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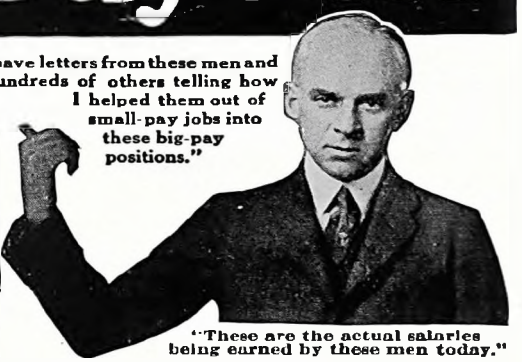

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ADVENTURE
April 30th, 1922

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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Contents for April 30th, 1922, 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*)

DEEP in the heart of the Brazilian jungle *Pedro* and *Lourenço*, with two Yankees, make their way along the Javary River for days, seeking to find a path back to civilization, meeting savage tribes and sudden death in strange forms. "TUPAHN—THE THUNDERSTORM," a complete novelette in the next issue by Arthur O. Friel.

MEN enter the lonely thorn bush of the blazing Rhodesian *veld*—and vanish. Under the merciless African sun any violence is possible, because the scavengers of the wild destroy all evidence. But from Bulawayo the Mounted Police set out grimly to find "the loser of heirs"—a man of unpleasant mystery. "THEY ALWAYS RUN TRUE TO FORM," a complete novelette by Ferdinand Berthoud.

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

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Adventure

APRIL 30th 1922
VOL. XXXIV
No. 3

Plunder

A Complete Novelette

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Barehanded Castaways," "Forced Luck," etc.

AVARY sucked in his breath and ran his tongue-tip about his full lips to hide his grin of self-appreciation. His fox-face, with its sharp nose and hazel eyes, the sandy hair and bristling mustachios suggesting cunning more than courage, was flushed with satisfaction rather than with wine. He had let the others do the drinking. His first glass was still half-filled.

And he had them. Oh, he had them gripped! he told himself, marking how they craned toward him from seat and transom and where they stood about the butt of the mizzen.

The conquest had been simple enough. It made him contemptuous toward them, though he took pains not to show it. Any tavern-orator, any popular ballad-writer, had the trick. Their brains inflamed by the heady Spanish wine sucked suggestion as a dry sponge takes up water.

The table was littered with bottles; every man clutched his measure firmly in one hand while the other was doubled to a clenched fist. Pulses throbbed visibly in brawny wrists or at sea-burned temples. Growing excitement glittered in the eyes that were all turned toward the mate. Smoke-wreaths fouled the air, drifting lazily out of the lifted skylight.

They gave Avary elbow room at the head of the table by virtue of his official authority, though he had deliberately broken down that barrier when he had invited them to drink and smoke with him in the after cabin while the captain was ashore. The very manner of the bidding had been calculated, suggesting to them something irregular; and from that unspoken hint the mate had subtly led them on until now he judged the time ripe to disclose his project.

With the exception of the watch below, asleep in their hammocks, the cook and his helper, a boy or so, the whole complement of *The Duke* was present. Horton, chief gunner from *The Lion*, their consort, had brought over half a score of men at

Avary's invitation. Horton, broad-shouldered, broad-faced, resembling a bulldog, had known what was in the wind. Avary looked to him to lead the response to his proposition when he plumped it out.

He took his bandanna handkerchief and wiped off the wet smears of liquor from the table-top. They watched him with the minute attention of a conjuror's audience. His glib tongue had fed their imaginations, appealed to their gross appetites. Now the movement of his hand held them hypnotized, as surely as the chalk-mark down the beak and along the floor trances the stupid fowl.

"Morgan was the greatest of them all!" said Avary, putting away his handkerchief, dipping the tip of his forefinger in his wine, holding it poised, using the arts of a street-corner fakir to create suspense and maintain their attention. "There were others who made their fortunes on the Spanish Main—Pierre le Grand, L'Ollonois, Montbars, Lewis Scott, Bartelemey—but Morgan was Chief of all the Brethren of the Coast.

"Since he died the Caribbean is an empty field, raked and gleaned down to the stubble. Now the Spaniards transship across the Isthmus or come round through the Straits of Magellan, and a buccaneer has a hard time to buy powder, let alone a chance to burn it. Tortuga is deserted.

"The French are harrying the Spanish on the west coast, smuggling off Peru. That is why we are here in a Spanish harbor, part of a Spanish convoy and expedition against the French smugglers—because the dons can no longer fight their own battles but must call on us and the Dutch, under the Treaty of Ryswick, to help them.

"I like it not. I tell you frankly it goes against my grain to fight for a Spaniard. Why, look you, on the Main, Englishman, Dutchman, Frenchman, were all dogs to be hunted down by the dons, to be put to the torture, to be burned at the stake. The Spaniards robbed the Indian, enslaved him, made him dig for gold and dive for pearls, and they claimed all the Islands of the Caribbees for their own until the buccaneers began to take a share—since they were not offered one. 'Tis not so overlong since the time of the Armada for us to remember how they ached to conquer England. And now they ask our aid and we give it to them—faugh!"

HE SPAT on the floor, rinsed out his mouth with wine, redipped his forefinger and began to trace a crude chart on the mahogany.

"Here is Spain," he said, making a cross on the coastline of his map, "and here is Corunna where we lie. This is our course in the wake of Magellan, through his perilous straits, if the wind is fair; or round the howling Cape Horn, then long leagues up the western coast, following the trail of Drake. But not as he did, harrying the Spaniards, loading the hull of his ship with gold and silver and jewels until it was indeed well named the *Golden Hynde.*

"We are to fight smugglers. There's no prize money. Its owners take all and give Jack a tot of rum. I've read the articles. The Bristol merchants who have found our two ships, the Dutch burghers who own the two from Holland, the Spaniards here take all the profit from the overhauled smugglers that is to pay for the output. We do the fighting.

"Now then."

He wiped out South America, relined drying Spain and swiftly outlined the continent of Africa, the island of Madagascar, the Arabian gulf and the coast of India.

"I'll show you where the Brethren of the Coast have gone," he went on. "Where there are bones with flesh on 'em and good marrow for the sucking.

"Here's where they rendezvous—on Madagascar. Here's where they live like kings, dressed as kings and their women dressed as queens. Slaves to wait on 'em, rare liquor to drink, rare food, rare revels. Then to sail out and swoop down upon Moor and Arab, on the Portygees, on ships from India. Gold dust, ivory, bar silver, diamonds, pearls and rubies, sequins, slaves!

"Listen. Since we were boys, in the last score of years Captain Misson took two hundred thousand pounds from a dhow off Zanzibar. Did ever Morgan equal that? There was Captain John Bowen of the *Speaker* who took eighty-four thousand sequins—the same as half-guineas—from one prize, and twenty-two thousand pounds from another, a Moor.

"Captain Tew, who sailed with Misson, divided three thousand pounds to each man of his crew. Captain White of Plymouth divided four thousand. There were Fly

and Howard and a dozen more who went "on the account" and were rich men all—from cabin-boy to captain—in one voyage. Burgess came back to Bristol five years ago with ten thousand pounds and the price of three hundred slaves.

"That beats hardtack and salt horse, hard work and little pay. Eh? I'll warrant you. A free life and a merry one. Fill up, there's plenty of liquor yet."

He nodded at them across his own tankard; chuckled under cover of it as he noted them gulp down the wine and set down their measures with their inflamed faces challenging him. His eyes held those of Horton for the space of a breath and mutual understanding was exchanged. The train was laid; it needed only the match set to the powder.

"There was none of these men who had such a ship, for instance, as this of ours: well found, well provisioned, with thirty guns and full magazines of powder and shot, a fast sailer. I have been in many ships, but never did I know a sweeter vessel to her helm than *The Duke*, nor a better on the wind. Given a good crew aboard such a ship, joining with others on the Madagascar coast, we could sweep the Persian Gulf and all the Indian Ocean and toss treasure overboard for lack of space aboard to stow it."

Horton brought down his great fist on the table with a thwack that set the bottles jigging.

"By ——!" he cried. "'Tis worth the trying, my hearties!"

They were all with him, pounding the table, swearing, bragging — a stampede of villainy; the quickmatch fired, sputtering to an explosion.

"What to do?" demanded Horton. "Come, Avary, give us your plan. You have the brains of us."

"Plan? There is no plan! 'Tis already set for us. Simple as taking a cake from a tray. Here we are in Corunna awaiting orders that are not expected for two days or more. We'll make it one. Here is our skipper, a good man enough at sea, I grant you, handy with his reckoning, weatherwise but a drunkard. His fortune lies drowned at the bottom of his glass.

"Tonight he is ashore as he has been ever since we came to Corunna. When he comes aboard he will be brought off in a shoreboat in the morning after he has slept off some of the fumes.

"What if he came, not tomorrow morning —for Horton has yet to sound out others on *The Lion*, so that we get all the men available—but the morning after that; and suppose he found that we had slipped cable in the night, drifted out on the ebb and that there was no ship of his in sight nor none to tell him she was speeding south for the Cape and Madagascar? What of that, bullies! There is no moon; the nights are dark; we are well placed for a flitting. What say you? Who is game to join the Gentry of the Sea? To go on the account?

