant prospect of a fourth man. Stone suggested pool, and the two others ignored him. Stone played altogether too well to make it interesting.

In Tahiti there are complaisant and not unattractive ladies who help to while away a trader's leisure hours—and spend his money. In Vila the native women are neither amiable nor attractive, even if the trio had been that kind of men, which they were not. To Saunders, a woman was as a red cloth to a bull. Haley and Stone had little French and less inclination for the company of the sallow wives of the inhabitants, who dressed in the latest modes and languidly despised the Stones and the Haleys and their ilk.

Nevertheless, some of them, sipping their *demi-tasses,* looked up with brightening

eyes and glances of distinct approval at the man who entered, bowing to some of them, murmuring a salutation in French that had once beyond a doubt been practised in Paris.

HE WAS a tall man and his immaculate white drill made him appear taller for all his breadth of shoulder. His thin unshaven face was so brown that his blue eyes appeared unnatural in their gleaming whites, and the flash of his teeth in a smile was momentarily startling. A keen face. A hawk face. A strong body. His name was Smith—James Smith. His nationality was proclaimed by the whispers among the wives of the habitants.

"*C'est M'sieu l'Amêricain!*"

Smith came over to the table where the three sat, and they greeted him almost boisterously. They hailed him as a younger brother at a boarding-school hails his elder, who comes bringing tips. Even Saunders' sour, nut-cracker face expanded in a smile.

"Smith! What good wind sent ye? How's a' wi' ye? Sit doon an' ha' a drink. It's Stone's treat."

"It's mine," said Smith as he sat down.

The *propriêtaire* came bustling up with a "*bon soir, M'sieu' Smeeth,*" and he ordered the meal *à la carte.*

"And a claret punch. Whatever the others are drinking for them."

He spoke in fluent French, and the *propriêtaire* courtesied and gave him a smile that was not all vinegar.

"The grub is rotten," said Haley. "Same old thing. Turtle steak's the best thing on it."

"Haven't seen a turtle for a coon's age. Vila looks good to me. First time in four months."

"How s copra?"

"Good. Averaging high. Ninety nuts on some trees. Same old bother with labor, but we worry along. Now let's cut out shop. My shop anyway. You old growlers have spilled your grievances, I suppose. What's the real news?"

He sipped his punch and smoked a cigaret after his soup, without regard of the glances of somewhat *passé* coquetry that were sent his way. He was easily the best-looking man in the room, the most impressive and the coolest. Vila has an average climate like that of a fernery. Or a steam laundry.

"It's all stale. Steamer's not due. What brought you here? Supplies?"

"I have come to interview the Commissioners—at their request. A complaint has been made that I am not living up to my agreement with my boys. No truth in it. I spoil the lazy bums, but I don't want to stay away and have a fine slapped on me. Bad example to the rest. No holding 'em."

"It's a burnin' shame," said Saunders, "the way they'll pamper the natives. You're too close in, Smith. Back in the bush we know how to handle 'em. A pack o' murderin' cannibals. All they recruit for is money enough to buy a rifle an' cartridges so they can go home an' kill a long pig.

"What was your trouble?"

"Two or three of 'em came down with what looked like dysentery. I dosed 'em pretty hard—pulled 'em through, before the rest got scared and quit. Some bush wizard got hold of them, and the result was they complained that I'd been poisoning them. I'll fix it all right, but it meant a trip to Vila. Glad I came now I've seen you chaps."

"Humph!" grunted Haley. "One of my boys made a swipe at me with a killing-mallet. My houseboy. I nursed him through a sickness, too. Got sulky at something. The fool forgot there was a mirror on the wall. Lucky for me I looked up. I should have potted the beggar, but it 'ud leak out and raise no end of a stink. I nearly skinned him instead. He took it out on the wizard who said he'd have no trouble with the job.

"The law's a joke. They can fine you and impound you on customs to secure it, but they never back you up with the natives unless there's a wholesale murder, when they send round a floating bath-tub they call a gunboat to fire a few shells into the bush. Fat lot of good that does."

"They hung a few of them over that Navaa affair," said Smith.

"They ought to have hung all of 'em. You've simply got to take the law into your hands and see that your plantation is far enough away to discourage the visits of the Lord High PishPash Commissioner. How about a game of bridge?"

"Good enough. Up-stairs on the veranda?"

"There's one bit o' news," put in Saunders. "Your especial friend Ford is a verra seeck man. They say he's bewitched."

"What's that?"

Smith turned sharply back to the table where Saunders still sat finishing his whisky and water.

"Not a soul'll go near him except the missionaries, an' he swears he'll pull a gun on the first who puts foot on his porch as long as he can hold pistol an' pu' trigger. We've sort of tabu'd him since the Abua business. Stone there called. Ford don't know what's wrong wi' him, but he's no strength an' juist lies on his veranda wastin' away. No fever, no pain, juist fadin' to a mummy. Eh, Stone?"

"That describes him better than anything I know of," replied Stone. "But he had energy enough to curse longer and more artistically than any one I ever ran across. He'd have punched my head if he'd had the strength. Said so. Tried to get up and do it.

"I told him I was a Johnny Newcome who'd heard he was sick and wanted to see if I could do anything for a neighbor, as he might do for me some time.

"He told me to go plumb to hades. Said I was like all the rest. All he wanted was to be left alone, and blast the eyes and heart and liver of every other white man in the islands.

"I left. He had a couple of villainous-looking houseboys hanging round, and I believe they'd have tackled me if it wasn't for my automatic. On the way to the boat-landing I saw the weirdest-looking bit of humanity you could find out of a nightmare. He *was* a nightmare.

"His hair was lime-bleached until it was yellow. There wasn't too much of it, and it looked like a moth-eaten duster. His face was painted with white all over except a sort of black-mask effect over the eyes. Looked like a skull. Eyes were red-rimmed and just devilish.

"Gimcracks all over his body. Red feathers stuck in braided sennit bands on his arms and legs. Skinnier than Ford back on the veranda. And scaly as a fish. Gray scales all over him."

"Scaly?"

Smith spoke the word. His plantation was far beyond that of the others, almost in *terra incognita* so far as whites were concerned. He was making money out of it for all that, with a superb grove of nuts from which he expressed the copra into oil, making by-products out of the husks and fiber.

His knowledge of native lore was wide, and he spoke the dialects. Without these he could never have mastered the wild boys from Tanna and Malekula who had signed out to him for five pounds a year. As he had said, he had his occasional troubles.

"Scaly as a mullet," affirmed Stone. "He had a peach of a boar's tusk. Double circle. And a necklace of human teeth strung like beads. Hundreds of 'em. Went three or four times round his scrawny old neck. Wore a kilt of human hair—beards, I suppose. He had a stone in front of him, and he was balancing smaller ones on top of it.

"He grinned as I passed. A grin without any teeth of his own; just the end of a withered tongue stuck out between his lips. They were scaly too. I'm hanged if he didn't give me the creeps."

"Tubu," said Smith. "The worst wizard on Efaté. A bloodthirsty old sorcerer. The stone was a magic stone—a *netik*—and he was doing a *hocum-pocum* rite with it. Making a spell. Funny he should be squatting there right on Ford's land. Wonder if Ford has had a run-in with him."

"Wouldn't be surprized," said Haley. "Ford's always raising Ned with his hands. Got fined twenty pounds for stringing one up by his thumbs and letting the ants get at him. Let's go up-stairs. Cooler."

SMITH went first, his face thoughtful.

"What was his run-in with Ford?" Stone asked Haley.

"Ford bought a girl on Abua for six pigs and some tobacco. They're Polynesian there, and the girl wasn't bad-looking. Young, of course. Ford took her to his plantation and abused her. Smith happened to drop in. Going by in his launch and heard the yells. He said she was bruised until she looked like a rotten plum. Wealed on the back. She was. I saw her later. Ford was in a rotten temper and taking it out on her by giving her a licking with a split bamboo. Had her tied up to a post on the veranda."

"Well?"

Haley grinned.

"Smith knocked him down and cut the girl loose. Ford wanted to fight, and he got his needings. Smith walloped him and

then gave him a dose of his own medicine. Ford's a big man—was—but Smith spanked him with the split bamboo, and Ford took his meals standing and slept on his belly for a bit.

"Smith brought the girl over to my place, and I sent for Saunders. You know Scotty. He's a hardshell where women are concerned; but, when he saw that poor kid, he wanted to take his rifle and go over and shoot Ford out of hand.

"We did go over later, all three of us, and we told Ford a few things for the good of his soul—if he's got one. He was gray with pain; and if looks could have killed, we'd have lasted about one minute. Since then Ford hasn't been popular. The yarn got out. With the native boys, too, and that hurt Ford's pride, which is the only sensitive thing about the inside of him.

"Smith sent the girl over to Abua and paid the pigs and tobacco over to Ford. Otherwise her folks would have shipped her back. But I'll bet she wouldn't have reached there alive, if she'd had a knife.

"Here we are. Thank Heaven there's a breeze. *Garçon!*"

They were soon settled at the edge of the veranda, looking to the bay. There are no reefs about Efaté. The land goes down sheer to great depths. The waves splashed soothingly on the shingle, and the palms rustled like big fans. The inevitable drinks and smokes accompanied the game. Smith played silently, as was his wont—and lost, which was not usual. The others rallied him.

"Out of luck tonight, boys," he said. "Gives you a chance to even up from last time. Fact is I'm bothered about Tubu and Ford."

"For why?" inquired Saunders caustically. "They're a pair of rascals."

"Two reasons. These bush wizards are getting to be more than a mere nuisance. They've got to be taught a lesson. Tubu's the big gun of them all. Spoil his little game in the open and you've got the rest tamed, for a while anyway, so far as we whites are concerned.

"It's a good bet he's cast a spell on Ford. Given out that Ford'll die. Told everybody, including Ford. There are five hundred natives now waiting for news of his death."

"But that's all bunk," said Stone. "I suppose a native will die from fright if he thinks he's bewitched, but not a white man. Not Ford."

Haley grinned at him.

"Bunk, is it?" asked Saunders. "You tell him, Smith."

"These wizards have got a lot of spells and incantations," said Smith. "I suppose they believe in 'em. Handed-down ritual. Grandstand and spectacular stuff. But if a man is stubborn and won't die they have got more practical methods. They kill some with trained snakes beyond a doubt. Set the snake in the right trail at the right time. And they've got a prime knowledge of all sorts of poisons.

"Then they've got assistants among the natives who are proud to help and get immunity themselves, though I imagine the assistants are often put out of the way before they can whisper secrets. I'll bet half my crop that if Tubu has got it in for Ford he's administering poison to him some way through his houseboys.

"Ford's no fool. He'll be careful of his diet. Use canned goods and open them himself. But Tubu's a past master. He's made the announcement. Ford has got to die or he'll lose his prestige.

"He's a water wizard. I mean by that his pet scheme is to make a clay model. Named this one for Ford. He's got it in a stream somewhere near a trail where it can be seen. As the stream washes it away Ford's life is supposed to ebb with it. And Tubu hangs round and sees that Ford gets weaker. Times the dénouement."

"This is a sweet country," said Stone, setting down his cigar as if it had suddenly gone against his taste.

"All right as long as you treat the natives fairly well and keep a good lookout. You've got to be boss, and you've got to be careful. I kept my veranda strewn with big thumbtacks for the first six months," said Smith. "The boys' feet are calloused, but the tacks were sharp and long. Better than a bulldog. They stay off it now.

"Second reason is that Ford's a white man. If he won't have us around we'll have to save him without him knowing it. We can't let a white man be poisoned and look on."

The rest were silent. Finally Saunders spoke:

"I suppose not. Mind ye, I wouldn't help him for his own sake, but it wad be a bad theeng for business; an' a good theeng

if Tubu was set down. How are ye goin' to do it?"

"There's only one way," said Smith. "All I need from you fellows is your moral support. If I go out you can clean up Tubu. I'll be through with the Commissioners tomorrow. My launch needs repairs, but that can be sent down the coast after me. I've got Liki with me, and he's a good man. Brought him from Samoa. My headman. He'll look after the launch. I'll pay a visit to Tubu. Do a little spying if I can and then beat him at his own game."

"Going to Ford's?"

"No. Into Tubu's village. He'll be there. He's just watching Ford for a time each day for general effect, diagnosis and to gloat."

"Going into the bush alone? Man, ye don't mean it!"

"Sure do, Saunders. Better one than many. I know their ways. They are a bit afraid of me or they'd have settled this present bother of ours themselves—or tried to—without tackling the Commissioner. I'll do a little conjuring on my own hook."

They laid down their cards and tried to dissuade him. At least to allow them to go with him. But Smith was adamant.

"You chaps don't know bush ways as well as I do. As for arms, a Gatling gun wouldn't do me any good. If they get me it'll be from behind. But the whole secret is that they are afraid of the white man's *mana*. That's hard to translate. Supernatural power revealing itself in physical force. They believe the white man has a more powerful *mana* than they have. Even Tubu believes that, though he'd hate to admit it to himself. The best of it is that *mana* can manifest itself after death very nastily. If they're afraid of me alive they'll be afraid of me dead. Savvy?"

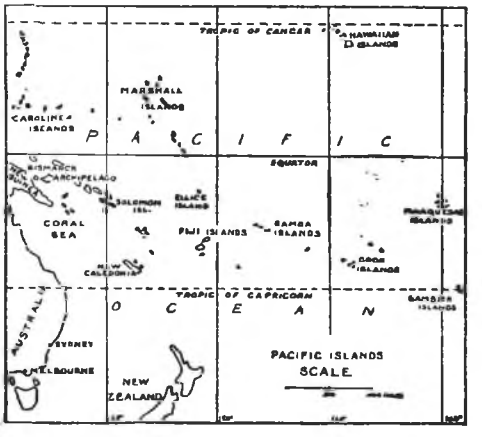
"Ford ain't worth it," growled Haley.

"I tell you it isn't just for Ford. It's the principle of the thing. He's our breed. We've got to stay on top. And I'm sick of these bush-doctors running my affairs and yours like a strike leader. That's settled. Let's play cards. And, now that I've got that off my chest, look out, you chaps."

They looked out—at phenomenal hands displayed and others they did not care to call. Smith won back all he had lost and as much again before they had the last round of jacks. He won three of those pots and gathered up his winnings.

"For general expenses," he announced. "Gives you all a hand in my trip. I'm turning in. See you tomorrow before I go."

SMITH hired two horses and made the first leg of his Quixotic journey in an Australian high-pommeled stock saddle. He took a native with him to return the nags, starting at dawn along the dusty Mele road for Undine Bay, his first stop, thirty miles distant.



THE NEW HEBRIDES ARE THE SMALL GROUP NORTH OF NEW CALEDONIA

The trail led out on to Mele Beach, a third of a mile wide and eight miles long of hard-packed powdered coral where the green beach vines trailed with their pink blossoms and the shadows were blue as strokes and washes of cobalt.

The beach was a blinding glare of whiteness, the bay shaded from amethyst to violet; with Melé Island sapphire in its midst. Out of this into the green twilight of the bush along the narrowest of paths between walls of buttressed banyans and lesser trees bound together with vines. Wild taro with leaves larger than elephant ears lofted above his hat brim as he rode. In the undergrowth ripe berries glowed. Parrots screeched and pigeons cooed. Wild pigs went trampling unseen in the jungle. Came a stretch of rustling reeds and then the bush.

At twilight when the sky was aflame and the sea one vast pool of liquid fire, he emerged upon a coffee clearing, its scarlet berries in the ordered rows looking like

holly amid the glossy leaves, and drew rein at Saunders', where the latter's headman greeted him with obsequious welcome. Smith had taken warts from the man's hand when a bush-doctor failed, using caustic, and the "strong medicine," plus the result, had made Smith's *mana* very strong with the native.