"Equal shares to all, an extra half-share to the quartermaster who speaks for the men, an extra share for the captain. What say you, bullies? Are you game?"

Avary rose to his feet and stood at the table head with his arms outstretched. The mate was not without his good looks when he was at his best. He was tall and well built, and the wenches of Bristol were apt to look after him as he passed. To the fascinated crew he seemed every inch a leader and a prophet. The cabin echoed with huzzas while he surveyed them with glowing eyes, striving to temper them a little.

"Softly, softly," he cried through the clamor, gesturing for order. "They may think strangely of the uproar aboard *The Lion*. So. 'Tis settled. We sail under the Skull. Tomorrow night Horton comes aboard with such men as he can muster. At two bells in the midwatch."

"What if the skipper should not stay ashore?" asked Horton.

"'Twill make no difference. He will be drunk. And drunk asea or ashore he will be stupid at that hour. Row over to us with your party. You can all get shore leave without trouble. Here is the word. Call up to us as in a jest—

"'Is your drunken boatswain aboard?'

"If all is well I'll answer 'yes.' Then we'll secure hatches, weigh anchor or slip cable and so to sea without bustle or noise. Is it agreed? Then finish the wine in a bumper to our luck. We'll get more and make a night of it."

THE symptoms experienced by the captain of *The Duke* when he awakened were not unknown to him, for he had a raging thirst, a splitting head and a most villainous taste of saltpeter in his mouth. But he was not usually dizzy the

next morning. And now the bunk heaved under him; walls and floor and ceiling of his cabin slid and changed angle.

He had drunk heavily the night before, starting at supper with the visiting captain of his consort *The Lion;* and before the meal was over he had been at once too sluggish and too comfortable to shift ashore. He could not remember turning in.

Still fuddled, he watched the unfixed motion of his cabin. His seaman's instinct reasserted itself before his will achieved reason. They were at sea! And should be at anchor in the peaceful harbor of Corunna!

With an effort he rang his bell. The door opened as if swung to the bell rope. Avary backed by Horton entered, grinning at the sleepy skipper, who lifted himself on one elbow and stared at them with set, stupid eyes.

"What's wrong with the ship? Does she drive? What weather is't?"

"All's well," answered Avary. "Fair wind and good weather. We've cleared the cape and we're making all of nine knots on a bowline. She can walk, can *The Duke.*"

The sleepiness and stupidity vanished from the skipper's eyes as a breath vanishes from the face of a mirror. Apprehension began to creep into them as he met the twinkling triumph in Avary's glance, saw the grinning bulldog face of Horton—Horton who belonged aboard *The Lion.*

"At sea?" he ventured. "How can that be?"

While he parleyed a dozen well-authenticated tales of ships taken from their lawful captains surged through his muddled brain and stayed there in ominous record. Prominent was the story of Fly, boatswain of the *Elizabeth* of Bristol, the skipper's own home port and that of *The Duke.* Fly had led a mutiny, and they had flung over Captain Green, chopping off his hand as he clung to the main sheet. True, Fly had been hanged at Boston, in New England, for other villainies only four years before, but that had not saved Captain Green.

Full accounts of the trial had been printed on both sides of the Atlantic and read avidly by every seafaring man. *The Duke's* captain, looking into the mocking gaze of Avary, remembered how it had been testified that Fly had asked Green whether he "would take a leap like a brave fellow or be tossed over like a sneaking rascal?"

"Short prayers are best," Fly had sneered to his skipper. "Repeat after me, 'Lord have mercy on me.' So—no more words; and over with him, my lads!"

Avary—he had always mistrusted Avary for a man who would not share in a fair bout of drinking—Avary, the sleek devil, was just such another as Fly!

Recollection raced through the mind of the captain like waves of the sea, summoned by his fear.

"Come," said Avary, "don't be in a fright, but put on your clothes and I'll put you into a secret. You must know that I am captain of this ship now, and Horton is quartermaster. This is my cabin and you must walk out. I am bound to Madagascar with a design of making my own fortune, and all the brave fellows have agreed to join with me."

"You have turned pirates?"

"Gentlemen of Fortune is the name we prefer."

Avary's tone crispened; his smile changed to a snarl.

"We have no time for answering impertinent questions further," he said. "Turn out and go on deck quietly and it will save us the trouble of scraping the cabin. If not—a few buckets of water and a scraper will take the blood out of the planks. Suit yourself."

Reaction from the liquor and his fear of death left the captain without coordination. He could only beg for mercy in a voice that mumbled of his unfitness for sudden death and judgment, that begged for time to prepare himself for the great change.

"I ask no more mercy, Avary," he pleaded, "than justice and compassion that the law shall allow you if you be hereafter taken."

"—— your blood," started Avary, "don't preach to me!"

Then he broke into a laugh.

"A fighting man and yet afraid of sudden death," he jeered. "It is as well we changed captains, upon my soul. Come, don't grovel there, man. Get up, and if you have a mind to make one of us we will receive you; if not you can take a boat and you shall be set ashore with the other fainthearts of the crew."

Horton grumbled something under his breath about imprudence.

"If they go we'll see they have a walk to give them appetite for breakfast," returned

Avary. "Let them know ashore how we turned the trick."

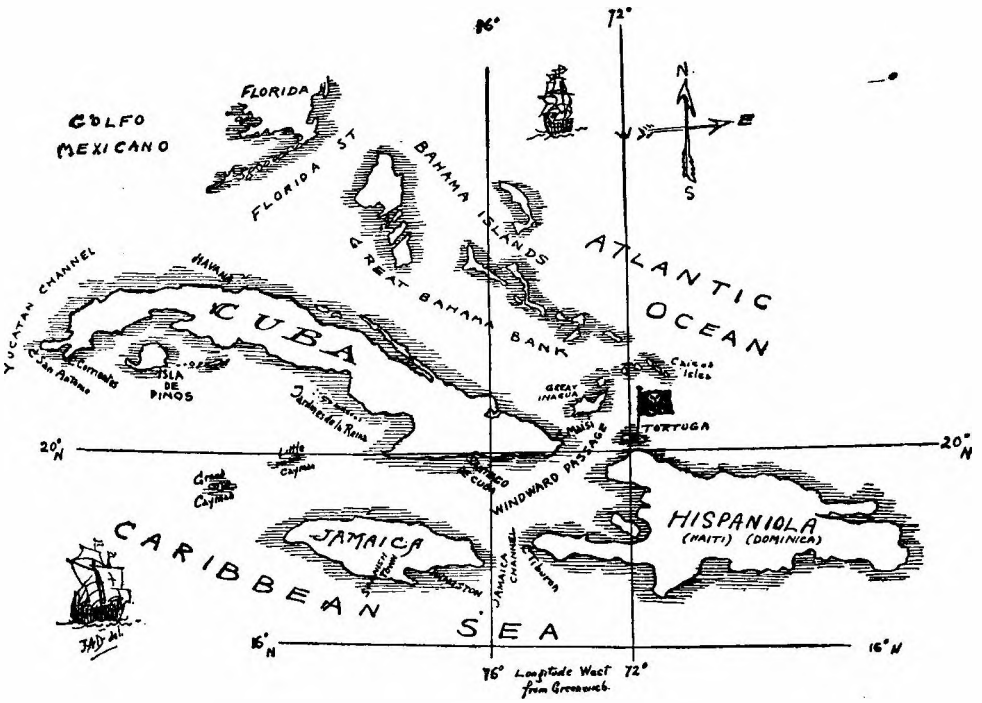
"They may pursue us."

"A badger might run after a hare. We have the heels of all of them, without a start.

"Call your men to the mainmast, Horton, and we'll see who wants to go ashore with the captain. What's your decision?" he asked the skipper, sitting disconsolately on the edge of his bunk, holding his head in his hands, mindful of his physical misery now he was assured of his life.

exception of five men. These, with the captain, were put into a boat and rowed ashore, *The Duke* coasting easily along, a league from land. The landing was made on a lonely strip of coast, a good sixty miles south of Corunna.

Horton had brought sixteen men with him from *The Lion*. The full complement of *The Duke* was now forty-nine men, well armed, able seamen, outlaws now by their own deliberate act and resolved upon making their fortunes without delay.



"I am an honest man. I'll go ashore."

"Then go and be —— to you. Some day I'll toss you a shilling when you are selling ballads for a living."

"God grant they may tell of your hanging," flashed the skipper with a burst of temper that he instantly repented.

Avary only laughed.

"If they do, I pray you see my name is spelled right," he said. "'Tis spelled with two 'A's', not with an 'E.' On with your smallclothes now; I need the cabin."

Fifteen minutes later the crew of *The Duke*, assembling at the mainmast, declared themselves for open piracy with the

IT WAS not an easy company to control. Jack was as good as Jerry, and the rating of all was equal save for Horton, appointed quartermaster and general representative of the men, and Avary. The latter was respected on account of his skill for navigation and for his quicker wits, and was credited with the initiative of their enterprise.

Horton's ascendency was assumed and maintained by his known fighting qualities. His nose, none too large to begin with, had been mashed in—as if from the blow of a battering-ram—and heightened the bulldog likeness. His jaw was aggressive and massive, his teeth strong but irregular and his

little piggish eyes, bristled by whitish lashes, could blaze with intense ferocity upon occasion. This, backed by a brawny body, muscles of steel, flesh like solid rubber, made the ex-gunner a man of mark among his fellows.

As yet the questions of rank were undetermined. No mate had been appointed to take Avary's original position; the second mate had gone with the captain. While it was the general custom with those who went on the account for the quartermaster to take the helm on going into action, it was felt that Horton should retain his position as gunner-in-chief. This the gunner of *The Duke* naturally resented. Sides were taken, factions began to form, discipline grew slack.

"You've got to fetch 'em up with a round turn," grumbled Horton to Avary.

He had the right to enter the cabin at will, and at Avary's request had taken over the mate's room.

"You've got to drive 'em," he went on. "Look you, that kind of cattle need authority and a firm hand. You'll have to drive 'em sooner or later or they'll be driving you.

"Before, let a man go slow to the order or give you a black look, and you could trice him up in the riggin' and give him a round dozen with the cat and be —— to him. If he didn't like it give him a dozen more, shove him in irons and let him be hanged for mutiny when you got home. You could shoot a man for disobedience or even swing him at the yardarm, and nothing said. But you had the backing of the law. You had the courts and the Admiralty behind you.

"Now what? The rest would be mighty slow about seeing a comrade get the lash or being put in irons. The only backing you've got is the fact that you can shoot the sun and they can't. That's all. And they wouldn't think of that if they got worked up right.

"Don't you give 'em too much latitude, Avary. Don't give 'em too much rum, either. Drive 'em. Keep 'em stiffened up. More work and less time for talk, say I."

"You're saying too much yourself," said Avary sourly.

Horton leaned across the table, thrusting out his dog-face aggressively.

"Am I? You're a fool if you don't listen. Half the time the watch don't turn out on time or only in half force. You give them too much rope, and they're more like to use it to hang you than themselves. When Shipton answered you back just now you should have knocked him down with a handspike. What did you do? Walked away.

"I'm a plain talker, Avary, and —— me if I don't think you afraid of him! You had your pistol; you should have slugged him with the butt.

"The men are talking and wondering what sort of a skipper we'll have when it comes to leading boarders. Shipton's swaggering round boasting, he's a better man than you are. By night you'll be a joke aboard this ship.

"We're sailing with our necks in a halter, every man Jack of us, Avary, and I for one am not going to tighten up that halter by staying aboard a ship without a commander. That's flat and you can lay to it!"

Avary's face was pale and his eyes were deadly. He had taken the best of the captain's clothes and his own and was dressed in laced coat, smallclothes, a cocked hat and ruffles. One hand fumbled with the lace in his bosom, his fingers clutching a pistol-butt. But his grip was clammy with sweat.

While Horton talked Avary silently cursed himself for his own limitations, his hesitations. He had a vivid imagination, whereas Horton reacted only to his emotions. And Avary knew the quartermaster for the better man while he hated him. Half a dozen times he repressed the impulse to snatch out the weapon and kill Horton as he sat there with his ugly face and too familiar manners, calling his commander—to all intents and purposes—a coward.

But he knew what would be likely to follow—open mutiny—his own death. He knew his own inhibitions. Physically he shrank from any test of prowess. Challenge flared his imagination with a vision of himself worsted, maimed, gushing blood. Yet he could dream of himself as a dashing, valiant leader until an issue came which left him sweating, goose-fleshed, averse to any encounter.

He flattered himself that his will could lash his body into subjection. He was well-formed, his muscles were strong enough, his senses perfect; he was active, able to give a good account of himself. But when it came

to the pinch he felt the qualms of physical fear as irresistibly as the seasick traveler loses control of his stomach, however he may master his affairs on land, however he may vow beforehand to subdue his nausea.

Shipton had openly sneered at him when he had rebuked the man for slackness in his work. Horton was right; he should not have let the matter pass. Shipton was his inferior in almost every way. The chances were that he could have worsted him in fight he had not dared provoke. Hitherto, backed by the authority of his office as warranted officer under the crown, Avary had avoided such affairs. For a sailor to strike an officer was death. Ashore his wits had kept him out of brawls.

Now he was alone. Supremacy was likely to be settled by physical rating alone. For all his cleverness in scheming he saw plainly that the master of a pirate crew must top the men in deviltry, in daring, in all the attributes that they considered supreme or lose their respect and obedience, which meant ultimate loss of office. Reduced to one of the crew Avary would fare miserably.

He was very far from being a fool. He realized the truth and knew he must accept it.

He withdrew his hand from his ruffles and sat with elbow on table, chewing his nails to the quick in sulky mortification. The men had power to depose and elect a captain at will. They might choose Horton, forcing Avary to furnish them with his superior knowledge with a knife at his ribs. Such a situation if it suggested itself to them might appeal to their sense of humor.

He had let loose a lot of dogs who, lacking the leash and the lash, had reverted toward wolfdom.

"What to do?" he asked, forcing the question bitterly. "I can call a 'mast' and lecture them, ordering Shipton for punishment."

" 'Twill not do. The matter was personal 'tween you and Shipton. You dodged it.

"One thing you can do. Appoint me mate. Let the men choose another quartermaster. I'll find a man for second to me within a day or two. But appoint me mate. No need for an election to that office. And they'll jump to my orders or I'll skin the hairy hides off of them. There'll be one master aboard the ship.

"You've the brains, Avary, but you're not a fighting man. A spaniel can follow the scent, but it tucks tail when teeth are shown. What to do when it comes to boarders away or repel boarders I know not. You'll have to make some showing. But we'll let that dog sleep. Make me mate and there'll be no trouble with Shipton."

Avary covered his eyes with his hand to hide the relief he showed. In a way he still commanded the respect of Horton, and the latter was the only one who had weighed him truly. Horton would handle Shipton. It was a good way to settle matters, and their mutual understanding—obnoxious as it was to Avary's sense of dignity—had been necessary.

"You get an extra half-share as quartermaster," he demurred. "As mate you'll share alike with the men."

Horton showed his crooked teeth in a grin.

"I'll not lose," he answered. "You and I are going to stand back to back. You get two shares and I one. We'll split the three between us."

Avary checked the devil that leaped in him before it looked out of his eyes and stretched his hand across to Horton. It would be easy enough to make up his loss by holding out part of the loot secured. As captain all booty would be spread before him on maindeck or on beach and he would act as appraiser, portioning out the stuff into as many shares as there were dividers. Simple to palm some jewels and appropriate them for himself.

He smoothed all villainy from his face as their palms touched and fingers gripped.

"Done!" he cried. "Back to back, Horton. We'll make a rare partnership. Now we'll open a bottle of wine together."

Horton was nothing loath. Avary envied him his capacity. He himself found that liquor affected him swiftly, perhaps because of his haitual abstemiousness. It was a practise established deliberately to afford him advantage over those who drank on every occasion. He took two glasses of the Oporto wine, and Horton literally poured the rest down his hairy gullet, smacking his lips in approval.

THE announcement of Horton's promotion was made at the mast at noon, after the taking of the midday observation. It pleased the gunner of *The Duke,* and his example spread. The

crew retired to vote upon a new quartermaster, and presently the appointee came aft to where Avary sat with Horton at table.

Avary had had some fear that the choice might fall on Shipton; but they had picked the boatswain of *The Duke*, a good-natured fellow and capable mariner. He had the customary bottle with captain and mate in confirmation of his right to appear in the cabin, and retired forward.

Horton selected the second mate; Avary appointed him. For a while things went smoothly enough. There was license aboard in the shape of extra rum and meals for the forecastle that dipped into cabin stores; yet there was discipline. The men walked the braces and did not grumble about the short tacks that drove them fast down the African coast. The hope of all of them was Madagascar, to beat the doldrums and hold a wind until they rounded the Cape of Storms, as practical mariners styled the Cape of Good Hope.

Avary spun them yarns about the Magic Isle, about Maritan the pirate settlement, the native liquor *toke*, the friendly kings and the kind of loot they might expect. He abolished the formality of the poop and let them come aft in the evening watch to listen to him. So he held a shadowy ascendency over them for the time. It soothed his own vanity to see them hanging on his words, to know that he had power over them in a mass if as an individual he was less than most of them.

Almost hourly he practised with his pistols. There was one pair whose balance suited him exactly. He learned to a nicety the best charge for them, carefully cutting the wads, casting and weighing the balls, measuring the powder. With them he acquired a skill that was almost magical; and he took care that the crew should witness his targetry.

Only in Horton's eyes did he see anything but respect. Horton, he fancied, knew as he did that the moment of peril would find him hesitant, with a palsied diaphragm and twitching nerves. For all his cool accuracy where the target was inanimate, facing a man who would be leaping into action against him, he needed a bridge to cover that hideous gap where the nerves refused control and the trembling body mocked the will. That bridge had to be found.