The next morning he plunged into the bush alone, working upward to a ridge where the long grass grew slippery as glacial ice, always waving in the wind, but making better, safer going than the moist-hot bush with its pathways leading to hidden villages and calling for momentary precautions against pitfalls, or ambushed spears and arrows, triggered by projecting boughs or innocent-appearing liana.

He made a three-mile gait of it, inured to the climate, a pith helmet above white shirt and drill riding-breeches that ended in laced boots. He traveled light save for a cartridge-belt and two Luegers tied down to his boot tops by thongs. His knapsack contained only a few things he had purchased in Vila—a conjurer's bag, together with a small supply of rice, some compressed beef tablets and hard crackers. For fruit he had the bush. Guavas in the scrub, berries and figs, bananas, great grapefruits, wild oranges. Breadfruit for baking and wild yams for vegetables.

To be seen was not a part of his program. He wanted to assure himself of Tubu's doings before his presence was known. So he went warily, listening for distant drumbeats that would wireless his approach. Here and there he saw threads of smoke. In mid-afternoon he looked down to where the lighter green of his own plantation showed by the sea's edge, four thousand feet below.

Until evening he worked his way through a thick forest, too high for the denser undergrowth. He made his solitary camp in a lava blowout cave, secure from interference. Above him were only the bare crags of the ridge, spirit-haunted, with the trade winds sighing through the defiles—tabu.

The Melanesians are not early risers. The Sun-God is their only genial deity; and, not until he has appeared or, in the rainy season, daylight is fully established, do they venture out. The night is filled with evil spirits. In their primitive state the men are warriors and the women slaves. When there is no fighting they dance or loaf. Bathing to the bushman, who must travel seaward through country beset with tribal enemies, is a luxury seldom engaged in. The use of water is limited. Along the beach after a hot night natives may seek the surf at dawn, but in the jungle they lie long abed.

This Smith knew and used to his advantage. Contrary to popular idea, the tropic dawn does not come in one wild swoop. When the sun tops ridge or trees the vivid change of color is swift, and the disk seems indeed to come up like thunder, but long before the fiery orb reaches sufficient altitude to chase the shadows from the valleys and the mists from the peaks, the world, rolling on into the zone of unseen rays, shifts through a gradual twilight. The sky grays, is softly suffused with light; the low tones of night gradually take on color; the stars pale slowly until the first beam seems to send them, shuddering, into obscurity.

Smith came out of his cave into an atmosphere that was olive-tinted, charged with the balm of sweet-scented fern and vines. A time of infinite silence with the low murmur of the sea and the soft rustle of leaves in the faintly stirring winds coming gently to the heights. Above him the mountain crests were wrapped in purple vapors which would shortly glow coral and sulfur and begin to writhe and dissipate under the influence of the sun.

He breakfasted on rice and beef extract, with some wild figs and guavas plucked the night before, finding water in a trickle of cascade. With infinite caution he descended toward the spot he had marked as Tubu's village by smoke drifts, and a low roll of drum at nightfall.

He looked for a stream, found and followed it, using the boulders as stepping-stones. This, he imagined, would lead close to the stronghold, possibly flow through it. It was the chosen medium of the Water Wizard's *chef d'œuvre* in sorcery. Much hinged on his finding a clay image set in the water near some ford where the action of the current would slowly wash away the stiff clay. If he did not discover it his plans would have to be changed.

Here and there he was forced to the banks to make his way through the bush. He had not brought a hatchet, fearing lest the sounds of chopping would be too resonant. Most of all he dreaded disturbing the birds.

Now and then he came across banks of

clay and noted their consistency and color with satisfaction. Occasionally he waded. Once he clambered up the buttresses of a banyan and worked up to a high bough that topped the surrounding forest. From the height he marked indications of a clearing, the light green of transplanted cocopalms about half a mile away. His climb scattered some wood pigeons, which wheeled, protesting, but he had seen what he wanted and took the risk. The sun was not yet above the mountains, though, high up, some wisps of cloud floated like great flamingo-feathers as heralds of the dawn.

Now he went with still greater caution. The falls of the stream were more infrequent and for the most part he waded half-knee-deep in the swirling water. Once he passed the two ends of a bush trail, a narrow, shadowy, sinister lane walled with green. It connected with a ford; but there was no image there, and he fancied that the path was out of the boundaries of Tubu's domain.

The stream met a mass of rock, widened, pooled out and made marshes where cultivated taro was growing rankly. He was nearing the village.

The brook curved sharply, running deep so that he had to work his way along the rocky confines. There was a low fall, then riffles, the signs of another path. Once more Smith took to the bush, examining every inch of the stream.

His keen eyes found the object of his search. Below a narrow spit about the edge of which the water curled and then swept on more placidly, yet with a fair and even current, he saw something projecting from the water that was too red to be a stone, that looked like a castaway *tiki-idol*, its head above water that eddied about it.

HE CROUCHED, listening. The sun was gilding the tree-tops, but the brook was in green twilight. Parrots were moving, chattering, occasionally screeching; but he had not started them, and he made no move. He heard the grunting of pigs and guessed them to be domesticated since there was no noise of their progress.

Foot by foot he neared the water, waded in, stooped and examined the wizard's black-magic charm.

The image was rudely modeled but evidently meant for a white man, though its substance was red clay. The high, beaked nose determined that, and the two blue beads set in for eyes. It had been molded about a stake that was thrust deep into the bed of the brook.

The arms, roughly suggested, were almost gone, as were the legs, and the body was wasted. Two or three days more would see it almost dissolved—unless a freshet hastened destruction. Tubu would look out for that. If there were a cloud-burst he would make a swift end of Ford.

The clay had been mixed with fiber to toughen it. This Smith discovered as he gently eased out the image and carried it ashore.

He had to work swiftly, but he fancied he had time enough. The women would not come to till the crops until mid-morning. First breakfast would have to be prepared, and he did not think they were yet out of their huts.

From his knapsack he took a package of cement and another of red-ocher with small bags inside of it that held brown umber and black. He took sand from the stream and made his mixture to match the clay of the charm. A small bottle of oil, a feather and a can of plaster of Paris he set beside him while he dried off the image carefully.

In the idle hours on his plantation Smith sometimes played the amateur naturalist, gathering butterflies and moths, stuffing and skinning birds, often mounting them. One hobby was a collection of the gorgeous and strange-shaped fishes of the lagoon and the open sea. Preservation of these in formalin faded the bright colors, and Smith had adopted the plan of making plaster-casts of them and copying the brilliant hues in oils. Practise had made him an expert.

He dug a basin out of the clay with his knife and lined it with a *taro* leaf, filling it with plaster batter, stiffer than usual, in which he immersed one-half of the manikin and set it in a bright sun spot to dry. It set swiftly, and he oiled the other half, also the edges of the half-cast, boring shallow holes in the lower form to be sure of proper contact and pouring over the rest of the batter.

Then he waited tensely for his cast to dry. Once he heard the gabble of women and shrank back under the big leaves, ready to draw the cast out of sight if necessary. If any one came and found the image gone there would be a mighty hubbub. The voices persisted; but they came no nearer,

and Smith decided that he was closer to the edge of the village than he had thought. Cautiously he crawled to investigate, making no more noise or show of movement than a snake.

Less than two hundred yards away a stout bamboo palisade was masked by the wild growth. Just beyond the stout fence the women were gossiping. He could make out the words—idle talk of a young man who thought himself a dandy, at whom they were laughing. One yawned, and then the sound of dull pounding topped their talking. They were making *poe-poe* from steamed taro roots. He still had considerable leeway.

The halves of his cast came away easily, leaving a perfect form. He set the image back in the stream again before he began to mix his colored cement, testing out little dabs to be sure of the proper shade when it dried. His chief trouble lay in the stake, and he had to hunt around before he found one that would pass muster as a duplicate of the one in the stream.

If he had had more time he would have used the original; but he did not know how long the cement might take to set, and there was a long day ahead of him. Ford's plantation lay between his own and Haley's, and he had to go there and return before nightfall after he had taken a look inside the village.

He poured the mixture of sand and cement into the mold and set it away in the hollow of a big tree. Every moment he had been careful about leaving no traces of his presence, using rocks whenever possible to stand and step on; and now he went about erasing little signs, disposing of all powder of plaster and cement and paint, smoothing telltale marks and deftly replacing bowed leaves.

He was ready to play and give check to Tubu; but checkmate could not be attempted before he found out what was being administered to Ford. First he decided to take a peep and see what Tubu might be up to. It was certain that as the time drew near for Ford to pass out—and no doubt the date had been set, if not announced, for fear of accident—the Water Wizard would go through certain incantations and ceremonials before his tribe. Probably he would dance the Dance of Death, which takes three days. The drums Smith had heard the night before might have been a part of that ritual. It was patent from the condition of the image that he had come none too soon.

He knew that the bamboo stockade was the back wall of the village, and that the top was unpleasantly spiked. The entrance would be led up to by a maze of paths in which the stranger would get misled, if he was not pitfalled or speared by a trap. The front wall would be of coral blocks or lava-stones. The gateway would be a heavy one of wood. By the time he reached it there would be sentries set with muskets loaded with slugs, their aim developed by long practise on certain places in the path. But he held no intention of an open visit as yet. He wanted to spy out the land.

Smith had a hard and hot job to find the place he wanted, where some tree with thick foliage might allow him to climb to a point of vantage.

The wily Tubu had encouraged the growth of bush lawyers for his outer defenses; and in places the thick vines with curving thorns like tigers' talons were as thick and nearly as impenetrable as barbed wire in the trenches. But he found a great fig with lateral boughs, and hitched and writhed his way up until he was perched where he could look through the screen of leaves into the heart of the village.

In front of him was the *sing-sing* ground, a plaza where the earth had been trodden flat by the stamp of thousands of dancing feet. In the center were solitary *netik* stones and others piled into the shape of a trilithon, after the manner of Stonehenge. Against certain of these stones a victim doomed for the cannibal feast would be dashed to death by four men holding wrists and ankles and ramming his skull against the rock with catapultic force.

Near the stones was a group of idol-drums, great trunks hollowed out with an open slit for resonance, the upper part carven into hideous heads painted black—eyeless, skull-like things with long red tongues hanging down on some of them, as if eager to lap sacrificial blood. Perched on top of every one was a black bird, like a crow, with outstretched wings, carved from wood.

Directly opposite Smith was the *hamal*—the temple, club-house, museum and place of initiation. It was well built with a high-pitched roof of thatch, the upper half of its façade open and showing the carven ends

of rafters from which dangled strings of human and pig skulls. Great horizontal logs closed it with occasional uprights, sennit-bound and strengthening the wall. Besides the top there were two square spaces, eight logs high to the sill. No porch or platform and no steps. Fringes of palm-leaves curtained the top.

There were a number of reed huts under the shade of trees close to the wall. The place was ominously silent and deserted, and Smith began to suspect that despite all his precautions they had discovered the presence of some one. He commenced to have the crawly feeling that scores of pairs of eyes were seeking him out, even observing him, waiting for some signal to uncover his hiding-place, greeting him with tearing slugs and poisoned arrows. He could not see the gate where the sentinels should be on guard.

The morning meal was evidently over or had been foregone. There were no women or children in sight—an ominous absence. Not even a pig, though they might have sought the shade.

WHILE he watched with every sense on edge he saw movement and color in a grove of trees to the right of the *hamal*. More to the left, though he could not see that side so plainly. He breathed more easily.

Processions were forming. The villagers were inside the enclosure and he outside and still hidden. But the motion portended a ceremony.

Out came a double file of almost naked men, belted with bright green pandanus leaf centered with crimson-dyed fiber strips, adorned with turtle-shell cuffs, with earrings and nose-pieces that dangled from their septums, painted with splotches of red, yellow and black; green and white feathers in their mops of hair, which were bleached orange, yellow and white with lime.

The six leaders bore drumsticks, carved and splashed with bright colors. These proceeded to the drums. Twenty more took place in line. The rest and less elaborately decorated stood about in groups to witness the dance.

The women came out from the left, armleted and necklaced with shell, a narrow pandanus strip about their hips. Each carried a peeled wand in either hand, and they stood in rows, leaning on the rods, motionless, half-stupid.

The drums began to beat, hollow, booming strokes that reverberated through the dense jungle and came back in a rolling rhythm that timed the listener's pulse and seemed to proceed from the sky, the forest, the earth itself. The women began to shuffle their feet, and when the tempo was established the score of dancers commenced to chant and race around the idol-drums, leaping, bending, running at top speed, bellowing with all their lung-power.

Faster and faster they went in a mad whirl with the deep sounds urging them to frenzy, fibrin pumping into their muscles from the madness of their blood-lust until they achieved prodigious feats of agility, bounding about with flashing teeth and rolling eyes, the sun glinting from the glossy pandanus-strips and polished shell ornaments, sweat streaming down their oiled bodies, ruddling the paint.

Just as the dancers, like devils of the pit, achieved the height of their excitation while all the place was filled with the whirlpool of noise flowing from the drums, Satan himself seemed to leap like a harlequin through the opening to the right of the door, though never was trim Harlequin so dressed.

Undoubtedly Tubu had leaped to the ground from some inner shelf or platform; but he seemed as if shot from a catapult, landing, despite his age, lightly as a great cat, without breaking his stride and commencing immediately to glide over the ground with his grotesque shadow skimming now below, now ahead, behind or to one side of him, like a diabolical familiar. His whitened face with the blackened space about the eyes was set in a mask of ferocity, his deep-set orbs gleaming but fixed always ahead of him.

The teeth in his necklace glittered as they shook, and little points in them broke into dazzles of light. The kilt of dead men's beards wagged. His projecting ribs had been picked out with yellow and underscored with black; he wore a headpiece of red, white and green feathers arranged on bamboos that were bound to his forehead and nodded as he danced. And his scaly body shone with the dull luster of tarnished metal.

The leaping savages tore round and round the resounding drums; the women shuffled silently; the knots of onlookers

were motionless while Tubu, with wondrous litheness, skimmed and hovered in the Death Dance, now swooping down on an imaginary prey with clutching hands, now seeming to herd his quarry while his tiger-ish, merciless face remained unchanged.

Smith had seen all he wanted, and he inched stealthily from his perch down to the base of his tree and rounded the outer wall until he could see the gateway through the leaves. Then he broke through the bush to come out on the trail that led to the beach and by sidepaths to his own plantation with the pulsing drums, boom-booming after him.

If the drums of yesterday had marked the first act of the dance he had a day to spare. He fancied he had two, by the condition of the clay image, and that the night performance had been an ordinary *sing-sing;* but he wasted no time, swinging on downward until his white drill was stained with sweat, maintaining his pace until the clean sea-breeze met him, and he came out on the beach a little below his own place.

He had hardly hoped for the launch, knowing the delays of machinery repairs; but it lay at anchor off his copra wharf. Liki had not failed him.

Ten minutes for a bath and swift change into fresh clothes. Another ten for a quick meal, and Smith was off again in the chugging launch at ten knots for Ford's.

The place seemed deserted. The gate of the labor quarters was closed. A sullen houseboy met him as he walked up from the wharf to the house, stilted high on a pitch of land between terraces.

The native's forbidding attitude vanished as Smith grew close enough for the savage to see the expression of "Simiti's" face and eyes. He knew something of Simiti. He had a very strong *mana*. If Tubu had been present he might have found hardihood, for he was growing contemptuous of the *mana* powers of "Forodi," his master, dead or alive. Every hour testified that Tubu was the more powerful. But with Simiti he did not know.

As he mounted, Smith could look over the labor-quarters stockade into the yard. It was empty. Ford's laborers had deserted him. The houseboys waited only as assistants to Tubu.