Meanwhile the men saw only that he could send the bullet smack upon a shilling at ten paces, could drive a nail-head touched with white at six, could split lead on the blade of a knife and bring down a seabird on the wing.

SHIPTON, it seemed, had been nominated for quartermaster but was easily defeated. He took it surlily, drinking more than his share of rum. The fifth day after Horton's promotion Shipton, handling a line, left it uncoiled on deck—flung it to the planks deliberately. He may or may not have noticed Horton; he had pitched the rope under the eyes of Avary. But it was Horton's bellow that ordered him to coil the halyard and place it upon a pin.

For answer Shipton spat upon the white planking, fouling Avary's pumps and stockings, spattering also Horton who was coming with a leap. Avary paled. His hand shook as he gripped a pistol in his belt. Shipton had unsheathed a long-bladed knife from which the sun reflected in a white flame. Avary could see—could *feel*—the steel biting into him before he could steady to aim.

Horton sprang between him and Shipton and clubbed his left fist full into Shipton's face. It was a terrible blow, and it had the mate's flying weight back of it. Shipton's nose squashed, his lips burst and blood spurted as he went staggering back to the rail, clutching backward for it, using it as support and fulcrum to fling himself forward with his gory mouth cursing and spitting teeth, his face maniacal with fury, his keen knife driving for Horton's heart.

The heavy mate had danced to the pin-rail of the main, where the new-made pirates like so many children had racked pikes and cutlases far in advance of any chance of using them. He plucked a curving blade loose with a twist of his wrist that made it sing as the point described a small circle and then a bigger one, which was barely checked as the keen edge drove through flesh and tendons and the small bones of Shipton's wrist, making no more of them than if they had been wax.

Hand and knife went thudding, tinkling to the deck; the severed wrist spouted blood while for a second Shipton gazed at it horrified, astounded. Then the point of Horton's cutlas plunged into the pit of his

stomach and struck his backbone; and imbedding in the stout muscles, the tip thrust through, showing before the mutineer fell weltering to the deck in a growing puddle of blood.

Horton tugged at the weapon to free it, widening the wound, severing the writhing wretch's entrails. Shipton's shipmate, the man who had nominated him for quartermaster, came charging with a pike.

"You —— murderer!" he shrieked at Horton in a frenzy. "At him, lads. Gut him!"

There were others of Shipton's faction standing irresolute, disposed to take a hand, yet checked by the fall of Shipton. Half a minute had not passed; so swift was the drama that the bulk of the ship's company watched as if in a maze, or as at a play.

The pikeman lunged, charging blindly, sliding, twisting on a clot of blood. Horton's cutlas whirred up and down, and the pike rang on the planks with its owner's arms falling lax slashed to the bone, the bone itself nicked and red fountains jetting. Horton whirled about, breathing hard but freely as his lungs came into full play, his face lit with lust of battle.

"Who's next?"

They dissolved before him. Two he called back by name.

"Pitch the carrion over and mop deck," he ordered. "Take Sime there to the cockpit and see if surgeon can patch him up. If he mends he can wait table on the fo'csle. He'll not lift arm again."

What was left of Shipton went overboard, a warm and gory corpse. Horton himself picked up the severed hand and tossed it after. He turned to Avary, standing by the rail, his face pale green as he gazed fascinated at the hot, steaming pool of crimson, slowly thickening between scorching plank and hot sun.

"Get into your cabin—quick!" he snarled contemptuously.

Water rising in his gorge, and striving to restrain his qualms, Avary achieved his cabin and his own bunk. There Horton found him giddy and wretched with nausea.

"You've little stomach for a fight," he said. "Take a swig of brandy. Here."

Avary waved away the bottle with a limp hand.

"A —— of a pirate, you are!" said Horton as he withdrew.

Presently Avary, relieved from his spasms, essayed to take the mate's advice. The strong stuff stayed on his empty stomach to his amazement. The fumes permeated him, gave him a sense of hardihood. He drank again and again.

Half an hour later he walked out on deck with a gait that was straight enough though inclined to strut a little, with eyes that were set but could see. A man, hurrying forward with a pannikin, bumped into him awkwardly.

Out came a volley of oaths. The man turned, stung by an apt simile, anger flaming. The crew had been to the rum-barrel to wipe out the incident, and the sailor was in fractious mood. Avary whipped out a pistol, aimed it without a tremor, marked a spot between the man's eyes.

"You dog!" he said, and barely held a hiccup. "I'd as soon send your black soul to —— as look at you! Learn to keep clear, you lubber-legged swab. Frown at me, will you? By ——, I'll teach you who's master of this ship!"

The sailor scuttled off, warding with an arm as if to stay the threatened bullet, bearing news of the captain's tyranny. News that held admiration, and caused it.

Avary replaced the pistol with a smile and went to the rail. His head swam a little, his gaze misted; but he shook that off as he had the hiccup. He feared no one now, not even Horton. For he had found his bridge.

FROM then on Avary was never entirely sober, nor was he ever drunk beyond control. By experimentation he found his gage and kept his alcoholic mark as an engineer keeps water in the tube. He tippled steadily, a nip every half-hour through the day. Previous abstinence stood him in good stead. He retained his appetite and kept his stomach filled with food. The chemistry of his body responded curiously. The liquor stimulated action and etched the release of his will to hair-trigger adjustment.

Wine, he found, was a good servant to him; and he took care not to let it become his master. While its effects lasted he no longer feared any man. Sometimes in the early morning he would wake in a nervous reaction, but the handy bottle held panacea.

The liquor evoked a sort of devil within

him, swift to anger, resolute He learned that to manage his men he had but to watch them and at the first sign of insubordination let loose such a burst of fury that it would effectually smother any show of resentment they might make. And, for all the fire of his rages, he exhibited such a cold, callous spirit that the crew began to look upon him as something unhuman.

Once he turned on Horton when the latter disagreed with him and reached for his pistol, though knowing the mate for a man not to be lightly crossed. Horton's hand shot out more swiftly than his own, struck at his wrist as a snake would strike, gripped the bones crushingly, bruising the flesh, forcing Avary to his knees in sheer anguish while Horton bent his face down, his eyes boring deep into the captain's very soul.

"The next time I'll not seek to argue with you," said the mate. "I do this for my own good, not your benefit. If I could use a sextant I'd slit you like a herring. The next time I'll ram your pistol down your throat and pull trigger. The men may fear you and your fancy shooting—but put it out of your mind that I do. You're nothing but a walking bottle. Dutch courage! Let the wine leak out of you and you're only half a man.

"'Twill serve you for a while and then leave you in the lurch to make your hand shake worse than fear ever did. 'Tis but the matter of time and you'll be a pricked bladder."

That passage drained Avary of any feelings toward Horton, except those of hate and a desire to get even in some other manner than matching physical prowess. It left Horton scornful. But the partnership held. Avary was not man enough to do away with the mate, and the latter, figuring that the wine was a spur that Avary needed in the present undertaking—which was his own—caring not a rap where Avary might fetch up later when liquor dominated him—as Horton was sure it would—was satisfied with conditions that made the skipper show a better front to the crew and muster some sort of courage, if it was only pot-valor. Avary's brains for plot and stratagem, for compass-course and general navigation, he still respected.

They made their southing, the ship proving herself a sweet-lined, gracious, willing vessel. A friendly breeze helped them to drift through the dreaded doldrums, past the dreaded Bight of Benin and along the malarial coast where slaves rotted in the swamps awaiting sale and transportation.

They started to transform *The Duke*, taking off the carven stern-board, erasing the lettering on her bows. The carpenter made a rude job of changing her figurehead, chiseling off the curling wig and three-cornered hat that the original artist had given to the bust, painting the face black and touching up the rest of the carving in crude colors. For the present they did not rename her, lacking inspiration.

They sighted an occasional sail or two, but avoided a meeting without trouble. There were no prizes to be expected on the western coast, and they had no desire to be recognized for word to be relayed back as to their route. It was probable that one ship at least had started after them, but their speed precluded overhauling. Yet the king's arm was long, and pirates had been hauled back from Madagascar before this.

Horton, remembering his former capacities as gunner, kept the crew to battery practise. There were fourteen guns to a broadside; a Long Tom in bows and stern for fore and aft chasers. Long-range elevation, trajectory and windage he knew nothing of scientifically; his skill, as that of *The Duke's* gunner, was born of natural aptitude and experience.

A pirate's connonading aside from the chasers was generally short-range work. It would be sufficient if the guns were served properly and the pointers taught to see that muzzles were sufficiently depressed. The target would usually be close enough to see the register of hits. Horton and the gunner would attend to the chasers.

So the mate drilled the crew hard until powdermen, shot-handlers, swabbers and ropemen worked with rapid precision. Cutlas practise and pike-drill he taught them; and by the time they caught up with a demi-gale that swept them on the Cape and helped them round it the crew made up a fighting force the more dangerous because they were aware of their own efficiency and eager to test it.