Ford lay on a long chair of bamboo, stretched out at full length; without motion. A rifle stood against the arm of the chair, within reach of the hand and arm that languidly drooped near it. A small table held a tobacco-jar, matches, a dish or two, a glass. Flies buzzed so persistently round the sick man that it almost seemed he was already dead. The split-bamboo curtains that should have shaded him were rolled up awry; the full sun beat on him.

SMITH'S tread was light; but Ford heard him, though he did not move.

"What name," he demanded in a weak and querulous voice, "what name you no come along here before when I call, you boy, you?"

"It isn't your boy, Ford. It's Smith."

A convulsion ran through the long body, which raised itself, the thin, nerveless hands clutching at the rifle. Ford's face, the hue of old putty, was seamed with virulence, and hate glowed in his eyes. The weight of the rifle was too much for him, and it drooped despite his efforts.

"Smith! Blast you, I'm not dead yet," he cried feebly. "You—you——"

He strove to lift the weapon, to aim it between his raised knees; but he shook as if with palsy, while Smith stood with folded arms, watching him with grave attention.

"Come here to torment me, eh? To gloat? I'll——"

Moisture suddenly varnished the dull skin of his face, and his eyes dulled. He gasped and sank back with a groan, the rifle slipping to the floor.

"I haven't come to gloat, Ford. I came to warn you that you are being slowly poisoned by Tubu; to pull you through and square accounts with the wizard."

"Tubu?"

Ford grasped the arms of his chair and succeeded in hitching himself up a little, his ghastly face sunken in his shoulders, looking suspiciously at Smith as if he feared a trick or some form of jest.

Smith nodded. His manner seemed to convey assurance.

"Tubu's been here every afternoon squatting down by the beach. He's been doing the gloating. He's got a clay image of you in a stream, wasting away, just as you are with the stuff he's been dosing you with through your houseboys. I saw him dance the Death Dance for you this morning."

"Tubu—on my place? Kicked him off it three weeks ago. Had to trim a boy for impudence—seems he was a clansman of

the old ——. If I'd known I'd have potted him. Too late now. All in. Mix me a drink, Smith, if you're so —— friendly. I can't help myself very well. The gin is under the cushion beneath me."

Smith picked up a glass, examined it, put it aside and poured out some liquid from a pocket flask into the cup that fitted on it.

"Take this," he said.

He had to help Ford swallow it; but the powerful drugs that he had mixed brought back some light to the sick man's eyes, lessened the deadly pallor of his face and gave him a flash of energy.

"I've thought of the poison stuff," said Ford. "Didn't credit Tubu with it, though. And I've been careful. No fruit except nuts opened in front of me. Can't inject anything through a coco-husk. Canned stuff, fresh tins of crackers—slept on my liquor. Last few days—haven't eaten anything much. I don't see how they can have doped me.

"And I don't see what the —— you are interested in me about," he added with his eyes changing back to suspicion. "Haley was here and a young cub named Stone. Now you come. I suppose you're all laughing at me. There'll be more to crow over soon. My boys have run off except the two housemen, and they're sticking around to loot as soon as I pass. They'll take my head along as the prize. Stick it up in the *hamal* and Tubu will Mumbo Jumbo to it."

A flush had come into his cheeks. He was close to hysteria. Smith checked him sharply.

"Personally I'm not especially interested whether you die or not," he said coldly and incisively, and Ford stared at the sound of his voice. "I don't give a hoot about it one way or the other. I think you're a rotter; but you're of my breed and Saunders' breed, and we are not going to let a bush wizard get away with you. A good deal for our own sakes. Let that sink in. There's no personal favor to you in this. You can go to —— in your own way, for all I care; but I don't intend to let Tubu be your introducer. I wouldn't let him poison my dog and get away with it."

The cold, hard words acted on Ford as if Smith were dissecting him with a blade of ice. They were surcharged with indifference, destitute of either contempt or pity; and they had their calculated effect.

Ford closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them again they were steady and held no enmity in the narrowed iris and pupil dilated by the stimulant Smith had administered.

"All right," he said, "if that's the way you feel about it. I'm not keen to pass in my checks, and I'm too helpless to do myself any good. Couldn't put up much of a scrap now, Smith.

"I don't know but what you're right," he went on a little wearily. "Maybe the rot has dried out of me a bit. I've had things to sour me—but that's no excuse for letting them. I've got the temper of a fiend, and drink rouses —— inside of me. That's no excuse either. I'm not making excuses. I'll say this: If you pull me through, Smith, and I know you savvy a heap about the natives—if you pull me through, I'll be —— grateful. I'm making no death-bed promises to reform," he added with a laugh that was bitter and also a trifle wistful.

"That'll be all right, Ford. I'm not asking for any. A white man is a fool to hit hooch in this climate, especially if he's much alone. I see no reason for either one or the other, with you, unless you play it that way. Now then, you're sure about your grub not being tampered with?"

"Dead sure. I don't know what's the matter with me. There's no chills or fever—just weakness, loss of flesh and strength and appetite. Look at my arm."

He painfully rolled up one loose sleeve of his shirt and showed the limb of a mummy, bones bound together with scanty sinews and skin.

Smith thought a moment, got the gin-bottle, poured out a little and tasted it.

"They might doctor it when you sleep," he said.

"Sleep? I haven't slept a wink for a week. I've been living in hell, Smith. If I'd had anything to put me to sleep I'd have taken a double dose. There was a little chloral in the case left over from the last dysentery outbreak. All that did was to make me drowsy. I lie and smoke—and do a bit of thinking."

"Smoke much?"

"So my throat's like a lime-kiln. No taste to the tobacco any more. No kick."

"Humph!"

Smith took the jar and put some tobacco on the palm of one hand, separating the fragments. He shifted them to the table and fished a small and powerful double lens

out of his pocket, examining the stuff closely while Ford looked languidly on. Finally Smith separated from the rest a few tiny bits that looked more like small stems or leaf-veins than parts of the leaf itself.

"There you are," he said. "No great mystery. I don't know either the native or scientific name of this plant, Ford, but it's done the trick. See the tiny hairs growing on the stems?"

He placed them so that Ford could peer through the little magnifying-glass.

"No tobacco there," he went on. "I've seen this growing, and I've found it in witch-bags and seen bunches of it hanging up in the *hamals* drying. Get's you quickly with your cigarets the way you've been smoking them. Through saliva and inhalation both, most likely. Slow but sure."

"It takes all the life out of you. I'm numb half the time, as if I was paralyzed, and my heart runs down so I can't feel any pulse in my wrist. It's beating now."

"I gave you some strong stuff, Ford. I'll leave this with you. Not more than a teaspoonful every hour. And no hooch. Go on smoking—with my tobacco. Houseboys come up here much?"

"Haven't been near me since morning."

"Good. Let 'em see smoke blowing over the veranda. I'll move you closer to the rail. Then I've got to leave you till tomorrow some time. I don't think there's much risk. You've got another day of grace anyway, and with my medicine and my tobacco you ought to get your strength back. Try and eat something later on. Suck some of these beef tablets of mine. Have you got any chickens?"

"I couldn't touch meat. Who's going to make broth?"

"I don't want it for that."

"There ought to be some outside if the beggars haven't stolen or starved 'em."

"All right. I'll be back in a minute."

Smith went into the house through the lean-to kitchen to the back compound. There he found the second houseboy asleep with an empty gin-bottle beside him. He let him lie in his drunken stupor and caught a miserable hen in a pen, killing it and burying the carcass.

Returning after a moment in the kitchen, he moved the long chair to the edge of the veranda. Looking down the path, he saw Tubu, stripped of some of his finery, emerging from the bush. The wizard hunkered down, glancing up at the veranda with an evil look. Smith said nothing but busied himself making Ford comfortable and setting things conveniently for him. At last he was ready to go and said so.

"If I don't see you again," said Ford, "good-by."

"You'll see me," answered Smith. "Good-by."

He held out his hand.

"Mean it?" asked Ford, his voice breaking a little.

"Surely."

They shook hands, and Ford passed his free palm across his eyes as Smith turned away.

"Tubu's below," he said. "Don't mind him unless he bothers you. Got a pistol?"

"Yes, but I'd been cleaning it and couldn't find the cartridges. I remembered later, but I was too weak to get them. They're in a drawer in the sleeping-room. Locked. Here's the key. Gun's under my pillow—should be."

"Smith found the automatic and filled a clip, sliding a cartridge into the breech, tucking the weapon down beside Ford.

"Don't use it unless you have to," he said. "Don't try and pot Tubu. He's my meat. I've a notion he won't stay overlong. Buck up, old scout."

Ford's lip trembled as he watched Smith leave. At the top of the steps he turned.

"Better cuss me out a bit," he said. "Do your best. No use tipping Tubu off we're not enemies. We're not, you know. So long."

And he went down the steps pursued by a torrent of vituperation in Ford's voice, already a little stronger. Tubu looked up at him malignantly.

SMITH paused in front of Tubu, one hand behind him, casually. The Water Wizard had set up his magic stones again and was mumbling over them.

"Making medicine, Tubu?"

Tubu grinned. The sun shone on the necklace of teeth. Smith saw what had caused the dazzles of light on the *sing-sing* ground. Some of the teeth were gold, others inlaid with the metal. His eyes became like flint.

"Make it strong, Tubu," he said, using native. "I too am making medicine."

"For him who cursed you?" asked the wizard.

"Perhaps because he cursed me. Tubu, is the blood in your body black or red?"

Tubu looked venomous.

"Let us see."

Smith reached out with the hand that had been behind him and lightly touched the bush-doctor on his chest in three or four places. Instantly scarlet blood appeared. Tubu looked at the phenomenom with squinting eyes. He touched the stuff dubiously.

"I see it is red, Tubu. Taste it. You have not very much of it. See that it is not spilled. Enemy or not of mine, do not try your spells on a white man. I have spoken."

The wizard half-stupefied—Smith passed on, palming the small enema bulb and short tube he had filled with the blood of the chicken. The trick had been simple enough, and he was glad of the chance to play it. Tubu would be likely to give him an audience when he wished it.

Night found him again above the village after a stop at his own place for a real meal and a short rest. Dawn saw him replace the clay image with his cement one, throwing away the other, broken, into the deep bush. He had had to risk the action of the water meanwhile, but it had made no very appreciable difference to the success of his maneuver.

Again he found his tree, though this time he was earlier. He had brought a light rope with him. This he fastened securely from the nearest stout limb to the wall. It was not all-important that he should cover his method of arrival, but he hoped to do so. The cooking-fires were still smoldering, and one was crackling busily among the *netik* stones.

This last, he surmised, was a sacrificial fire which would be used in the dance. From it might later be furnished the brands for an oven and a feast.

That they would take the body of Ford after Tubu's spell was ended, he doubted. That they might have some prisoner immured in a hut, whose flesh would furnish meat for a savage barbecue in token of victory was more likely. Ford's head would undoubtedly be counted upon as a trophy and offered to the biggest of the drum-idols after its tongue had been smeared with blood.

He imagined that they were eating within the huts, men and women apart. The sentries he had to risk, but they would have their eyes beyond the gate. He tested his rope, swung off and landed on the *sing-sing* ground, running swiftly to the buttresses of a great banyan which was inside the enclosure and taking up his place behind the root-pillars, waiting his entrance cue, unobserved.

From the higher, more horizontal, boughs there pended strings of boar heads with the tusks removed, each string ending in a human skull. They swayed slowly in the morning breeze that rustled the leaves above.

It was no part of Smith's program to bring about any actual hostilities with Tubu. He could hardly hope to cope with the whole village in their own stronghold. If he killed any of them and got away he would be in fresh trouble with the Commissioners, who had already seemed inclined to make an example of an American who might be mistreating their wards.

And he was eager to get back to Ford. The dose he had mixed and prescribed for him—out of a better knowledge of medicine than was in the usual scope of planters and traders, who must of necessity carry their own medicine-chests and tackle anything from a decayed molar to an outbreak of dysentery—was principally composed of adrenalin. Ford needed more than a stimulant; he wanted a moral tonic; and this Smith was prepared to furnish him, believing him in receptive mood.

Though he had purposely suggested to Ford his own lack of personal interest, he was by no means minded to see a white man go to the dogs if he could check him. Ford had his strength as well as his weakness. He was a good planter, aside from his treatment of his boys.

Saunders, Haley and Stone should be back on their places before this; and Smith had despatched a brief note by Liki in the launch to Saunders, outlining the situation and asking one or more of them to visit Ford and greet him with some friendliness. The launch was then to return to Smith's landing and await him after delivery of the note, whether personally made or not. Smith knew that under Saunders' Scotch crustiness there was a deep vein of humanity. But it was possible that they had been delayed, and he feared a relapse for Ford when he was left alone. Despondency was one of the symptoms produced by Tubu's degenerating poison.

There was still no outward movement from the huts. His trick with Tubu would have lost some of its impressiveness overnight. He felt sure that Tubu had tasted the blood and also sure that the wizard had divined before this that it was only a *teriki*, such as he himself might compass.

Inaction chafed him, and he strolled out into the middle of the *sing-sing* ground, toward the growing fire and the idols, halting in the center. Unexpected at this hour of the morning meal, he had been unnoticed.

In a loud voice he called on the wizard.

"Tubu! Come out. Tubu! Simiti calls you."

Instantly he saw startled faces appearing in the doors of huts and instantly withdrawn. How had this white man come into their village? From the sky, or through the earth?

"Tubu! Come out of the *hamal*. Unless you are too afraid."

The challenge could not be passed. Tubu appeared in one of the temple openings, peering out. The paint had been washed from him in preparation for a new make-up; and now he appeared only as a wizened old man who, lacking the exaltation of his mummeries, slowly descended and came out into the sunny *sing-sing* ground, blinking and evidently disturbed, though he tried to present a bold front as he advanced.

"Come out, O men of Tubu," called Smith. "Come out and listen to the words of my spirit, which is very strong within me. Come out and know that the white man's *mana* is powerful beyond that of Tubu. Come out and learn to be wise and to walk softly, for my spirit is angry and it is not a patient spirit."

The women remained in hiding and in hearing. The men came slowly forward and ranged in an irregular crescent well back of Tubu, their eyes shifting as they watched the pair. It was a trial of *mana*. Sleep was still heavy with them on account of their full stomachs. The rituals that lashed them to frenzy had not commenced. They were merely savages with the minds of dull children. The stage was set to Smith's liking, the audience in the right mood.

"TUBU," he said, "come closer. I am in mind to see if your blood is still red."

He thrust a tentative finger at the wizard, who fell back involuntarily. *Teriki* or no *teriki*, he was not inclined to let his people see blood drawn from him through his skin. Smith laughed.

"Listen, you Water Wizard! Know that the time is past for you to work your spells upon white men. You and all the wizards of the bush. The spells of the white men are stronger than your spells, and I am here to prove it."

His supreme confidence began to worry Tubu. It hypnotized the tribe. Why else should one man come into their midst unless he was backed by spirits who had brought him here, so tall and dominant in his solar topee, his white clothes, the two much-speaking guns at his belt? They shuffled uneasily.

"You have made a *tiki* of *Forodi*," went on Smith. "A *tiki* of clay with blue eyes and a nose like the beak of the frigate-bird which you have named for Forodi. You have set it in the stream, and you have told the people that as the water washes it away so will the body of Forodi waste and his spirit leave him because your *mana* is greater than his and because he flogged a man who was impudent. Is it true, Tubu?"

The eyes of the villagers rolled toward each other, then centered on Tubu. The white man knew much. It was Tubu's move.

"It might be true, Simiti," said Tubu hoarsely.

Without the potent spirit he distilled from the tabu ti-root and administered to himself before he took up the rôle of sorcerer, without his trappings, his mumbo-jumbo by which he convinced himself of power, he was little more than a cunning old man whose body was usually very stiff and tired.

But his prestige was on trial. After all, Forodi was a very sick man. The poison was powerful, and he did not know of any antidote. Perhaps Simiti did, but perhaps he did not know about the poison, or what it was. Simiti might well be putting up a false front.