FOR a week the ship logged two hundred sea-miles between dawn and dawn, crowding sail, handling the extra canvas Avary devised as well as they manned the guns. The work kept them from malingering. Twice a day the

whistles sounded for boarders away, and the crew divided into squads, arming themselves, rushing to quarters, ready to board an imaginary enemy.

The repelling of boarders was a maneuver seldom bothered with, save to assure themselves of the readiness of boarding nettings and the assignment of stations. Pirates were wasps; they attacked first or sheered off. It was fight, or run if the quarry proved too dangerous.

Up through the Mozambique Channel they went, edging in to the mountainous coast with the great forests clothing its flanks and the perfume of gaudy tree-flowers wafted far out to sea. Avary knew of the existence of pirate colonies and rendezvous on Madagascar itself or the adjacent islands. To be a pirate chief had long been his dream, and he had kept in touch with all the news that was spread in home ports of the successes of the noted sea-rovers. Now he fancied he was coming into his own kingdom.

They rounded the northern line of Madagascar and passed Cape Hopewell, named by the natives Ambro, reaching into a crescent bay close to Maritan, a pirate port of call where the native king was friendly. There were two sloops at anchor. Avary flew no colors; the skull and bones was reserved for a fighting flag. Discretion restrained bravado in displaying it too freely. *The Duke* had the lines of a merchantman rather than that of a frigate, though her gun-ports were more than the average vessel of commerce carried.

It seemed evident however that there were guilty minds aboard the sloops. No sooner had the larger vessel made the point and squared off toward the bay when both sloops slipped their cables and ran ashore on a soft beach, their hulls vomiting men who raced off into the thick woods.

"They are small fry of our own sort," declared Avary, watching them through his glass. "They fear we are a king's ship come after them for some venture. They are posting sentinels. There are recruits for us and the beginning of our fleet.

"Look you, Horton, we'll join forces with them. We'll send a boat with a truce flag. Take arms, but do not show them. Let two or three go empty-handed up the beach; the rest can cover them with muskets."

Horton nodded commendation of the strategy, and the boat was lowered. Avary himself, primed with a swig of brandy, appeared from below and took charge.

"I'll do the talking," he said.

As they rowed ashore with a white flag displayed in the stern they caught the glitter of arms from the men posted on the fringe of the jungle. Avary narrowly inspected the sloops, slightly careened on the mud.

"They'll come off easily enough at the flood," he announced.

The genial warmth of his liquor gave him confidence; he saw that his men were in accord with his judgment; there was small danger that could not be offset by the news he brought, and he handled himself as a proper leader, springing ashore with the white flag and waving it, advanced boldly toward the woods. Three men backed him, displaying their empty hands.

"What is your business? Whence come ye?" challenged the nearest outpost, his musket at the ready.

"From the seas!" cried Avary, using the passphrase of the Brethren of the Coast and all those who had gone on the account. "Our business is the collection of merchandise and the swift spending of the proceeds. Look you, we are unarmed. Come down and talk with us."

The man lowered his musket, but did not shift his ground.

"What ship is that?" he demanded.

"It has not yet been christened," replied Avary. "We borrowed it for our own occasions. If you would know the color of our flag, it is black. Since you think your sloops too small to oppose a ship of our metal, let us join forces and share profits. Are you blind or only timorous that you do not recognize gentlemen of fortune when you see them?"

A man pushed forward out of the woods, a swaggering figure dressed in a crimson coat with tarnished lace, his breeches thrust into bucket-topped boots, a hanger at his side, pistols in his belt. He tossed his weapons to the sand and came on boldly up to Avary.

"Curse me," he cried, "if I did not mistake you. Your men row too well for free brethren, and your studdingsails fooled me. Your ship is handled like a man-of-war, and she is pierced for a heavy battery."

"Men of war we are," answered Avary. "But we fight for no king. Was ever a

pirate worse off for discipline, comrade? We can work to mutual advantage. The more merry men get together the better. There is plunder enough in these seas for all of us.

"My name is Avary and I hail from Devonshire. It is my aim to reduce the taxes in these parts by a more equal division of goods. If it is in your mind to think as we do, let's talk together. Here on the beach, if you still mistrust us."

The other broke into a great laugh.

"If you fight as well as you talk," he said, "there should be rare pickings in your company."

He shouted encouragingly to his comrades in the woods and squatted down on the beach, after he had slapped his great paw into Avary's open palm in token of confidence. The men came slowly out of their concealment and formed a ring about the newcomers.

"Fulke is my name," said the bearded man. "We come from the East Indies, borrowing our sloops to go upon the account. Borrow is a good word, Captain Avary, though we were less fortunate in our opportunity than you. They are fast sailers, but we have but four cannon apiece. Set us by the board and we will show you how we can fight. The East India Company, to whom the sloops belong, is a miserly body and we thought you sent after us.

"With you for flagship and we scouting, we can hunt up rare prizes. This is the season for travel to Mecca from India. In the Arabian Sea we can take tribute from the Mogul's ships and load ourselves to the rail with treasure. I know those waters. To hang off the mouth of the Indus offers the best chance.

"But 'tis dry work for me, talking. We are out of good liquor, for we came away in somewhat of a hurry. This native *toke* is villainous stuff. Sink me, Avary, but I like your style. I'll go aboard with you."

IT DID not take long to cement the partnership. Fulke's men were a hard-bitten set of rogues, and a carousal made all sworn comrades. The sloops were easily hauled off at the full; fresh water, meat and fruits were traded for with the complaisant king, whose main village was near by. The three craft made sail northward under a full moon the same evening, bowling along in company for the Arabian coast.

The sloops proved but indifferent sailors compared to *The Duke*, save in light airs. After dark Avary sailed accordingly in order not to be separated.

They made slanting course over the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea heading across the equator up to the angle where India merges into Baluchistan—a two-thousand-mile voyage that took them far from land across desolate, sail-less leagues, upheld by thoughts of the rich loot promised by Fulke and by Neill, captain of the second sloop.

Provisions ran low before they sighted land. Twice the sloops had to come to the ship to replenish stores. The wine and spirits were exhausted, save for a few bottles Avary had stowed away for his private consumption; the water-casks held a rapidly diminishing and evil-smelling fluid that was rationed out at the last as a miser spends gold.

They passed the Indus mouth, plain enough to tell by the brown water spreading fanlike far to sea, and made a landing close to Karachi. They careened *The Duke* and scrubbed the sea-growth from its hull; they scraped the sloops, refilled the water-casks, traded with natives for coconuts and goat-flesh, also for arrack. Fulke urged speed, before the Mecca season should be over.

Tales were brought them by the natives of rich vessels that had set out with pilgrims. News was confirmed by several sources that the Great Mogul himself, Ruler of All India, was outfitting a great ship in which no less a personage than one of his daughters was to embark, escorted by many principal people of the Mogul's court, bearing with them rich offerings to present at the shrine of Mohammed.

This item fired all minds as a match explodes gunpowder.

"Said I not so!" cried Fulke. "How will they travel? With all manner of equipment, with slaves and attendants, with vessels of gold and silver, with great sums of money to pay their expenses, not to speak of the gifts—gold dust and gold bars, bars of silver, elephants' teeth, pearls, rubies, emeralds as big as your fist, shawls from Kashmir worth their weight in gold, perfumes and essences, an emperor's ransom!"

The assembled pirates cheered lustily, half-drunk with arrack. Each in imagination saw himself handling vast treasure,

invested in brocades, decked with jewels and loaded down with gold.

To Avary another vision came. A Mogul's daughter! A dark-eyed maharanee, brown of skin but slender and well shaped of limb, voluptuous, regal. He saw himself riding in a lacquered and gilded howdah by her side upon a great elephant, while his retinue marched all about or rode on caparisoned steeds, the men turbaned, armored, bearing quaint but effective weapons—matchlocks and yataghans—salaaming him as potentate of some rich province. Son-in-law to the Great Mogul! There was a stake that appealed to him.

The consent of the woman he barely reckoned with. By force of arms or by stress of sudden passion, it was all one. She would be in his power for ransom—and that ransom should be recognition of himself as her husband and high honors heaped upon him by the Mogul.

There was much of *Malvolio* in Avary. His vanity kept stride with his imagination.

But he said nothing of this plan. Instead, he examined the natives, paid for news, sent out spies in various directions and compared notes until assured that the tale was true, even finding out the approximate date of sailing. Then they set to sea again, cruising off Indus mouth twenty leagues from land—a reward of an extra quarter-share hung up for the man who first sighted their quarry—ranging off and on like hounds quartering a heath for scent.

IT WAS Fulke's sloop that flew the welcome signal and, coming up, announced the glimpse of a great ship seen dimly in the mists of dawn, a mass of canvas, a ship with a towering poop, a tall and stately vessel that looked at first to be an East Indiaman but, the fog lifting with the sun, resolved into a big dhow with all three masts lateen-rigged.

The breeze was strengthening; and the three took position, a sloop to windward, another to leeward of *The Duke*, bearing down to where the canvas of Fulke's discovery showed like a low-lying cloud. They sailed on transverse course, the dhow coming on rapidly, showing her three-decked stern, the raking masts and great sails, the overhung prow and the open waists crowded with pilgrims. She was fairly bristling with guns. Avary estimated a hundred or more.