"It is surely true," Tubu went on more confidently, "that Forodi gets more sick day by day. Perhaps his *mana* is not very strong—for a white man. Who can say?"

"Who can say?" answered Smith. "We will see."

He stooped and began piling up some clay that he loosened with the point of his knife.

"We will see."

White men will gather and watch every move of a street fakir, gaze as some casual pedestrian happens to stop and look upward. To the savage every movement out of the usual routine smacks of jugglery. Smith had no more tricks to play. They were always dangerous.

But he had noted what the villagers, facing him, could not see—high windward clouds piling against and spilling over the high peaks. They were slate-colored; and now and then a faint flicker of lightning, fading in the sun, levined through them. It was close to the true rainy season. The chances of these heavy clouds discharging their contents in the gorges, ripped by a crag, were better than even.

He mixed the dirt with his spittle, remembering old-time lore, and fashioned a rude creature while the mob gazed fascinated, unmindful of the slowly darkening day. Save Tubu, whose eyes were the weakest among them but who as Water Wizard claimed to bring and send away the rain and was always susceptible to such tokens. He cast a backward glance and gathered heart.

"Can you make a well man of Forodi?" he asked mockingly.

"I can cure Forodi," answered Smith, going on with his plastic work.

"Then perhaps," said Tubu—and his tones were filled with a sneer that his clan was quick to notice, shifting their belief to his side with the easy balance of their limited reasonings—"perhaps you can stop the water from washing away the *tiki* of Forodi?"

Smith still played for time while the storm was doubtful and its direction uncertain. He dug a hole, buried his model and patted down the dirt. Tubu watched him uneasily. The burial struck him as significant. Simiti was making magic. He had said Forodi would be cured, therefore he could not be burying Forodi.

"Because you have done these things, Tubu, trouble may come to your village as it has come to Navaa and at Mallicolo, with great guns and much killing. You they would hang. But, because Forodi is not dead and because you are an old man with not much blood in your body and not very long to live, I, Simiti, have made a stop of these things. It is better that the tribes shall see that you are neither strong nor wise but only a foolish old man who will soon do nothing but sit in the sun and eat soft *poc-poe* when his last tooth has gone."

There was a chuckle from the bystanders. Tubu's eyes glowed like hot coals, but Smith's dominated them. Also Smith's hands were resting close to the butts of his pistols. Tubu had only a knife tucked in his loin-cloth. He was certain that his first overt move would bring a bullet crashing into his skull between the eyes, so he kept still, though the chuckle was galling. He knew the downpour would strike the gorge whence the stream issued. Then the freshet would wash away what was left of the *tiki* of Forodi. As for Forodi himself, the Water Wizard's cunning brain had already evolved a plan.

There was a mutter of far-off thunder, a flash of lightning. The light began to fail. Then a crash and a glare. The swift tropical storm was on, breaking half a mile away, two thousand feet above. It was apparent to the watching savages that both the white man and their own wizard appropriated this storm as of their own evoking. They thought of the clay image they had all seen in the stream that presently would be a raging torrent, and their faith veered back to Tubu.

The strong trade wind did not take long to scatter the wrack of the broken clouds. The sunlight shone through them, sparkled in the wet leaves of the higher slopes. The rain had not reached the village. In the stillness that followed, the murmur of the augmented stream was plainly heard as the water came down in spate, hurrying to the sea, swiftly rising and as quickly subsiding again.

"About the *tiki*," said Simiti. "You asked if I could stop it from washing away. There has been a lot of water, Tubu. Suppose you send a man to find out. Send two men, Tubu."

Tubu glowered at him. This was a strong bluff. He was sure that the spate must have melted the image. Smith stood calmly assured. He had driven in the stake firmly enough, he fancied. If he had not there was going to be trouble.

Tubu gave a guttural order to two men near him, and they set off at a run while Smith calmly rolled and lighted a cigaret. It was not smoked through before the men were back, their mouths wide open to impart the news.

"The *tiki* of Forodi is there. And it has turned to stone."

"I, Limuku, tried it with my spear. Lo, it is hard as rock!"

TUBU'S face of baffled rage was that of a disappointed demon. Excitement ran through the men behind him, seethed in the huts of the women. His prophecy had come to naught. His *mana* had been tested and found wanting beside that of the white man. His fingers stole toward his knife.

"Don't do that, Tubu, if you want to live," said Smith. "It's all over now. After this, leave white men alone. Next time I shall not be so patient. Now come with me to the gate."

He was taking no chances of Tubu, by some swift turn, rehabilitating himself by arousing race hatred. And he needed Tubu to point out which of the entrance paths was open.

"Come," he said and tapped his fingers against a pistol holster.

Together they walked across the *sing-sing* grounds while in their rear the crowd began to jabber and gesticulate. If Ford lived, Tubu's downfall was complete. The bush wizards would profit by his example and leave the whites and their plantation labor alone. It would be a good job, done bloodlessly.

Tubu waved aside the bearded guards, who openly scoffed at him and were patently afraid of Simiti the White Wizard. The heavy gate opened.

"Which is the free path, Tubu?"

"Does not your *mana* tell you?" snarled Tubu.

"My *mana* tells me to ask you and then to take you down the trail with me for fear you have made a mistake. Old heads are forgetful, Tubu."

One of the guards laughed. The reference to senility stung the wizard who snarled and turned such a baleful look on the man that he shrank away. None of the childish minds had retentive memories, but Smith felt sure that Tubu would remember the morning's work and, even when he regained the ascendency over them, would hesitate to monkey with the white man's buzz-saw.

That he would soon dominate the tribe once more was certain. His mastery of tribal superstitions that were almost as deeply implanted in its members as instinct, would ultimately insure that, perhaps before Smith reached the beach. But he felt that among those instincts he had planted an inhibition that would flourish—a deeper reverence for the *mana* of all white men when it came into contact with their own.

He took Tubu's greasy arm in his own grasp and, holding it behind his escort, bade him go ahead.

"I will let you go when we reach the main trail, Tubu," he said. "But my gun will surely blow your liver into pulp if you try to play me a trick."

Tubu growled, the low growl of a trapped beast. His scaly body quivered as he led the way. He was as surcharged with wrath with desperate casts for snatching victory out of defeat, at least for saving his face, as a cylinder head at high pressure.

When they reached the main trail and Smith twisted him around to face him, the Water Wizard's malevolence was fairly dribbling from his mouth, which could not pronounce the words that formed, but which he dared not utter. He hissed instead, for all the world like a venomous snake that has been rendered fangless.

But there was craft in his eyes at the last, Smith fancied, and he lost no time along the trail. He held a strong desire to see Ford's condition, to see whether Saunders and the others had answered his note.

He was close to the beach when drums began to boom back in the bush. There was no marked rhythm to them. No dance was in progress.

The sounds were intermittent, staccato. They were in code!

Tubu was playing his last card. He was sending a message. A message to his assistants, the houseboys at Ford's place, an order to kill.

The conviction flashed through Smith's mind, and he cursed himself for a conceited fool. With Ford dead Tubu might yet regain ascendancy. And he had left the opening though he had seen the craftiness in the wizard's glance as they parted.

He sprinted hard over the firm beach, through a jungle strip that clothed a promontory, over the beach again, with the sea sparkling to the left and the green bush waving to his right. On to the beginning of his young groves, through files of older trees, panting and sweating, reviling himself for a self-sufficient fool.

Out to the crescent of his own bay. His

launch was at the wharf-end, a figure in the cockpit that stood up and waved a stalwart arm as Liki saw his master racing and, knowing necessity drove him, started the engine. The launch was moving when Smith leaped aboard, steaming from the run, his immaculate attire rumpled, diving under the hood to coax the engine to its best, staying there with oil-can and waste while Liki set the course for Ford's.

There was a white craft bobbing at the copra-pier. Saunders' launch! Smith's pulse began to slow down toward normal. The drums had stopped sending.

A shot sounded as they slowed up for the landing, and Smith shouted to Liki to put the launch straight for the beach. A heavier report rang out, followed by another, all three from the veranda.

Smith, his wind regained in the launch, burned up the path, guns ready. Liki jumped over the gunwale of the launch, stranded on the shingle, and tore after him, carrying an ax. Saunders was waiting at the head of the veranda steps, his face placid.

"What's happened?"

"There was a slight distur-r-bance, Smith. But it's all ower wi' noo. Ye're a wee late for this party, though ye seem to have been havin' some action o' your own. We were juist aboot to have a drink when the thing star-r-ted. Come in and cool off."

Smith stepped in with a swift survey of the porch interior. Ford sat up on his cushions, his eyes bright and his face faintly flushed, nodding a welcome at him. Haley was kneeling beside the body of one of the house-boys that lay face down, arms flung wide and a hole in his back where a high-powered missile had torn through. A second body had collapsed at the foot of Ford's long chair. This man's hand still clutched a knife. His head was turned to one side—what was left of it.

A rifle leaned against the wall near the door; another was on the main table; Ford's pistol on the smaller stand beside him.

Haley looked up.

"Just in time to help clear up the mess, Smith. Stone, hurry up with that Scotch. We've got a caller."

Smith stood with puzzled, narrowed eyes.

"I heard the drums," he said, "and guessed what they might mean. I've been putting a spoke in Tubu's wheel; but I overlooked one bet. How long have you been here?"

"About half an hour. Found For-r-d quite per-r-ky wi' the dose you'd gi'en him. There was no one else in sight, ye ken. We felt a wee thirsty, an' as Ford seemed a bit sleepy we went inside for a drink. Of course we'd noticed the drums; but that's not so much oot of the ordinar'. Anyway whiles we were lookin' for a corkscrew Ford's two hoose-boys slip in fra' somewheres at the back an' try to butcher Ford wi' a knive an' a hatchet.

"They made the fatal meestake of not noticin' we were here. By the smell o' their breaths I'm thinkin' they'd been makin' free wi' Ford's gin back i' the bush.

"Ford fired an' missed. Haley an' Stone grab the rifles they had set inside an' did some verra fine shootin'. I had the bottle between my knees at the time, wi' the cork oot. By the time I'd set it doon the incident was closed. But the bottle 's open. We'd better get rid o' the two bodies."

"We'll set them down by the trail that Tubu uses," said Smith. "He'll be down later to see how things worked out, and I think we've settled his hash."

"Stone and Haley had best report to th' Commissioner," said Saunders. "Nothin' like the first word. I'll stay a while wi' Ford gin ye want to gang back to your ain place, Smith. D'ye think there's any danger of a raid?"

"No. But I should be getting back. And, with the evidence we've got, the Commissioners will have to come clean. How are you feeling, Ford?"

"Four hundred per cent. better, thanks to you. And to the rest of you good scouts. I hope I haven't seen the last of you."

"Not while ye've any of the peench-bottle liquor remainin'," said Saunders. "Mon, we're like to be a plague to ye. And no one's had a dreenk yet. Stone, ha' ye the glasses?"

"None for me," said Ford. "I'm off the stuff."

They looked at him, and he returned their gaze with a smile that held assurance.

"I'll take another nip of Smith's tonic with you instead," he said.

Smith fixed it for him. The four men lifted their glasses, and Ford raised his.

"In that case," said Smith, "here's to you, Ford. Best of luck and happiness."

"Make it friendship," Ford answered.

The others drained their glasses and reversed them. The toast was bottoms up.

THE LOGIC OF SITTING BULL

by **E. A. Brininstool**

SITTING BULL, "the irreconcilable," the great Sioux medicine-man — but not recognized as a war-chief among his own people—was born in 1834, on the banks of the Grand River in South Dakota, and was shot and killed by the Indian police of his own tribe on December 15, 1890, also on the banks of the Grand River, while resisting arrest just prior to the Ghost Dance uprising on Pine Ridge Reservation.

From the day of his birth to the day of his death, Sitting Bull cordially hated the white man, especially Americans. He retained much friendship for the Canadians, to which territory he hastily decamped after the Custer fight in 1876, and where he stayed until 1881, when he returned to the United States and remained a reservation Indian, wholly against his will.

It can not be gainsaid that much of the dislike for the American people, which the great medicine-man formed, was wholly due to the failure on the part of the Washington authorities to keep the treaties which they had made with the Sioux. Sitting Bull was weary with unkept promises, and at last, in great disgust, he gave utterance to this bit of speech—

"Send me from Washington a man who will speak the truth, and I will listen to him."

During the latter part of 1890 it is alleged that he kept the young men of his tribe in constant turmoil. Finally his arrest was ordered by the Washington authorities, and at that time Sitting Bull made a speech which is both logical and pathetic.

"God made me what I am," said the celebrated old warrior, "and what I am, I will live and die. Why should I be a white man? You whites have your Great Book to guide you. You say it is God's work. You ask me to follow in your pathway.

"We have not been able to believe the white man in the many things he has said to us in taking from us our possessions. How can we believe you about your God?

"The Sioux has his God as well. If our God had wished us to be like you, why were we created so? You came to us with your Book of God and your whisky. Since we met the white man we have lost all we had.

"Now I am old. I dwell like the coyote in a burrow; my bed in the earth. If I hunger I must forage like the animals or starve. But God sees me, poor and old and suffering, and it is well.

"Only leave me alone. It is all I ask. Go—trust in your own God, as I trust in mine. I feel that there is still something that you seek to take from me.

"My life is all that is left me—and this spot of earth. Here I was born. Here I shall die.

"There was a day when we could put ten thousand mounted warriors in the field. You feared us then. Now, in my helplessness, you despise me, and when I am about to die you tell me I must be a white man. No! Say to the Government, no! Sitting Bull says, 'no!' Seize me, imprison me, kill me! Ta-tank-ah-yo-tank-ah (his Indian name) will not go.

"Here I am. From here I will not move. I ask for nothing. Wa-kan-ton-ka (Supreme Power) will protect me. The God of the Dakotas rules over all.

"Why do you not let me alone? I ask nothing from the white man. I never went into your country to molest you. Why do you follow me to the end of the world? I wish no harm to any man. I will be what I am in the sight of Wa-kan-ton-ka, though you take my life.

"What treaty that the whites have kept, has the red man broken? Not one! What treaty have the whites ever made with us red men that they have kept? Not one!

"Where are our lands? Who stole them? What white man can say that I ever stole his lands or a penny of his money?

"Who has ever seen me beat my wives or abuse my children? What law have I broken? Is it wrong for me to love my own?

"Is it wicked in me because my skin is red? Is it wrong because I was born where my fathers lived or because I would die for my people and my country? I tell you, God Almighty never made me an agency Indian, and I never will be one!"

And the logical old Sitting Bull kept his word. He remained irreconcilable to the last.

THE CAMP FIRE

A Meeting Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

SOMETHING from William Wells about his story in this issue:

Redmond, Oregon.

I don't know how well this yarn is told, or whether it's interesting, but it actually happened, except that the guy that captured the saloon held it four days, repelling all attempts to dislodge him and dispensing drinks to all comers, then locked it up and went away, sending back the key by a rider that he met, with his compliments to the saloon man.—WM. WELLS.

IF ONLY the advocates of the national anti-revolver law would stop considering theories only and look at the cold, hard facts, they'd cease to be advocates. That is, those of them who are really sincere in believing it would lessen crime. Those advocates who are for this law because they know it will leave the general citizenry, the decent element of our population, in the power of the criminals, the reds, the capitalists, or some other minority that should not rule are, of course, advocating this law because of the facts.

DURING its twelve and a half years there have, of course, been many good words for our magazine. But there have been none, I think, that seem to me so splendid a compliment as the one paid it by this American hobo seeking refuge and in danger of death.

Read this letter from George E. Holt of

our writers' brigade and of "Ask Adventure." He has been having exciting times down in Mexico where he's been writing our stories of *Mohamed Ali*.

——, B. C., Mexico.

This place, I believe, is going to offer some adventure stuff when I get around to it. We have been having considerable excitement around here recently, and it *might* form the basis for a story. It involves the man who was formerly the only American resident here, who has been exploiting the natives in an outrageous fashion. Also an attempted poisoning of an old negro in order to get possession of his drove of hogs; the trying to put the blame on an American hobo who cooked for the aforesaid American for a couple of months; the coming to my camp at night of an American hobo with the story that native gun-men were lying in wait for him; various comings and goings in the darkness; the taking of the hobo into my camp with resultant complications; the prevention of a lynching party by the old negro; the looting of a rented ranch by the American resident, smuggling, an "extinct" gold mine, cattle-rustling—mistreatment of young American school-teachers; the employment of slacker labor and the robbing of those slackers who had money.

In short, Mr. American has been one of the grandest little —— raisers that I had happened to come in contact with either on or off the printed page. I doubt if any editor would use a story with half of this stuff. He would say those days of the wild and woolly West were gone. But they aren't—down here. And finally, the exodus of this American who has been a resident here for thirty years, is taking place as I write. The little steamer he has sent for is lying off the coast—and I am now waiting for the conclusion of a row with him which began yesterday when he presented me with an outrageous bill for a few items of food which I got from his ranch before I learned of his idiosyncrasies. (In case gun-play should develop and he proves quicker on the draw than I am, this letter will be forwarded to you by kind friends—but I'm —— if I am going to pay 60c a gallon for kerosene that cost him 15c, 25c a box for matches or 75c a pound for packed, rancid butter).*

Incidentally it may interest you, as it did me, to know that when the American hobo (who turned out to be a pretty good scout) came to my camp for refuge, he said he came because he had heard that I was connected with *Adventure* and that he knew *Adventure* stood for a square deal—which I think is a rather nice little tribute to it.—HOLT.

*October 23d—He beat it for good yesterday—without honoring me with a further visit—so I'm still among you!—G. E. H.

No one man earned that compliment. "Our" magazine earned it. It couldn't earn it unless for years every one in any way connected with it, including its readers, had not held pretty steadily to our Camp-Fire ideals of manliness, cleanness, fearlessness and fair play. Editors, "Ask Adventure" editors, writers, all those readers who talk at Camp-Fire and all those readers who find themselves in sympathy with its ideals and therefore come to it, though silent, all these together have earned the confidence expressed by that American wanderer characterized as "a pretty good scout." I'm mighty proud to be one of those who helped earn that compliment and I don't make any bones about saying so. And I think you'll be as proud as I am.

If that hobo drifts to New York I hope he'll stop in here. I'd like to thank him personally in behalf of all of us.

WHY won't bees sting some people? Here's one of those people who wants to know. So do I, for that matter.

Fort Myers, Florida.

I note what you say in Camp-Fire about bees not stinging certain people. Well, I'm one of them. Let me correct that little statement, I should say that no bee or hornet or wasp has ever stung me *yet*.

HAVE I been around bees much? You bet! Used to take care of quite a swarm. I never had much fear of bees even as a kid. One Fourth of July when I was about fourteen I experimented with several bee hives and some cannon crackers. The operation is simple. Slip up to the hive and insert the cannon cracker in the main entrance, light, and run like ——. Only I forgot to run. Well, the bees came out of the hive all right and, I believe, they stung every one within a half-mile but me. Why?

Another time I was raking a hay-field with a two-horse rake, one of those wide affairs. The rake raked up a nice sized nest of ground bees. The field was fenced and the gate was barely wide enough for a team to pass through. The team passed through all right, but the hay-rake and I didn't. No sir, we stopped real sudden like. The horses were a mass of bees and I was very well covered myself. There were bees on my neck so thick I had to claw them off. But not one stung me. Why?

I have asked many people to explain why some few people are immune, but have never had a real answer. If any one around the Camp-Fire has an explanation, speak up.—JACK BEATER.

P.S.—When I put the fireworks in the bee-hives some one ought to have walloped my pants.—J. B.

SOMETHING from F. R. Buckley in connection with his story in this issue:

Norwalk, Conn.

I just want to remark, in connection with "Flor de Garfield," that I'm perfectly well aware that the Texas Rangers were not organized, as a police-force, until long after the Civil War. The men who had composed the semi-military body known during the war indifferently as the Texas Rangers and the Border Ruffians, did, however, spend quite a lot of time after peace was declared, keeping order locally. As far as I can find out—and as I have tried to indicate in the story—they hadn't the

slightest right or authority to do this. They just saw it needed doing, and they did it. Which is the way of empire-builders.—F. R. BUCKLEY.

HERE'S the good old Camp-Fire spirit. It's men like this comrade who make our comradeship what he calls it.

Bryan, Texas.

I received my Camp-Fire button in good condition and can certainly say that I am glad to wear it. It makes me feel like I have joined the biggest benevolent and protective society in the world, which I am sure I have, for where can one find bigger hearts, and broader views of things than among those who constitute the society of those around the Camp-Fire?

May best luck and happiness attend you each and every one.—CHARLES CARR.

HERE are the results of the readers' vote on the ten most popular stories in *Adventure* during 1922. As in previous years, we give also the ten ranking next in the vote. (S) stands for serial, (N) for complete novel, (n) for complete novelette, (Ss) for a series, those unmarked being short stories.

Of course a vote of this kind is only a partial expression, being cast by only a minority of the total number of readers, but nevertheless it is both interesting and decidedly useful in helping us in the office fill the magazine with the kinds of story our readers like best.

1922 VOTE

S—Serial. N—Complete Novel. n—Novelette. s—Short Stories. Ss—Series.

1	THE SEA HAWK	S	5922	*Rafael Sabatini*
2	TIGER RIVER	S	3864	*Arthur O. Friel*
3	THE GRAY MAHATMA	N	3738	*Talbot Mundy*
4	THE GRAY CHARTERIS	S	3465	*Robert Simpson*
5	THE WEB OF THE SUN	N	2888	*T. S. Stribling*
6	MEN OF THE NIGHT	S	2877	*Gordon Young*
7	BRETHREN OF THE BEACH	n	2797	*H. D. Couzens*
8	FREEDOM'S LAST STAND	n	2688	*Norman Springer*
9	CROOKED SHADOWS	n	2646	*Gordon Young*
10	WAR WAMPUM	S	2415	*Hugh Pendexter*
11	KHUFU'S REAL TOMB	N	2313	*Talbot Mundy*
12	THE LOST TROOPER	N	2285	*Talbot Mundy*
13	THE ISLAND	N	2238	*J. Allan Dunn*
14	A SON OF STRIFE	S	2229	*A. D. H. Smith*
15	ROAD OF THE GIANTS	N	2204	*Harold Lamb*
16	THE WHITE DAWN	S	2037	*Hugh Pendexter*
17	TUPAHN THE THUNDERSTORM	n	1911	*Arthur O. Friel*
18	OVER THE RIM OF THE RIDGE	S	1869	*Hugh Pendexter*
19	THE WOLF-CHASER	n	1806	*Harold Lamb*
20	FLOTSAM	n	1764	*J. Allan Dunn*

Of course there are a good many factors that play a part in such a ranking of stories. A story read a month ago leaves on the mind a more vivid impression than does an equally good story read eleven months ago. A long story has the big advantage of size and weight over a short one. A story read next to an unusually good one is likely to suffer by comparison more than it deserves. But, all in all, such a vote as ours furnishes an invaluable guide in helping the editors make our magazine provide the kinds of story our readers want.

As last year, we give also a list of the shorter stories by themselves. Those marked with a star are of less than twelve thousand words; the others are of twelve thousand to twenty thousand.

STORIES UNDER 20,000 WORDS

Stories under 12,000 words are marked with an asterisk.

1	THE TREASURE OF TRINIDAD	1092	*Albert Richard Wetjen*
2	FISH FOR THE GUNNER*	1029	*Charles Victor Fischer*
3	MINERVA'S TREASURE*	945	*Walton Hall Smith*
4	THE CALABOOSE NOMINEE*	798	*Russell A. Boggs*
5	TWINKLE BRIGHT*	777	*Bill Adams*
6	PETER PAN'S PEBBLE*	672	*Mary Gaunt*
7	MONK RIDES HIS LUCK*	651	*Charles Victor Fischer*
8	ROUGH JUSTICE	609	*F. St. Mars*
9	BOOT HILL*	598	*Frederick R. Bechdolt*
10	THE UNFORESEEN*	588	*Albert Richard Wetjen*
11	THE ROLLING STONE*	561	*Edgar Young*
12	A BURNED STEAK*	546	*E. E. Harriman*
13	WISE MEN AND A MULE*	483	*W. C. Tuttle*
14	THE BOSUN OF THE *GOLDENHORN'S* YARN*	466	*Bill Adams*
15	THE PAL WITH THE NO. 12'S*	441	*Max Bonter*
16	40,000 B. P.*	417	*Eugene Cunningham*
17	VENTY*	409	*Charles Victor Fischer*
18	UNDER THE SKIN	404	*Albert Richard Wetjen*
19	PAPA'S BOY*	378	*Robert V. Carr*
20	THE COURTSHIP OF CAPTAIN DRISCOLL*	354	*Albert Richard Wetjen*

The annual vote by readers is both interesting and valuable. Be making your selections for the vote on our 1923 stories. It's your chance to help in editing our magazine and to make its stories a bit more to your own personal taste.

SOMETHING further from J. Allan Dunn in connection with "The Black Banner," which ran in the last issue:

Patterson, N. Y.

In these days of too frequent plagiarism I find myself open to misapprehension. With George Creel, I have just come through a committee of inquiry in which we were glad to find certain authors "not guilty" as charged. Now, in "The Black Banner" crops up a curious coincidence that occurs through two authors having arrived separately at the same possibility of action in a character taken from history.

I TELL the story of Lafitte as it has been handed down in pirate lore, filling the gaps here and there, trying to cover his dry bones with living flesh once more and to indicate in some fashion how such a man was likely to have thought and acted.

Perhaps ten per cent. of the boiled down facts in

"The Black Banner" are fiction though there is still some dispute as to how Lafitte really died.

Of this ten per cent. the lady takes up a fair proportion and the idea engendered in the harassed brain of Lafitte, hemmed in by land and sea, that, he, a true adventurer, shall offer his services to the exiled Napoleon, nearly all the rest. It was a natural conclusion. Lafitte was French, he was used to desperate occasions, the storming of St. Helena was just the sort of thing to appeal to him as a last resort.

SO THOUGHT I. The story was written long ago, sold, delivered into the safe of *Adventure* for publication in course of time. Then I read a review of "Captain Sazarac," by Charles Tenney Jackson, or it may have been an announcement, stating that here was "a Romance of Old New Orleans, a tale of Jean Lafitte, once pirate, now patriot, lover and hero, and of a plot to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena."

I haven't read Mr. Jackson's book, though his publishers (Bobbs Merrill), are also mine. I do not imagine that Mr. Jackson will be at all disturbed by the brief paragraph or two in "The Black Banner" and, if he ever sees them or is shown them, I trust he will acquit me of attempt to steal his thunder. I don't get as much time for reading as I would like and I don't know how closely I suggest his plot.

BUT doubtless it came to Mr. Jackson as a logical thing for Lafitte to attempt, as it did to me, after reading over my material that showed him beleagured at "Galvezton". And A. S. H. suggested that the coincidence was interesting enough to talk of at Camp-Fire, if only to show that certain types of mind, given certain conditions, might run so closely in the same channels that the casual observer might start the cry of "Plagiarist." And, while there are no new plots under the sun, that's a nasty sounding word.—J. ALLAN DUNN.

ONLY a little over 55 per cent. of the population of the United States is of white American parentage. It's more than time to stop immigration altogether.

A LETTER from a real old-timer of the West bearing on one of F. R. Bechdolt's articles. I hope we'll have more letters from him:

Shoshoni, Wyoming.

In the December 30th number I read with great interest the articles by Mr. Bechdolt on the "Johnson County War." Looking it over very carefully, I noted quite a number of minor errors and some conclusions which are at variance with the facts.

TO COMMENCE at the beginning, Mike Barnett (not Burnet) and Grotch Spencer were killed by John Chapman and the men with him. Among the men were Stuart and Wichkam, and Chapman was the owner of the stolen horses. In the little bickering Chapman got a bullet through his hat. Mike was a brother to Joe Barnett who died recently and who for years was a well known saloonkeeper in Casper.

The story of the two punchers who had a duel and were found dead together is a trifle exaggerated. The duel occurred at the old Angus McDonald place on Gooseberry Creek in 1891. Dickey P. O. is now the place. Instead of being alone there were about 20 to 30 men around them and several fellows were asked to give the signal but they all refused. They agreed to step fifteen paces from one another, but at about five steps they both turned and the ball was on. The contestants were Dab Burch and Billy Rodgers. Rodgers was known as Pistol Billy and Burch, whose real name was David A. Burch, went by the name of Dab, from the fact that he had D. A. B. stamped on his saddle. The row was over some colts stolen from old Jake Price, the old and well known foreman of the M outfit. Both were hit four or five times, Dab being struck fairly in the forehead by one of the bullets, which took a curious glance around the side of his head.

After the battle was over they were both bundled into a buckboard and taken South over the mountain to the old Mail Camp ranch and they were treated there by Dr. Schuelke from Lander. Incidentally they both recovered. Rodgers was living in 1906. Dab and Jack Bedford were both under arrest for horse stealing in 1892 and while the Sheriff or rather the Deputy Sheriff was taking them toward Lander, a bunch of masked men held up the whole outfit and shot both Bedford and Dab. In order that Dab's head would not turn any more bullets the muzzle of a .45-90 was placed close to his head and his brains blown out.

THERE were three leading forces which led to the Johnson County War. The old maverick law; the hard Winter of 1886-1887 and the push of the sheepmen toward new ranges; and the increase of the sheepmen. In 1888 there were but a fraction in numbers of the sheep that grazed in Natrona County and the southern part of Johnson County in the Spring of 1892. They flocked in from all sides and pushed the old owners toward new ranges and this put the big cattle companies on the warpath. On the black list of the cattlemen in 1892 were many sheepmen and their destruction was as much desired by the cattlemen as were the little cowmen or rustlers as they were designated.

From 1892 to 1895 was the only time in the history of Wyoming when the small stockman and the sheepherder were comparatively friends. The common enmity of the big cowman was the uniting factor. While not directly concerned in the fighting I was close to the whole thing. Heard the first account of the killing of Champion and Ray told at midnight in a sheep tent by the two witnesses, Walker and Jones. They came to my tent and got their first meal after the invaders turned them loose after the slaughter of Champion and Ray. I knew many of the men who took part in the struggle.

CHAMPION was a medium size man, strongly built; hawk-nosed and extremely quiet and very gentlemanly. He was a man from his sole upward. His defense against the odds against him was one of the greatest in the history of the West and, withal, just think of the extreme coolness of the man in writing the diary while his enemies were sending bullets into the cabin from all sides. There is a short, deep cut gulch south of the cabin. There were about a dozen men stationed there to head him off when he made his anticipated rush out of the burning cabin. When the lion came out these men

turned tail and ran for their lives. Champion would have got away if he had not turned and stood still while he fired his six-guns at the men stationed at the stable. This gave the besiegers a chance to hit him and they did. Twenty-seven bullets were sent into his body before they dared come close to the dead man, who was a real champion in deed as well as in name. He may have rustled a beef or two, but he proved himself a very gallant and valiant gentleman. In the aftermath of the war, Dud Champion was killed in a duel on the range by Mike Shonsy or Shaugnessy. Ben Champion, another brother, is still living at the little town of Kaycee just across the river from where the killing was done. The place is still respected by the neighbors and the tall rye grass will identify the place, to the curiosity seeker, where a brave man died.