"She'll carry a thousand or more aboard," he said to Horton, focusing his glass as they gained on the chase that held its steady course, either lacking suspicion or unafraid.

"What of it? Pilgrims and Moor mariners! A poor lot for fighting."

"Odds of ten to one."

"Ten sheep to every wolf of us! Best get below and get a bottle inside of you."

Horton swung away, tone and manner utterly scornful. It stung Avary, but he did not leave the deck to seek his usual buttress. In this difference of odds he saw a gap that he could not imagine bridged. Pilgrims could fight upon occasion, fight fanatically. The Mogul's subjects were Mongols, wild men of Tartary, adepts with the knife. To board the dhow would mean that, even if their full hundred achieved simultaneous footing, each man would have a mob to fight, a mob used to short-range work with blades.

His eyes dulled as the mate's began to blaze. The flattened nostrils of the mate's bashed-in nose distended, quivered with the lust of fighting and the hope of booty. Avary saw his men standing about, watching the chase, eager, every man ready, girt with weapons, standing by their guns. But that to him did not make the risk less disproportionate. His dream of the Mogul's daughter, of himself as potentate, lost all form, all desirability.

Horton bellowed an order. The ship rang with loud huzzas that were echoed back from the concavities of the sails. The black flag was being bent on a whip. It rose swift to the masthead in a confused mass, then flapped out on the wind, the skull and bones rippling to the flutter of the bunting. On both sloops the sable colors broke out. From the dhow's maintopmast a heavy pennon caught the breeze and streamed in defiance—a flag of green bearing a crescent moon in silver, the flag of the Mogul.

There were three rows of ports pierced in the dhow's high poop; a ring of guns belted her. Puffs of smoke blew out from her side with stabs of flame back of them. Over the sea came the boom of guns with round shot skipping toward Avary's vessel, falling far short. The fight was on; the followers of Mohammed meant to protect themselves, and had shown their teeth.

The gun-crews of *The Duke* crowded about their batteries; the gunner and his helpers were at the fore-chase. Bursts of cheering and wild yells showed the temper

of the men. Other shouts came down the wind from Fulke's sloop, faintly. The sun had sucked up all the mist; the dark blue sea ran briskly with hissing crests. The horizon was clear; the four ships had the stage set and cleared for their encounter—a fair scene for drama.

To left and right the sloops raced, converging toward the apex of a V, where the dhow smashed through the water with a great show of speed, low in the water, packed with cargo and living freight beyond her proper sailing capacity. Avary's ship came on between the sloops.

There was no backing out now. He could not check his men. Horton had given orders that he must follow up to retain his position.

His crafty mind cast the chances. To let the sloops board, bear the brunt of the encounter, be most certainly beaten back, if they were not blown out of the water by the guns of the dhow? Their disaster would check the zeal of his own men; meantime he'd work ship to bring alternate batteries to bear, luffing and wearing, falling well back with each discharge yet apparently eager to fight.

If by good chance they dismasted the dhow he would get all credit for strategy. At that, he could sail about her and pour in his broadsides until she was ready to surrender. Not to the point of sinking her—it was the treasure they wanted, not the hollow victory. He might get the woman after all—long-range fighting, maneuvering with the better sea qualities of *The Duke* and his own seamanship helping to offset the number of guns. That was the plan.

The fore-chaser went off with a roar, enveloping the bows in woolly smoke that blew to leeward swiftly enough for Avary, on the poop, to observe the shot. The projectile plumped fairly across the bows of the dhow. The pirates cheered.

Avary saw the intention; the shot was a bid for surrender. The answer came in quick retort, belching smoke and fire from every gun aport on the dhow. Out of the vapor the tops of her masts showed with the green pennant flaunting defiance. The range was too great; but the geysering water midway showed how menacing such a discharge might be if properly placed—once.

"All hands walk the braces! Down the helm! Starboard batteries ready."

Avary roared his order through his speaking-trumpet. Horton had actually taken the initiative, but the men did not know that. Avary was still in command.

The Duke came into the wind, began to pay off as the crew held her headsails aback. The fourteen cannon of her starboard battery crashed and the ship shivered to the recoil. The drift of burning gases swept the deck and the men sniffed it in like an elixir. There was no mistaking their temper. Imagination did not bother them—nor the very apparent odds. They responded to one primitive emotion—the instinct to fight. Like those of the dhow, the missiles fell far short. The broadside guns lacked the range of the bow chaser.

Back came an answering broadside, useless, save for intimidation and defiance, as the roar of a lion facing the tribesmen.

The sloops went racing on like wolves after a stag while *The Duke* gathered way on her new tack. No sooner was she fairly going than Avary wore ship and let fly with the port guns.

The men never questioned his tactics. The firing temporarily relieved their tension; the belching of the flame, the thunder of the discharge, the stagger of the deck under their feet, all matched their mood. They did not notice that they made scant headway in such maneuvering. Avary repeated it while the sloops closed in fast on the dhow, leaving their powerful consort lagging. Then Horton came bounding to the poop, brushing away all ceremony.

"What fool trick is this?" he demanded of Avary. "They hold their fire. We waste ours."

"We are closing in," said Avary. "We'll be in range before long."

"Before long! What then? Lead's a dull knife for a trick like this. Steel, and that quickly, is what we need. A rush from all sides, as we agreed. She'd riddle us at this sort of play.

"What kind of a scurvy knave are you, Avary? D'you want to sacrifice the sloops? If they are beaten off with loss they'll blame you. If they make good—and those pilgrims will break once they are boarded—they'll claim the glory. Aye, and take the best of the loot before we get a look at it. Fulke and Neill will see through you, as I do, and —— you for a lousy coward!

"Head up and join 'em. They're closing now."

FULKE'S sloop had come about and was running down for the bows of the dhow. Neill was lunging on a close-hauled tack for her quarter. The dhow was in line between them, unable to bring her guns to bear, save one carronade of small weight on poop and bows, popping spitefully. A white splinter showed on the bow of Neill's sloop.

Shouts came from Avary's crew, yelling encouragement and envy of their more daring allies. They turned expectantly toward the poop. At sight of their fellows racing on to close quarters they itched to be at it themselves.

Avary quailed before the glare of Horton flaying his yellow soul.

"Take her over and be —— to you!" he said, and went swiftly down the poop ladder to his cabin. He knocked the neck off a brandy-bottle and swigged at it, cutting his mouth with the sharp edges without noticing, gulping down the strong stuff.

"A lousy coward! Called that on his own poop! He'd show them!"

His heart reacted to the stimulus of the alcohol, pumping the blood through his veins, flooding the vessels of his brain.

"A coward, eh?"

He set down the bottle and looked at his pistols. He poured out a silver tankard full of the brandy, almost a pint of it, and drained it. By some strange chemistry his own self was transmuted into another, primed with reckless deviltry. Sparkle came into his eyes, energy to his limbs.

The day was hot; it was sweltering in the cabin; the brandy brought his body to fever heat. Avary stripped off his laced coat and his brocaded vest, rolling up the lace ruffles of his fine linen shirt and adjusting the shoulder-sling in which he carried his spare pistols. Two brace more were in his belt, buckled over a crimson sash. He drew sword and tossed aside the scabbard, leaping out of the cabin with a shout.

The men had stripped to short drawers, belts and sashes, with gaudy cloths bound about their heads. Legs were bare; so were their bronzed, hairy bodies and brawny arms. Horton had brought the ship to a course along which she raced toward the dhow like a sprinter kept behind at scratch and off at last.

The batteries had been inhauled and the gun-tackles secured. Each man was a walking arsenal. They stood in four groups, ready for the word to send them over rail in simultaneous attack. Grappling-irons were ready to cast. Hand-grenades were piled in woven baskets. The men had chosen their weapons according to their fancy; pike or cutlas or broad-ax. To the new Avary they seemed an efficient lot of devils, and he strode forward like a master demon with his face bloodied from the bottle neck and lit up with his newly inspired ferocity.

"Pikes and pistols, bullies! There lies our fortune. Up into the tops, some of you, with the grenades. We'll give 'em a taste of —— before we board. We'll make short work of the infidels!"

He sprang to the rail and shook his fist at the dhow while his men cheered him. For all his pistolwork they had held some doubt of his mettle. They had none now. Two scuttlebutts of native rum had been broached, into which they dipped their pannikins at will. They could not distinguish between his mood and their own.

Only Horton grinned sardonically from the poop. He had little fear of the issue. By Fulke's and Neill's accounts the pilgrims would prove sorry fighters. He fancied the first estimate of a thousand far short of the actual number packed close in the waist, watching the oncoming ships.

Now the shot from the dhow were plumping all about *The Duke*, tearing through the canvas, severing a shroud or two, whistling by, all aimed above her hull, the guns fired irregularly. There were signs of panic aboard her.