JOHN R. SMITH, who lived close by was the first man to give the warning to the countryside of the work of the invaders. The two witnesses, Jones and Walker, who first told the story of the killing at my camp near the present station of Natrona on the C. and N. W. R. R., was advised to go to Casper by a little bunch of sheepmen and tell the story to the authorities. They went there and stayed around town for some little time and then they mysteriously disappeared. The State did not have any real witnesses to identify the murderers of Champion and Ray. The two men were then in Rhode Island. Years afterward, after a hard morning's work running some section lines in the Wind River Reservation, two of us sat down on a rock and my employer opened up his heart and told me how he had been employed by the manager of a very prominent cow outfit, in companionship with the foreman, to take the two men quietly across country in a buggy to a station on the North Western R.R. near the Nebraska line where a train was caught and the men were quietly accompanied to the far East.

Sheriff Angus died in Buffalo, Wyo., Arapahoe Brown was murdered some years ago by an employee of his. Jack Flagg is still living, I think. Was on the Green River side a short time ago. He was editor of the Buffalo *Voice* for a while and worked afterward on a paper in Lander.

The Hole in the Wall bunch did not materialize until after the Johnson County War. The whole neighborhood was in a very disturbed condition for several years afterward and it was not until the battle between the C. Y. Outfit, under the leadership of Bob Devine, with some small stockmen near the Hole in the Wall that matters quieted down. The sheepmen took possession and the Hole in the Wall was quietly homesteaded by a young Scotchman by the name of Ross, who after receiving patent, sold it to Kenneth McDonald, who still owns it.

By the way, Mr. Bechdolt is sadly mixed up in his geography when he puts Lost Cabin on the North side of the Owl Creek Mountains. It really lies southeast of the Owl Creek Mountains and southwest of the south end of the Big Horn Mountains.

Hoping that you see fit to make these slight corrections to a very good article, I remain.—EDWARD L. CRABB.

Some years ago I sent you the real story of Jim Averill and Cattle Kate (Ella Watson), as I gleaned it from the testimony of neighbors and other people who knew them both. Averill's chief crime was that he was a surveyor and knew too much about the choice pieces of land which some of the cattlemen had fenced up. There was no connection between him and any organized band of cattle thieves. Ella Watson was simply a good hearted, loose living woman.

The above letter was sent to Mr. Bechdolt and here is his reply:

Carmel, California.

That is good stuff. I hope you print it in Camp-Fire. I have no doubt that Mr. Crabb is right in most, if not all, his points. One is apt to get a wrong version of a tale sometimes from people in the country who got their story from hearsay themselves. And anyhow my errors seem to me to be minor ones in the main. I think the reader will get a deal of good information from what Mr. Crabb says, and I happen to know through others that he is a genuine old-timer, who knew many actors in that drama.—F. R. BECHDOLT.

HERE is one man's creed. I don't know his definition for "arbitrary authority." Arbitrary authority in an army, for example, is necessary. Its objectionableness depends on how it is asserted and on whether it rests at bottom upon democracy. Otherwise the creed looks good:

Langford, South Dakota.

The following is a clipping that sounds good to me:

"The under dog is my hobby; I have been it. I even served a term in Uncle Sam's army with a typical Prussian for top sergeant, and I see red at the very thought of arbitrary authority. I am not a Socialist; I am not red, but a wee bit radical. The man in overalls is my blood brother and his cause is my cause, and yet I love him too well to cheer him when he is wrong. I am neither a Democrat nor a Republican and I have no platform except common sense and common decency, hard work, self respect, thrift and belief in the ultimate wisdom of the American people."

Now what do you think?—LEE OLSEN.

THE following has reference to a story submitted to us—a good story, though it happened not to fit into our particular scheme of things and we had to let it find print elsewhere. Some interesting points are raised about Boer names.

That reminds me I'd better explain why our magazine uses some of the spellings it does—spellings that now and then lead some of you to remonstrate. Aside from mistakes, I mean.

Every magazine must adopt some one dictionary for spelling and then stick to it. Before our magazine was born the printing department of the Ridgway Company followed the Standard Dictionary. Therefore our magazine followed it. The Standard spells some words in a way that makes us in

the office squirm, but we have to follow it just the same. If you play one system in this game and then begin making exceptions you're in for more trouble than you can guess. For one thing, the printers and their proof-readers would invade the editorial department and strive to assassinate us. And they'd be justified in so doing. For another thing, the magazine would soon be appearing with words spelled one way in some places and another way in others. And it wouldn't be long before your editors went crazy and had to be shut up in some place with soft walls.

NOW for those Boer words, though we in the office shall have to go right on spelling everything as the Standard spells it:

Berkeley, California.

A word about my collaborator. He is a Boer and an authority on South African history, an Amsterdam and English university man, for several years editor of the *Agricultural Journal* of the Union of South Africa and official interpreter of the department of the Administrator of the Transvaal.

I believe the Dutch angle of approach in English stories is uncommon. A few words require explanation.

"Veld," though Anglicized and pronounced with the "t," is spelled here without the letter because the addition of the German "t" either appeals to the risibilities of Dutch South Africans or enrages them. "Veldt" in current English fiction is wrong both grammatically and historically, Mr. Van Ribbink insists, even though writers like Rider Haggard have erred and used straight German words like *hausfrau* instead of the Boer-Dutch *hauisvrouw*, betraying a lack of the fundamentals. The same applies to "sproot" for the Boer-Dutch *spruit*. Either the English should be used, or the word as it is—don't you think? We have used the colloquial *skiet*—shoot—instead of the grammatical High-Dutch *schiet*, and the colloquial "koppie" instead of the grammatical *kopje*.

You will be interested to know that Mr. van Ribbink lived next door to Dinizulu, last king of the Zulus, when the deposed monarch was in Pretoria awaiting deportation to his place of exile, a farm in the Waterberg district of the Transvaal. King Dinizulu had just come from prison at Eshowe. He had been found guilty by a Natal court of conspiracy in having incited his *Induna*, Bambata, to attack the whites. Mr. van Ribbink as neighbor became well acquainted with the fallen monarch, frequently calling upon him. He describes Dinizulu as an obese, small-eyed person of great native cunning.—W. D. HOFFMAN.

WHILE, as you know, I don't talk praise of our writers at Camp-Fire, any of our stories that make our country's history more real and more interesting to Americans deserve commendation for so doing. As to comrade Baer's question—would we rather have operas made from American historical material instead of the senseless stuff generally forced on us, I right now put in my little answer in the affirmative. I wish the movies, too, would turn more to that material, except that nine times out of ten they take a perfectly good historical or fiction story and twist it into something quite different and nearly always inferior. Either the public taste is very rotten or the picture people think it is, or both. If the right picture people would handle American history material, some very wonderful pictures would result.

This touches a hobby of mine. The movie people are suffering from the newness of their profession. That is, they are completely swayed by the rules and principles they've hastily set up, not having progressed far enough to become critical of said rules and principles, give them the acid test by digging down to fundamentals and ascertain just why a picture does or does not appeal. They measure by sales, which is a fairly sound basis, but they don't sufficiently analyze for the causes of good or bad sales. They—but why maunder about it at Camp-Fire? I'll shut up.

Washington, D. C.

Admiration for Hugh Pendexter and his wonderfully human yarns built upon American history compels me to break a long-established rule—that of not pestering editors. But I have a hope that you will forgive my intrusion, and permit my enthusiasm to overshadow the disturbance I may arouse.

HE IS doing the real American thing! Interpreting the cold facts as something live, vibrating, romantically interesting; actual rather than legendary as we are prone to think of great men, scenes and places out of American history. From dates, which to the average American are mere numbers, from cut and dried biographies, usually a dreadful bore to read and a hopeless literary nuisance, from fast-fading landmarks, etc., he is building pen pictures that ought to become text-books in America's history classes. They are gems!

His work finds a responsiveness in my blood that is really difficult to analyze. For years I have been hoping to do the same thing in the realm of American music. Hoping to aid in the creation of an American romantic and comic opera medium that would result in American opera—not the kind we are getting today—utilizing historic themes for a background, incorporating the fragmentary folk-songs that are extant, and preserving all detail relative to each theme employed. In short: An American opera with American material!

I should like to see a cycle of pre-Revolutionary operas. Wouldn't you? How much more delightful, more instructive, more cleanly such a cycle would be than the brand of "pop" music show we are now getting. But producers maintain that such entertainment (founded upon the historic) would never

"go," and it is with that in mind that I venture to request that you inquire through the Camp-Fire whether or not its thousands of readers and followers prefer "senseless" operatic concoctions or something finer, something anent the above-mentioned, a style that I will label "the Pendexter kind?"

Under a nom de guerre I have written a trifle—lyrics, libretti, etc., for the stage, but will never feel content until I have tried the historic field; it is blood badly needed by the American stage. Too little of it is being done, and that by incompetent hands.—FRANCIS BAER.

A DEFENDER of Wm. Madans. There has been a deluge of letters from good Americans who do *not* defend him, but quite, quite the contrary.

Chicago.

Well it is nice to hear you say that there are some good Germans. It is rather late for you to admit it now, when all the time you must have known it. A man of your standing knows that there are good and bad people in all countries, and if you had not been as hostile toward the Germans as you were, I do not think Wm. Madans would have said what he did say. You may be a good editor, but as an Americanizer you are nix. Instead of making an American of Wm. Madans, you have most likely made the opposite of him. As soon as I read his letter I said that he (Madans) does not mean all that he said. You must give Madans credit for knowing that there are some good Germans. Your magazine has given its readers the idea that there were not any good Germans. Madans knew that there were some good Germans and you aroused his anger, and he let it out as best he knew how.

Constantine destroyed Christianity by accepting it. You would make more Americans by accepting the Germans, than by trying to destroy them.—EDW. LEONHARDT.

In the first place the writer speaks without his facts when he says I've only recently admitted there were good Germans. Have always admitted it. My point was and is that the Germans have been systematically educated from childhood up in the doctrine of "blood and iron," of "*Deutschland über alles*," until as a people, they became the exponents of those principles on the battlefield. Defeated, they moan over their ill-treatment, knowing in their hearts that if they had been victorious their terms to the vanquished would have been ten times more severe.

I DO not trust the *junker* element of the German people one single instant on one single issue. In so far as the mass of the German people are still under the influence of the *junker* ideas, I do not trust them either. And it is impossible that a whole people have suddenly become freed from the ideas to which they were born and trained. I do not believe that Germany is so helpless for war as she may seem. The next war will be largely a chemical war, and Germany is well equipped in that line. While there is no doubt of present privation among the German people themselves, I do not doubt that the war party knows where it can lay its hands on funds for war.

But it does not follow that all Germans hold to the *junker* ideas. They don't. Some of them, like the Saxons, are by nature kindly, honest folk, and certain parties in Germany are strongly opposed to the *junker* principles. I wish that the sheep could be isolated from the goats and treated with the mercy and friendliness that should be accorded a defeated foe who no longer harbors hostile designs. They are, for the most part, suffering for the sins of others. In any case, they are no longer foes, but human beings in need and they deserve only help and kindness and friendship.

But the *junker* element is still strong in Germany. No one knows how strong. And that element has proved both its hate and its "scrap of paper" attitude. How can they ask to be trusted?

SO, AS you say, Mr. Leonhardt, I am nix as an Americanizer when such material as Wm. Madans is concerned—material that not only still hates Americans, but cries his hate aloud and talks threats of what the Germans will do to us "the next time." God knows I don't want to Americanize Wm. Madans. You say he does not mean all he says. Then he is not a responsible person and does not deserve your advocacy.

Germans unpolluted by the *junker* doctrines rank high as good material for Americanization. I have no lingering animosity against them, sympathize with their present sufferings in Germany and would be glad to hold out the helping hand if I were sure it would not be seized by the *junker* element for its own purpose. I think most Americans feel the same way. But I have no friendly impulse toward Wm. Madans and his type. I think most Americans feel the same way.

One can not see through the fog of international politics. Except enough to know that the whole world is over a powder magazine and that nearly everyone is playing with matches. Germany, by race, religion and civilization belongs with all the rest of Western Europe and with this country. By

junker training she belongs with whatever allies will, by whatever methods and at whatever cost, seem to offer the best chance for *junker* advancement Who can decide which impulse will sway her decisions?

IT IS the Wm. Madans type, be he German, American, English, French, Russian or what you please, that gives war to the world. War is a kind of idiotic suicide and murder combined. There is no hope of anything save destruction, desolation and utter misery for the world unless the Wm. Madanses of all the nations can be held down and controlled by those of saner mind and more kindly heart.

No, I have not became a pacifist. I've always hated war and I still hold that, with the world seething with hate and greed, it is only common sense for this nation to go heavily and efficiently armed for self-protection and for enforcing peace among others by the threat of strength in battle.

I BELIEVE, too, since we are seeking no other people's territory even under the disguise of a mandate, that our greed for power and gain is contributing less than the greeds of many other nations to world-strife and world-danger. But we, too, have greed. So far as Europe, Africa, Asia and South America are concerned we've practised as well as preached self-determination, though the Philippines, West Indies and Central America are another story. But if the American Government has behaved fairly well in international politics, the American money interests, sometimes acting through the Government, can not make the same claim. We have neither boldly stepped forward with strong, clean hands to help set the world right, nor have we wholly refrained from using American influence for American ends alone. I have not sufficient wisdom to know which course is the wiser, but any one with common sense must know that a half-way course is weak and wrong.

This country is rich enough. It is no help toward world peace for us to try to become still richer at the expense of other nations.

DEBTS owed to us should be paid like any other debts. The plea that others fought the war for us before we came in means nothing. So far as we were concerned there would have been no war. Europe hatched it and presented it to us ready-made. Also, they would have fought that war just the same even if we had not existed. Just which one of the Allies entered the struggle with even a side thought of "saving America?" Rot! When we entered the war they were just frankly grateful for our help. Now that it's over, they want us to pay them for not coming in sooner. If a man saves you from foot-pads do you send him a bill for not saving you sooner than he did?

Saved them? Well, they told us things were lost unless we came in. Certainly we saved them—the needed ally arriving in the nick of time, though blessed little gratitude remains among them now. No, we didn't "win the war." They bore the greater burden of it and played a bigger part than we did, it being primarily their war, not ours. But our smaller part was a mighty useful one and—at the time—they were very grateful for it. Now they tell us we owe them money for not helping them sooner.

YES, I'm for collecting all their debts to us, but only if we give it away to those who suffer from need of what it can give them. What is ours is ours and I believe in making others render it instead of meeting a just demand with arguments and excuses and hair-splittings. (The "scrap of paper" idea seems to have spread to some of the Allies.) But, having got what is ours, I would give it freely away in the name of humanity, even to the very nations from whom we collected it. There's a difference between being cheated and giving.

There is hope for the world only if the giving idea supplants the taking idea in international dealings as well as national and personal. Idealism? Well, it's Christianity. And when all the very, very wise "practical" people have gone on a little farther at this taking game they're so busy with now they will bump up very hard against the demonstrated fact that this kind of idealism is a —— sight more "practical" than what they now call by that name.

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J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

33. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 182, Salinas, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

34. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

35. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

36. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
GEORGE L. CATTON, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

37. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

38. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
ED. L. CARSON, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

39. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

40. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

41. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1436 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, backpacking, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

42. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

43. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

44. Western U. S. Part 2 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 705 So. 1st St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

45. Western U. S. Part 3 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

46. Western U. S. Part 4 Idaho and Surrounding Country
OTTO M. JONES, Warden, Bureau of Fish and Game, Boise, Idaho. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

47. Western U. S. Part 5 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

48. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

49. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

50. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

51. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies

✠ *(Enclose addressed envelop with three cents in stamps—in Mr. Beadle's case twelve cents and in Mr. Moffat's, five cents—NOT attached)*

of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

52. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

53. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

HOWARD SHANNON, care Howard Shannon Co., 310 International Bldg., Washington, D. C. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

54. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

HOWARD SHANNON, care Howard Shannon Company, 310 International Bldg., Washington, D. C. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

55. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

56. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Maine

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York City. A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns**, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers**, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

DR. H. N. WHITFORD, School of Forestry, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

MAJOR W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., National Aeronautic Association, 26 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C. Airplanes: airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire** Stations write J. COX, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions**, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash, D. C.