Avary jumped down from the rail, brandished his blade, hurried back to the poop to take full command again while giving directions to the helmsman. Fulke's sloop had sheered alongside, her bowsprit entangled with that of the dhow, grapples making fast, the men clambering aboard by fore and bobstay. Neill's craft slid up to the starboard quarter as *The Duke* came sweeping down and up into the wind, her bows battering at the sides of the dhow under the muzzles of the belching guns, her yards locking with those of the Mogul's ship—like the horns of fighting stags.

Greek fire, stinking, blinding, was tossed from the dhow. A shower of grenades answered, spreading confusion among the pilgrims. Fulke's bullies hacked their way from the bows, Neill's men slashed a bloody lane through the defenders of the poop as Avary, side by side with Horton, to the

hoarse shout of "Boarders away!" poured over the rail at the head of their crew, firing their pistols, swinging axes and cutlases, thrusting madly with their pikes.

Avary, keyed to a pitch that linked bravado with cold dexterity, fired four pistols with deadly aim and ran through a turbaned Moor who rushed him with raised simitar. He saw Horton smite a man with his cutlas so that the heavy steel clove through the skull to the eyes, wedging in the bone while Horton tugged at it fiercely, cursing.

A giant negro rushed at the mate with a long knife, and Horton kicked him in his groin. The black collapsed in agony, and Horton, wrenching free his cutlas, pinned him to the deck with a thrust through his heart and passed on roaring down the alley opened up by Avary.

It was a massacre—not a fight. A slaughter—as Horton had foretold—of a flock of sheep, falling back from those ravening wolves of pirates, jammed together, frightened, not a quarter of them armed, crying for mercy, praying to Allah, their supplications mocked by the imprecations of the triumphant pirates who butchered them at will. The Moorish mariners had been divided to defend the attack of the sloops and were pistoled or cut down to a man.

Only on the poop was the issue ever doubtful. There, forced down the ladders by the weight of onslaught, joining others who were ranged in front of the entrance to the main cabin, a group of men fought with desperate, effective valor.

Their mien as well as their clothes and weapons and the manner in which they handled the latter proclaimed them to be of high rank. They wore spiked helmets of light steel that had neckpieces. They wore mail and carried circular shields. Their swords were curved and each sword had drunk the lifeblood of at least one opponent.

Chief among them was an old warrior with the eyes of an eagle and a ropelike gray mustache in strong contrast with his brown skin. As he fought, covering himself with his shield, his tulwar flashing out like the strokes of a fighting panther, he shouted a warcry in his own language.

Horton made for him with bludgeon strokes that failed to beat down the guard of the ancient, whose blade licked out and brought the blood from the mate's shoulder. Horton, roaring like a bull, snatched a round shield from one of the knightly group who had just fallen, hamstrung by a pirate whom he had run through. Holding the shield—which had a sharp horn at the boss—the mate hurled himself clear of the deck and crashed full tilt and full weight upon the other, who gave ground to the onslaught, staggering back, tripping over a prone body, crashing against the wall of the cabin.

The way was clear to the door that they had guarded. Avary, rushing through to the cabin, saw Horton hold steel to the old fighter's throat and bid him surrender.

IT WAS time for quarter to be begged and granted. The dhow was a pandemonium of blasphemy, of groans, threats and prayers. The pilgrims were leaping overboard to escape the victorious pirates.

Avary's one thought was the Mogul's daughter whom this honorable and devoted guard of Rajputs had sought to save. The fight was practically over, the dhow captured. He left the handling of surrender to the mate. To slaughter more than a thousand helpless pilgrims would pall the desire of the most bloodthirsty and hold up the chief purpose of their attack—loot.

The essence of all that booty, Avary believed, lay in the person and in the personal ornaments of the Mogul's daughter—though he thought only of the woman for the time, inflamed with the afterlust of fight and brandy. The cabin was floored with magnificent rugs and hung with Oriental draperies, set about with silken divans and cushions. It was empty, save for two negro guards—giant eunuchs—who stood with drawn simitars in front of an inner door.

Their eyes rolled in the dusk as Avary came leaping in, a terrible figure enough, besmeared with blood, bringing the confidence of triumph with him through the opened door that let in the full flood of the raving, ramping noise of battle. It was dying down. Battle-cries were changing to shouts of glee as the pirates began to pillage individuals and spread through the dhow in search of booty. Horton had given quarter, and the looting had commenced.

The eunuchs were picked men and Avary was alone. Their wide blades swung up as they shifted position to let him come between them. Avary had two pistols yet unfired, retained for an emergency like this.

The eunuch to the right fell with a ball between his eyes. The second Avary shot through the top of his head as the man stooped and smote sidewise, scything at Avary's knees, the pirate leaping nimbly to avoid the stroke.

Curtains of heavy silk partly veiled the door to the inside cabin. He swept these aside, broke the bolt with a kick and strode in.

There were several women crouching and kneeling about a central figure, but Avary saw only the one who stood dominant, regal, from whom emanated such a force that Avary felt his own mean spirit shriveling before the inherent majesty of the ranee who outfaced him. A veil of silver tissue covered the lower part of her face; a band of it was drawn across her crescent brows. She was supremely beautiful.

The eyes held Avary; they seemed to grow luminous, absorbing all space. In them was somewhat of horror but nothing of fear. They were deep wells of disdain and of purpose, regarding him as something to be despised, the meanest of all living things that held power to kill or to force death.

That was all he might ever do to a woman like this—daughter of the Great Mogul—reigning princess in her own right. Once he had captured a wild bird in his youth and watched it die on its perch, its eyes fearless, implacable, untamed to the end.

There was no common speech between them; neither knew the other's language. But emotion was bared, and Avary knew himself for an ugly, mean thing in her eyes while he saw her——

He drew a bloody hand across his eyes to wipe off the sense of compulsion her eyes gave him. He saw then that she grasped a jeweled knife, the point resting between her breasts. She made no gesture, but he knew that a step forward from him meant death for her rather than the smirch of his touch. No matter how he had found and captured her, she would have thought only of self destruction once he had held her.

A dull rage fought with his will's surrender to her inherent superiority. He strove to lash himself to forceful, arrogant action as became a conqueror, to meet her scorn with brutality. But his forces were at the ebb; the excitement of wine and fight were dying down. He had a most emphatic, bewildering sensation of actually dwindling in size under the serene scorn of the ranee's steady gaze. Thus taken aback he stood irresolute when Horton rushed in and caught him by the arm.

"Come away, man! Leave the women alone. The fat's i' the fire. There's a dhow been hove-to watching the whole thing. She's gone now on the wind. I but caught glimpse of her sail-tips. We'd never overhaul her. She'll have the Mogul's fleet—aye, and the East India fleet, too, scouring the seas after us. Injure any of those women—yon's the Mogul's daughter, I take it—and the hue and cry'll reach home to England. We trade in India by the Mogul's good will.

"Come on. Fulke and Neill are gathering the best of the loot. There's enough to set us up for the rest of our lives. But we want to clean up and get clear."

He tugged at Avary's arm, and the latter shook him off. The spell of the ranee was dissolving.

"I'll take her aboard," he muttered. "—— her for a jade; I'll take that look out of her eyes! I'll——"

"You'll do naught of the sort. A woman aboard? To bring us all the bad luck of the seas. The crew would never stand for 't. Think you Neill and Fulke would let you keep her? D'ye think to make peace with the Mogul because you ravish his daughter? Come out, you fool!"

Through the door came some of the crew, their booty tucked in the fold of one arm, seeking more. Horton drove them back.

"Out—out! The women are to be left alone."

He forced Avary along with him. The captain looked over his shoulder once at the ranee standing like a statue, save for her glowing eyes, the knife still threatening her bosom. He shook his shoulders, shrugging away a situation he could not control.

"Who first saw this dhow?" he asked Horton as the mate pointed out two tiny flecks that faded away into the horizon haze.

"The quartermaster soon after we boarded. Then forgot about it. She was standing up then. They've seen the whole affair. 'Tis for us to gut this fat fish we have caught and clear south."

Avary nodded. Horton spoke sooth. The Mogul would be likely to appeal to the East India Company, threaten to repeal its charter and privileges if such an outrage were not redressed. To spoil the ship was

enough; to offer violence to the Emperor's daughter would make things too hot for them altogether.

Pursuit was inevitable. They had captured a great prize. At one stroke they had done as much as many men of their calling had achieved in all their career. Avary saw himself going home a rich man—to America perhaps—settling where he was unknown.

Horton was right. —— fly away with the woman; it was time to be sure of his own shares. There had been an agreement that it was every crew for itself, to be divided later according to the rule of each ship, in shares apportioned by the captains, approved by the quartermasters, diced for by the men. The bullies from the sloops were wasting no time gathering their harvest.

Some one touched Avary on the elbow. He turned to see one of the women of the ranee's train, her face veiled, offering him a casket of ebony inlaid with pearl, the lid of which she held open. Inside was a dazzling iridescence of jewels. Avary took it and the woman fled. Horton had gone off on his own collecting.

Avary poured the gems into his palm and stowed them in his breeches pockets, tossing the casket aside. He motioned to the surrendered rajas to take guard across the cabin door. For whatever reason the gems had reached him, he took them as a salve to his pride. In his heart he knew himself glad not to have forced an issue with the ranee.