For **Alaska,** the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Pacific-Island Life in the Raw

WITH the jolly head-hunters:

Question:—"Will you please furnish me with information *re* the islands set opposite your name in the *Adventure* directory?

I want to locate for a few years in some of the island groups with a good camera with the idea of working up lecture material for Chautauqua and lyceum talks.

The best field would be the most picturesque *re* topography, appearance of natives, customs, etc.—the farther from civilization the better. I want the *real* thing. Something that is not seen in every book of travel, but things which will have the spice of the far-away, and a little of the zest of danger possibly. I know how to take care of myself and have done so over all the Northwest, both U. S. and Dominion, and Alaska.

Also please advise *re* companies with agencies in the islands, Samoa especially. Is it possible to carry on a business there on the side to make expenses while gathering the above material, or to get a place as agent, trader, etc., with a corporation?

What can you say of the natives of the different groups *re* appearance, customs, attitude to well-meaning whites, etc? I have in mind particularly Tahiti, Society, Friendly, Solomon groups, but of course what the old hackneyed books say is what I've formed my ideas from.

Some of the names under your paragraph in the magazine are entirely new to me, and if they would

be better for the combined purpose of making a livelihood and collecting material, please inform me. It is just possible if I found a good location with prospects of making a quiet, comfortable living, I would proceed to forget to return, and such a prospect is more pleasing than otherwise.

Will greatly appreciate full information on the above, and if there are any additional charges for the trouble just say so."—LOUIS BECK, St. Maries, Idaho.

Answer, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—Next to Samoa, which happens to lie in Mr. Mills' territory, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides seem to be your logical camping-ground. Samoa will yield you the picturesque and the strange, the sort of a lotus-eating existence tired men and women dream of; the Solomons and the New Hebrides offer all manner of adventure with a maximum of risk. Martin Johnson got some fine pictures down there, you know.

I am not acquainted with any companies that have agencies in Samoa. Please read the address and reference sheet I am enclosing.

You should be able to work your way out in the Solomons and the New Hebrides. But watch your step when it comes to making up with the natives, the majority of whom still go in for head-hunting and other gentle pastimes.

Here's luck! Lots of luck!

The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Arizona

THE following is the second of a series of half a dozen leaflets that Brother Harriman has had us print up for him dealing with the six States in his charge. Any leaflet, or the whole six of them, may be obtained by applying to him, provided request is accompanied by self-addressed envelop and stamp. Don't expect an answer otherwise.

The first leaflet printed for Brother Harriman, by the way, described California, and appeared in the April 10th issue of our magazine:

ARIZONA has an area of 113,000 square miles. It is known as a desert State. Its climate is generally hot in Summer. At Tucson and Yuma, generally taken as the hot-area standards, it shows temperatures that appal the reader. It has millions of acres of dry land.

But Arizona has many places where the awful heat indicated by thermal readings do not worry the inhabitants in the slightest degree. It has areas where the bringing of irrigating-water has shown the soil to be wonderfully productive.

It is known beyond question that millions of acres of dry land can and will be reclaimed by the waters of the Colorado River. With a dry atmosphere a temperature of 115 degrees is less enervating and unbearable than 95 degrees in a humid climate.

The climate of Arizona is exceedingly healthful. A dry climate invariably means less pulmonary troubles, anywhere. With varying elevations, one may select quite a large range of climates in Arizona. Her greatest handicap is the quality of the water available.

In some places, like Flagstaff, the water is splendid. In others it carries too great a content of chemicals. In Prescott, Wickenburg, Springerville, Greer and many other places, the water appeared excellent.

Arizona is the most generally mineralized of any State in the Union. It produces a large variety of minerals. It leads in metal minerals. Gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, antimony, manganese, tungsten and many other metals are all found in the State, many in large quantities. Practically every county shows a large mineralization.

Arizona has large forests in its mountain ranges. It raises many herds of cattle, many great flocks of sheep. It has large fields of cotton and is now producing a steadily increasing amount of other farm-products. With the completion of other irrigation projects it will be able to raise much fruit and treble its farm output.

One can find any type of humanity he desires in Arizona. There are still gunmen, gamblers, rustlers, horse thieves and amalgam thieves in the State if those types best suit the depraved tastes of the men who come there. But Arizona contains the finest, most hospitable and generous, kindly and open-hearted people in America if one prefers the society of good folks instead of evil.

Arizona offers some of the most picturesque scenery in the world. Some that is absolutely unsurpassed on this globe. It offers the peace and quiet of dense forests and the free air of wide plains. It offers a climate second to none for healthfulness.

Also it proffers good sport with rod and reel or with rifle and shotgun. The Mogollon Mountains with their various spurs, such as the White, the Big Blue or the Gilas, boast of Silvertip grizzlies, deer by the hundreds, mountain lions, coyotes, bobcats, foxes, wild turkeys galore, waiting for the sportsman. Its streams are full of trout.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

Living Conditions in Germany

WHAT must they be for the German, when $5 to $10 in U. S. money will keep an American in comfort there for a month:

Question:—"I should like to spend a year or so in Munich and other points of interest. What is the living cost in Germany today as per our dollar and how do the people feel toward Americans?" —C. E. VAWLER, New Harbor, Me.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—Inasmuch as you mention Munich, I have been recently informed that it would cost about 50 cents per day for a room with bath in the best hotel and that the same amount has been paid for a very good meal. There is no fixed standard for living costs in Germany for the foreigner.

A dollar bill of course will go a long way, considering that it brings about 8,000 marks *at the present time. You must consider, however, that the decline of the mark brings with it an increase in the cost of living.

*About 20,000 as this issue goes to press.

You can spend just as much money over there as you can here. If you are content to live at a moderate hotel and take your meals there I should say that $5 to $10 will keep you for a month. It is impossible for me to state exact costs at all cities, because rates are different in Munich from those at Berlin or Leipzig or Dresden. In smaller towns the cost of living is only one-half of that in larger cities, because the products of the country are available and you may buy almost anything directly from the farmers.

But why pick Munich? Granted that it is the art center of Germany, it is also the hot-bed of Royalists, and only recently severe political disturbances have taken place. It is not a good place for a foreigner. Go to Nuremberg, a very old and picturesque city, or farther south to Regensburg on the Danube. Living in these cities is decidedly better than in Munich.

I have been told that an American has easy sailing in Germany, but has to pay more than any other foreigner, because he comes from a *valuta-stark* country. That means that our money is very "strong." But as most Americans can afford to pay 50 cents for a meal and a similar small amount for a room, they don't mind paying a few cents more than others.

About living conditions I can not advise you. I have had all kinds of reports, and none of them are alike. Some people told me that everything was cheap and plenty; others again that many things Americans are used to can not be obtained. Of course, conditions differ in all parts of Germany.

If you would tell me what you mean by other points of interest and if you intend to travel extensively, I would be only too glad to advise you regarding each town (larger) that you have in mind.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

More about *Cloisonné*

THE following amiable interchange of letters seems to add to the store of general knowledge on the subject:

Evansville, Ind.

Mrs. G. P. T. Knudson:—I noted your response to Mr. O. B. Germond's questions on *cloisonné* in the Jan. 30, 1923, *Adventure* and take the liberty of writing a line on the subject. By way of excuse let me say that this is one of my pet hobbies, that I have several pieces, imperial gifts, and have taken occasion to study the subject of the Chinese art as far as possible.

The really valuable work is Chinese of the old type before the gold-plating was done by electric bath. This Chinese work is extensively imitated by the Japanese; one factory is at Kobe, and I think there are others. The imitations are so well done as to deceive all but an expert judge. I have been offered pieces which only a very careful examination—not meaning to say that I'm an expert—could detect as fraudulent.

Curio-shops, particularly on the Coast, and auction-rooms all over the country are flooded with this stuff. Department stores, etc., have a great deal of it. Much of it is marked in large ideographs on the bottom, Ta Ming or Ta Ching. The work of polishing is carefully done to imitate the Chinese craft; poor enamel is used to imitate the pitted early enamels, and so on. It is sold as Chinese, and as antique, at a fourth of the price.

Please don't accept this note as an impertinence or a correction. Probably you know all this; but I've never seen it set forth in print.—H. BEDFORD-JONES.

Castine, Me.

H. Bedford-Jones:—Thank you for your recent note with reference to *cloisonné*. May I send it on to the magazine for publication, if they desire? Perhaps I did not go far enough into explanation on the subject—anyway a word from a man like yourself will be interesting to "Ask *Adventure*" readers, I know. I had in mind in answering Mr. Germond's questions the fact that the name *cloisonné* had reference to the *method* of work, but as I think of it more I presume in its modern application it has a wider scope than just that, and in this wider-scope sense there are imitations as explained in your letter. I always think of the stuff on the market as poor *cloisonné* rather than as imitations. Do you consider me wrong in this respect? I am open to conviction and shall be glad to know your opinion.

Let me say in passing that I have enjoyed reading several of your stories and have noted some interesting advice given by you in the current *Student Writer*.—(MRS.) GRACE P. T. KNUDSON.

Evansville, Ind.

My dear Mrs. Knudson:—Thank you for you very cordial letter, acceptance of my notes, and comment on my work. I appreciate it all.

As for the letter I wrote, of course I don't care if you use it, if you think it worth using. It struck me that Mr. G., in writing, had perhaps run up against some of this Jap imitation ware.

What I've seen of this ware—I have one piece that I got stuck with when it first came out about ten years ago—impresses me as really very good, and in a way as beautiful as the old Chinese work. Of course, it hasn't the value; and in a larger sense it lacks the beauty that can come only by very patient work and attention to detail, which in the old pieces are sometimes incredible. One of mine has intricate *cloisons*, raised and filled with enamel, the background of bronze being gilded; and the whole encircles the vase and is partially enameled in *champlevé*. The Jap imitations are faithful in color and pattern and enamel, though lacking all gold-work and detail.

As to the usual Jap *cloisonné* with its crackle and glaze over all, I can not speak, as I don't like it and know little about it. Please pardon all my opinions. I'm not an expert—just a crank.—H. BEDFORD-JONES.

East-Indiamen's Crews

THEY had to be "soldiers and sailors too," like Kipling's marines:

Question:—"To settle an argument which has been raging aboard here I am applying to you for the answers to the following questions:

Did any of the old-time American clipper ships that engaged in either the China tea trade or the New York to San Francisco trade ever carry as many as forty A. B.'s in one watch; that is, eighty before the mast all told? If not, what was the largest number of A. B.'s ever carried by one of these

ships on a trip? Also the largest number of both men and boys ever carried before the mast on any one of these ships, including ships carrying double crews for the run.

What is the fastest speed on record ever attained by a fore-and-aft schooner, and where?"—H. BRIDGES, U. S. S. *Lydonia*, Marshfield, Ore.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—In the old days of single topsails the ordinary crew of an American merchant ship of any class was two men and a boy for every hundred tons of measurement. A fifteen-hundred-ton ship, and there were a few of that measurement in "them days," would therefore carry thirty men and fifteen boys. In the early days of the China trade, when vessels were armed and carried broadside guns, double crews were fairly common to defend the ships against piratical attack. The old-fashioned East-Indiaman carried a crew but slightly smaller than a frigate of the same tonnage.

As to the exact number of men carried on any of the old-time clippers, I have no data, so I can not settle your argument in full. I incline to the belief however, that some of the old tea-wagons must have carried crews as large as is claimed. I didn't see how they could have handled their canvas and worked their batteries with any smaller crews.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

A Month in Ontario's Backwoods

HOW to connect with a farmer who won't pesticate you with "dudes:"

Question:—"I am taking the liberty of asking you for some information. Myself and wife are planning on a month's vacation during August, and as we do not want to go to a Summer resort thought maybe you could help us out on a few pointers.

Do you think it possible for us to get board with some agreeable family that are located in or near the pine woods, near a lake so that we might fish a little?

We do not care so much about the fishing, etc., as to get a good place to rest, and preferably far away from any town.

I do not know that I have made myself clear to you, but we want to get away from the usual Summer tourist, to see different people, change of climate, customs, etc. Please do not publish name or address."

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—If I get you right in this letter, you want to spend a month's holidays with your wife somewhere here in Ontario, away from a town or village, near a lake where you can get some fishing, and board in a private house—where there will be no other tourists. Is that right? That would be easy were you traveling in a motor-car. Then you would be able to pick out the place that just suited you and apply at the farm-houses in that vicinity for board. Nearly any farmer back from the regular Summer resorts would accommodate you for a month, and do it cheaper than you would think, too. But the trouble will be for you to locate the desired exact spot without being right on the ground. And the best, and practically the only, way to accomplish it would be to advertise.

The locality you want is in the Muskoka district; vicinity of either Huntsville or Gravenhurst. Sit down and frame a small advertisement like this—

WANTED: Board for man and wife for one month (August) in farm-house, on lake, back from Summer resorts, where no other boarders are kept.

Then send this advertisement with a couple of dollars to the *Gravenhurst Banner* or the *Huntsville Forester*, the first in Gravenhurst, Ont., and the second in Huntsville, Ont. Or send it to both and take your choice from the answers you get.

This is the district you want, and any of the lakes in here will give you all the fishing you want, and the scenery is there. A couple of dollars will pay for about four insertions of this advertisement and will reach only the best class of farmers.

Death of "The Going Kid"

WALTER GOYNE, the greatest dog-racer that ever lived, has "mushed" the Last Long "Mush." He was a Man; may he find the trail open to the right place:

Question:—"I notice in *Adventure* in a reply by you that you advise him to write Walter Goyne, The Pas, for information regarding huskies and malemiuts. I was under the impression that Walter Goyne and his team had gone through the ice some time during November, 1921, or just before The Pas Derby of last year. Am I right, or was the report in error?"—ALEXANDER MILLS, Sturgeon Creek, Man., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Hague:—Walter Goyne was drowned in Moose Lake, eighty miles from The Pas, in the second week of November, 1921, and his body was recovered and brought to The Pas for burial.

The letter to which you refer I wrote some three weeks prior to Goyne's death, but in the case of a magazine such as *Adventure* it is of necessity some time before these letters are published.

I was quite a close friend of Goyne's and found him one of the most thorough sports it has been my lot to meet. He did more than any other man for dog-racing in northern Manitoba, and the types of sleigh and harnessing which he introduced are now being generally used among dog-racers here.

Supplementing this information, Mr. Hague wrote me the subjoined letter under date of Dec. 19, 1922. Long before these words meet up with your eyes the Sixth Annual Dog Derby of The Pas, that of 1923, will be history:

The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.

The death of Walter Goyne left a great gap in the ranks of dog racers. "The Going Kid" as he was called was born in Alaska and was therefore an American citizen. He took up dog-racing at an early age and achieved many victories in Alaska, one of his most famous being in a race from Flat to Iditarod and return, a distance of 15.4 miles over a very considerable hill, in one hour, five minutes and three seconds, a record that has never been equaled or approached on that course.

Goyne won the 1920 Pas Dog Derby over a course of 100 miles in record time, but was unsuccessful in the 200-mile non-stop race the following year. He, however, was favorite in the following year, but in the early Winter went through the thin ice on one of our lakes and was drowned together with the best dogs of his team.

Walter was one of the best sports I have ever met and endeared himself to every one with whom he came in contact on account of his sunny nature. He revolutionized dog-racing in northern Manitoba and was primarily responsible for the high standard which it has now reached.

I suppose The Pas Dog Derby is the most unique event in the sporting world. The winning team last year covered the course in 24 hours and 51 minutes, so you can imagine the caliber of men and animals who compete.

Would write more on this subject but my time at present is extremely limited as I am up to my ears in work connected with the coming race. Am engaged in compiling a history of dog-races of the world, and if it ever sees the light of day will send a copy.—REECE H. HAGUE.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Canoeing Maryland Waters

PLAYING hide-and-seek among the islands of Old Chesapeake:

Question:—"I am going to try to take a canoe-trip this Summer, from Baltimore to Ocean City, Maryland.

Would it be possible to go there *via* the Chesapeake Bay to the Pocomoke River and then portage overland to the bay in back of Ocean City? This appears to be the only way except the ocean way outside, and I really would not like to risk that.

"I will take another chap with me, and we will have lots of time—all Summer in fact. Canoe is an eighteen-footer with outriggers and sail. Last Summer we paddled from Sea Isle City, New Jersey, to Philadelphia but it sure was a nightmare of a trip.

"I would appreciate any dope you could give on my contemplated trip.

"If this should appear in the pages of *Adventure* I would like to have only my initial printed. Thanks!"—A. H. M.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—A canoe-trip from Baltimore to Ocean City *via* the Pocomoke River is possible. I'm outlining the safest route.

Run down the Patapsco to the mouth of the Magothy and cross to Love Point on Kent Island. Down eastern shore of Kent Island and through the Kent Island narrows into Eastern Bay *via* Parson's Island. South from Parson's to Claiborne Neck. Up the Miles River to St. Michael's and then truck across to Board Creek—cost me one iron dollar—about a mile. Down Broad Creek to mouth of Tred Avon, cross to Castle Haven and up to Cornersville. Haul across to Beckwith Creek—another mile and another dollar; ask for Mr. Wilcox at Cornersville, a mighty accommodating gentleman—down Beckwith Creek into the Little Choptank, into Slaughter Creek and through the Taylor's Island narrows.

Take the Honga River fork of Slaughter Creek into the Honga—ask Ben Harrington at Taylor's Island about that fork; it is easy to lose. Down Honga River to Hooper's Strait, across the strait to Bloodworth Island, south skirting islands on eastern side, cross to Crisfield and run around the point to mouth of the Pocomoke. Up the Pocomoke to Snow Hill.

You can ship from there by rail to Ocean City or have some one haul you across about seven miles to the inlet from Chintooteague Bay, and then run up the bay to your point of destination.

I wouldn't advise your doing this unless you want to buck darn rough water. It is like being "outside" most of the time. Still it can be done in comfort if you have a good partner, a good canoe and plenty of muscle. It is tough going for a canoe loaded with duffel and two huskies.

From Hooper's Strait south you will have to exercise good judgment in making the long crossings. Old Cheaspeake can kick up rough in a very short time. Consult the natives about weather conditions whenever possible. The *know* they bay—and they won't steer you wrong.

You will pass through a country seldom traveled, rich in historic traditions and full of local color. The finest and most natural people you ever met. Treat them right and you can count on them for anything within their power.

Take along a camera by all means. Leave shooting-irons at home. You won't need them unless you want a .22 for target practise. Go as light as possible for comfort. A compact tent, bug-proof, snake-proof, mosquito-proof and rain-proof with a pneumatic mattress makes for comfort.

Take along an extra length of mosquito netting. When it is sultry leave the tent-flap open and use the netting. Water-proof duffel-bags for spare clothing. Leave bedding in the tent and make a roll of the whole thing. Fewer cooking-untensils the better just so long as you have enough. Five-gallon water-container. Water is scarce in spots. Be sure to take along enough—it's inconvenient to be caught on an island in salt water without it, and a blow might hold you up for days.

Pack food in friction-top cans. I always carry mine in a light wooden packing-case. Easy to get at and easy to handle. Have plenty of matches!

The wife and I came down from Philadelphia last Summer as far as Crisfield and across to Point Lookout and up the Potomac. Paddled all the way, four months of it, and enjoyed every day a little more than the one before.

Good bass-fishing in the Pocomoke. Rock bass best at Kent Island narrows. Crabs and hard-head all the way. Oysters in Slaughter Creek for the gathering. Fresh oysters even in July are not to be lightly sneezed at. Berries and fruit inland. Eggs and milk at all the farm-houses.

Get a set of Chesapeake Bay charts from Lester Jones, U. S. Geodetic, Survey, Washington, D. C. Five of them cost $2.50. Worth it on a trip such as you propose. Study them and lay out your route.

I'm giving you the long way round, but you are inside nearly all the way—and Chesapeake Bay can look like Old Lady Atlantic when she takes the notion.

Good luck to you! Any further information I can furnish is at your disposal. Shoot!

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

McROBERT, CHARLES. Resident of Chateauguay Basin Prov. of Quebec, Canada. Son of the Charles McRobert. Left Montreal, Canada when he was about twenty-two years old for New York in the year 1863, and left New York with a party of prospectors for Nevada Gold Mines May 4, 1864. Last heard from he was going to Snake River or Silver Mine. Any information will be appreciated by the children of his late and only sister Barbara Walker.—Address ALLAN F. STATE, 745 Bloomfield Ave., Montreal, Que., Canada.

MACKEYS or MACKIE, LOUIS. One time an electrician employed in the mines in Bruceville, Indiana. Any one knowing his present address please write to me at once.—Address RAYMOND E. FORTH, 900 7th St., Evansville, Indiana.

KAVESH, SAMUEL. Last heard of was employed as a window trimmer for the Du Bois Dry Goods Co., Du Bois, Pa. About five feet eight inches tall, fair complection, and sandy hair. Please write.—Address NORRIS J. KRANITZ, 1514 Pine Ave., Niagara Falls, New York.

VAN DUSEN, WILLIAM and MRS. BELLE VAN DUSEN or their daughter MRS. CLARA SMITH. Left Troy, N. Y. about twelve years ago for Denver, Colorado. Any information will be appreciated by their relative.—Address W. J. WILBER, 68 North Main St., Mechanicville, N. Y.

BENJAMIN, JAMES. Former resident of Los Angeles, Calif. Age about thirty-five. Slight build. Sharp features. Prominent nose. Was employed in White Garage in 1917 and has been heard of in San Bernardino and San José. Is probably employed as cook or waiter in restaurant. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T. 453, care of *Adventure.*

DAMON, GEORGE B. Last heard of in Lowell, Mass. in 1908. Age about fifty-two years. Medium height, weighing about 200 lbs. German descent, civil engineer. Any information will be appreciated.—Address M. E. S., care of *Adventure.*

EBERHARDT, SARAH and VIRGINIA. Last heard of lived at 62 Greenbush St. I have information to your interest. Please write.—Address H. B. STOUT, Box 57, East Liberty Sta., Pittsburgh, Pa.

ECONOMU, AUGUST A. Ex-Sgt. Troop C, 15th Cavalry. Served in Philippines, Mexican Border, France and Cheyenne, Wyoming. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. F. HAUN, Box 95, Bellingham, Mass.

SHARPE, CECIL. Last heard of in Kamloops, B. C., Canada, Nov. 1920. May be in U. S. or Australia. Age twenty-six, gray eyes, dark-brown hair, wears glasses, round shouldered; good horseman. Mother is very ill. Any information will be appreciated by his father.—Address A. E. SHARPE, Pritchard, B. C., Canada.

HOWARD. Your letter received and everything is O. K. Understand now what you were up against. You certainly did right in leaving. Write to your mother. She will make no effort to bring you back. So have no fears. January 10.—ERIC.

WILCOX, ARTHUR M. Last seen in Seattle, Wash. in 1919. About 6 feet tall, weight about 175 lbs. Black hair turning gray; wears a mustache. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. W. WILCOX, care of Casper Hotel, 346 Sutter St., San Francisco, Calif.

DRAKE, ELMER. Ex-marine. Was formerly policeman on the Des Moines, Iowa, Police Force in 1903-4. Last heard of was in Clinton, Okla. in 1904. Age about thirty-nine years, five feet eleven inches in height, auburn hair inclined to be curly. Any information will be appreciated.—Address HARRY G. DRAKE, 63½ E. Tioga St., Tunkhannock, Pa.

HAMILTON, G. A. Last seen in Ft. Worth, Texas, in 1918. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MISS M. L. HAMILTON, Memphis, Tenn.

DE VAILE, LOUIS. Son of William Pinkney. Age about twenty-nine years, born in Australia. Relatives or himself write wife. All well.—Address MRS. LOUIS DE VAILE, 137 Hester Ave., San José, Calif.

PUZAR, JULIUS. (Russian) Soldiered in Arizona, 1916, Ft. Slocum and Washington Barracks, 1917. Last heard of just before battle of Château Thierry, then with Co. "D", 6th U. S. Engineers. Any information will be appreciated.—Address A. WESTCOTT, Rockaway, N. J.

SHANNON, NAYLOR, Lettow, Davis, Lewis, Dunn, Pratt, Eames and others who were with Troop C, 2nd U. S. Cavalry, France, 1918 please write.—Address A. WESTCOTT, Rockaway, N. J.

SCHAFFER, GABRIEL. A world wanderer. Met him in early part of 1914 crossing Kara Kum. On reaching Askerbad our ways divided. I received several letters from him at Batum, and wrote to him in Archangel, but got no reply.—ADDRESS E. R. P., care of *Adventure.*

VANDERPOOL, Martha; Elizabeth; Nancy; Christie; Lilly; Mary; Willis; Joe and Johnnie. Any information will be appreciated by their sisters.—Address MRS. VINA STUBBS, Chillicothe. Illinois.

ODELL, ANCIL. Age eighteen, auburn hair, blue eyes. Last heard of as being in Texas Oil Fields. Mother has tried to locate him for five years. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. VIRGINIA RUSSELL, 3863 Blaine Ave., St. Louis, Missouri.

GREEN, C. O. Formerly of China and the Philippines. Last heard of in Pittsburgh, Pa. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CHARLES J. POTH, Pittsburgh, Pa.

KOYOTO WHITEY. Any information will be appreciated.—Address WM. J. SILVERTON, Gen. Delivery, Seattle, Wash.

PETER JOE, Everything O. K. Dad is still worrying. If you do not want to come home, write.—Address J. D. M., care of *Adventure.*

JOHNSON, O. W. Five feet tall, weight about 140 lbs., light hair and complexion. Any information will be appreciated.—Address J. D. M., care of *Adventure.*

DAVIS, JOHN KIRKER. Resident of Pittsburg, Pa. Last seen on June 14th, 1918, when boarded a train on the Chicago & Northwestern R. R. at Milwaukee, Wis., en-route to Washington, D. C. to enter some branch of military service. Born in Elmira, N. Y.; age fifty years. He was also known as John or Kirk. Any information will be appreciated.—Address DONALD P. O'BRIEN, 38 Dunnell Road, Maplewood, N. J.

ANDERSON, AEEL PONTUS. Left Sweden about twenty years ago and married a widow whose last husband's name was Engmaw. Was last heard from in Phila., Pa. about nine years ago. Age about fifty-five, tall and slender, blacksmith by trade. Any information will be appreciated.—Address ALBERT ANDERSON, Gen. Delivery, N. Y. C.

COLEMAN, ANNA MAE and EVA VERLINE. Age fifteen and eight respectively. Were in Children's Home at Boise, Idaho, in 1916. Anna Mae is probably now living with a family by the name of Berry. Any information will be appreciated by their mother.—Address MRS. H. WOOD, 1301 Lincoln Ave., Yakima, Wash.

L. Q. W. Don't come wait for letter.

SAXTON, SAMUEL, HUGH, JOSHUA and THOMAS. Left Mississippi for Texas before Civil War. Any information will be appreciated by their cousins.—Address MRS. M. A. FOWLER, 1004 Leydia St., Austin, Texas.

PLINT, MARY. Left Melbourne, Australia in 1911. Last heard from in 1916 at Great Falls, Montana. Any information concerning her or family will be appreciated by her sister.—Address MRS. E. BAND, 9 Sackville St., Collingwood, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

HELEN H. Write your mother. Important. Same address.

BOSTER brothers. Residents of Ohio. Your buddy who served with you at Marine Barracks, Balboa Park, San Diego, Calif., would like to hear from you.—Address HARRY MALOWITZ, 195 Ave B., N. Y. C.

PENLAND, NOBLE (or Bud). Last heard of in El Paso, Texas in March, 1917. Served with Battery A, Roswell, New Mexico. Supposed to have gone to France. Any information will be appreciated. —Address MRS. M. PENLAND, 408 E. 16th St., Tucson, Arizona.

NOLL, FRANK. Age about thirty-four; last heard of in San Francisco, Calif., in 1915. Believed to be in California. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CARL CARPENTER, Prelate, Saskatchewan, Canada.

JOHNSON, BILL. Last heard of was with me in Mexico. Any information will be appreciated.—Address FRED MONDRAGON, care of F. Harlow, 890 Clinton St., Buffalo, N. Y.

HALL, HILL and VALENTINE. Were in the fights at Naco and Agua Prieto. Any information will be appreciated. —Address FRED MONDRAGON, care of F. Harlow, 890 Clinton St., Buffalo, N. Y.

THE following have been inquired for in either the April 10th or April 30th issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ADAMS, LYDIA, Lethia and Myrtle; Allen, Prescott C.; Baker, H. W.; Bennett, Howard; Bildog, Morgan; Campbell, Fred C.; Chapman, Frederick Wilson; Cornish, Charles Jr.; Davis, Ralph E.; Dickson, Ted Jr.; Dunn, Paul A.; Elam, Richard; Ellis, Walter S.; Ennis, Henry; Evans, James Booth; Forde, Joseph Patrick; Forman, J. B.; French, Dewight; Frost, James; Frost, J. Hopping; Grady, Nellie Mrs. (née Nellie McCarthy) Graham, L. B.; Haigh, Ward Percy; Hanks, Marion R.; Haynie, Thomas Sexton; Henderson, Helen; Hennon, Ralph (Bud); Holly, Geo. or Joe.; Hutler, Reginalds; Lamb, Frank; Lane, James A.; Latchford, Ed.; Locke, Charles E.; Lysoe, Meta M.; McGee, Martin; McGuire, Benjamin; McPherson, Norman; McWilliams, Walter; Murdaugh, Roy H.; Napier, Harry; Perry, Robert R.; Priest, Francis E.; Priest, Julia; Russell, Robert Lawrence; Sailor Bob; Samuel, Merton H.; Seaton, James Arthur; Siple, William B.; Smith, Lester M.; Tate, Thomas; Via, Dellman H.; Wilson, Edgar Private; Wood, Carl Herbert; Womble, Benjamin Franklin; Woolery or Wickwire family; Young, Joy.

MISCELLANEOUS—C. L. W. of Ft. Clayton, Panama; Conger, "Yank" Harris, Locke or any A. B.'s of *Buckeye State;* Shelton, Victor Alvin, Moe Henry; Devlin (97) Kelly, Lynch (Honolulu); Texas Jack, Slushy, Andy O'Brien, Kelly, Ted Leeds, Mike or any of the crew of the Bowhead Whaling Schooner *Era;* W. V. M.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

21 Jewel Burlington

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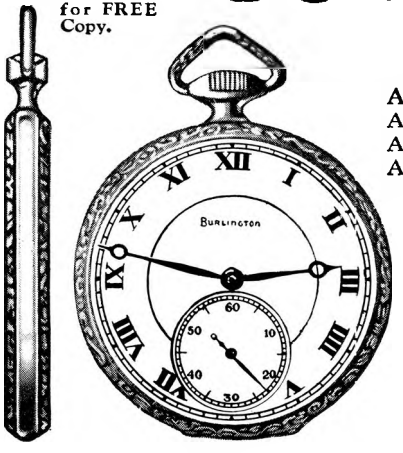

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