TO SUCH crude appraisers the wealth of the Mogul's ship was incalculable. Diamonds, rubies and other gems, bar-gold and silver, besides those metals wondrously wrought in the offerings for the shrine of Mohammed. Ivory, rich silks woven, raw silks, carpets, valuable spices—most of which they left or threw wantonly overboard—it made a goodly showing. Roughly it might bring five thousand pounds sterling a share.

The loot was brought to the foot of the mainmast of each vessel and there stowed in chests under the eyes of the crews' representatives. Flight was the main thing before an irresistible force should assemble against them.

They left the dhow winging back toward India, bereft of all its precious merchandise, bearing some killed and many wounded in its defense. The pirates would soon be identified with the crews that had landed at Karachi and made inquiries. The hue and cry would be up. There was no sense in staying to await trouble.

When the dhow was hull down Fulke and Neill came aboard *The Duke* for a captains' carouse of celebration. Before the limits of sobriety were reached Avary set forth the plan his cheating, greedy brain devised.

Every man was supposed, without fail and on grievous penalty, to bestow in the mutual treasure-heap all his gleanings. Without doubt there were many who held out small trinkets. Avary had disclosed nothing of the gems from the casket. But he could not keep the thought out of his mind that if the present shares were worth five thousand pounds they would have been three times that amount if the sloops had not been with them.

In his specious way he flattered the sloops' commanders and complimented them on their bearing, their bravery, their resource and their worth as companions so that they vowed him—their wits diluted by wine—the prince of good fellows. They even complimented him on the tactics he had shown in the fight, swearing them worthy of the great Morgan—since they had turned out so well. Worse for themselves, they believed what they said. His was the "master mind." Avary, using his own liquor wisely, baited them along.

"Now, look you," he said at last, judging the moment ripe. "There is instant necessity for securing all this property that we have acquired in some safe place—ashore—where it can not be sunk nor easily overhauled and where it may be more easily guarded. And the greatest difficulty lies in getting it ashore; for if either of your sloops should be attacked alone you could make but slight resistance, you must either be sunk or taken with all your booty aboard.

"For my part, I think my ship so strong, so well manned and so swift sailing that I do not deem it possible for any other to take or overcome us. Let us seal up this treasure of ours, you keeping your keys, placing it all upon my ship. Then if we are forced by stress or storm to quit company we will appoint a rendezvous.

"Let us make it the bay where I found you on the beach. The king is friendly—we will make him more so. There we will build us a fort and leave always a guard

chosen from all of us, making the place our headquarters until such time as we may wish to leave these seas, after the cry dies down that this exploit will surely rouse."

Horton, half-seas over, gazed first at Avary, then at Neill and Fulke with his mouth open. He closed it as he sucked down a goblet full of wine, blinking his eyes at his commander.

" 'Tis a rare plan," he said. "We have the heels of anything in these seas. If your sloops are overhauled you can claim to be peaceful traders; and, finding no booty aboard, they must clear you. Nor can you sail fast enough to avoid chance of being caught up before we reach Madagascar. 'Tis a long stretch, and we may all be held in the equator drift long enough for the pursuit to sight us."

"But we'll all keep company and close consort for as long as we may," capped Avary. "If we run, we'll draw them away from you and they'll never catch us, you can lay to that. So we'll meet and give them the laugh at last."

"That's what comes of having a skipper with brains," put in Horton. "One who looks ahead. Curse me, I'd never have thought of that."

Avary looked at the mate and the latter winked at him slyly. Fulke and Neill approved the scheme, and the chests from the sloops were set aboard the next day.

Avary called a general mast at noon. The sloops were only showing their topsails above the horizon, far to leeward. *The Duke*, bowling along in the fine breeze, was under shortened sail, not to drop them entirely.

"Bullies all," said Avary, "we've made a rare haul. There's enough treasure aboard us now to make us all happy. If 'twas all ours now, what should hinder us from going to some country where we are not known and living ashore the rest of our days in plenty? But we have done well for a first strike. Doubtless we shall never achieve such another. We must be content if we are let cruise this side of Africa.

"There's booty worth close to fifteen thousand golden pounds apiece in those three chests. That is, if it were all ours. Should anything happen to the sloops, should we part company and not rejoin, why 'twould be all our gain and their loss. But they should have thought of that before they brought the stuff aboard.

"For my part, I confess to temptation. The more I think on 't—how much better is fifteen thousand pounds than five, of what a great fortune that would be in America—the weaker grows my resolution."

They had caught the irony of his talk and they were laughing. Avary said little more, but left his leaven to work itself out and went aft while the crew broached a cask of liquor they had taken from the dhow and toasted the distant topsails of the consorts with jeers.

WITH nightfall the breeze strengthened, and Avary ordered the reefs shaken out. Daybreak showed only empty horizon. The mask was openly tossed away, and *The Duke* rang with laughter as the men discussed the new names they would adopt in America where they would live in affluence and honor all the rest of their days.

Their admiration for Avary increased as he disclosed his ideas for their safe dispersal. He suggested Nassau or New Providence in the Bahamas, being newly settled, as their best port of call.

"It is none so long since we left Corunna," he argued. "It may be just time enough for a description of *The Duke* to have reached the New World. So let us sell this ship at New Providence to the merchants there. I will pretend she was equipped for privateering, and since she has not been a lucky ship the owners have empowered me to dispose of her to the best advantage. Then we can buy a sloop and so to America—to Charlestown, belike, or to Boston as you will. So we will wipe out all traces and laugh at the world while we take our ease."

The sailors preferred the golden bars and coins to the gems, complaining that they were like to be bilked of the true value of the latter. Avary purchased a lot of them with his own share and a half of gold, flattering himself he could dispose of them more easily and to better advantage than his men.

They sailed their way across to the Caribbean, gambling and drinking, some half stripped of their shares by the time Hispaniola was sighted. At New Providence *The Duke*, renamed *The Good Adventure* for the sale, was disposed of and the sloop secured.

It was late in August when Avary stepped on the dock at Boston with a dozen of his

men, all that remained of the original crew —the rest had scattered adown the coast at their fancy—and made his way to a waterfront tavern. By his advice the party was dressed quietly, with no display of wealth. Avary appeared the ordinary skipper and Horton his commonplace mate. They bore no arms; they comported themselves in seemly fashion. Skipper and mate went to the private room reserved for such as them; the crew thronged into the taproom.

Avary ordered sack, but Horton insisted upon ale.

"I've swilled wine and spirits till I'm sick of the taste of 'em," he declared. "Many's the time I'd have given all we had aboard for a short keg of ale, skipper."

Avary merely nodded. He had lit a long clay pipe and was puffing at it, his eyes fixed on the wall back of Horton.

He stared so fixedly that Horton screwed his head around to see the attraction, which was a great placard tacked to the partition. Horton's bulldog face paled, then flushed again. He lowered his voice as he spoke hoarsely across the table.

"I know a king's proclamation when I see one," he said, "though I am no hand for reading. What is it, Avary?"

" 'Tis a pardon. 'The King's Pardon, to be given to all pirates assembling upon the island of New Providence within the time specified, when the said pardon shall be brought from England by Mr. Woods Rogers, Governor and Vice-Admiral of the Bahama Islands, providing that the said pirates and malefactors do assemble peaceably and prepare to give inventories of their ships and several ladings.

" 'That all ships and cargoes so assembled, or now assembled within the harbor of Nassau, are to be secured for the use of the king and company, till such time as a court of admiralty shall be called, that they may be lawfully cleared or condemned by the provings of the said court which vessels belong to pirates and which to fair traders.

" 'To such pirates as do obey this covenant and engage to become loyal subjects of his sovereign Majesty William the Third, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc., full amnesty and pardon shall be given—save and excepting:

" 'The notorious rogues Captain Thomas Tew, Captain Robert—or William—Kidd and Captain Avary, whom all officers, mariners and others under the king's command or that of the colonial appointments are authorized to apprehend, seize and take into custody to the end that they be proceeded against according to the law in such cases.'

"There's a lot more to it," said Avary, "but 'tis tiresome reading and you've the gist of it. It would seem our fame has crossed ocean at last. Zounds, man, what ails you? You are not even mentioned. You can go to Providence and become a lick-spittle, an you will.

"I fear me the merchant that bought *The Duke* will repent his bargain. They'll likely suspect him of being our accomplice. Serves him well for being stingy with his price."

Horton, his hand still shaking a trifle, looked at Avary with something akin to genuine admiration.

"You take it coolly enough," he said. "You with your neck as good as in a halter."

"It won't be long. Who knows me for Avary, for aught but an honest trader? My name is Pruden and yours Rogers. Warned is saved to the man with wits. Hist, here comes the liquor."

It was the landlord himself who served the sack and ale, a garrulous type of Boniface.

"I see they're granting amnesty to the pirates," said Avary. "Had I my way they should be hanged, all of them."

"Aye, the rogues. They deal easier with them than with honest men. They are too strong. I hear there are three hundred already at Providence and more arriving by scores. So the news was brought from Virginia last night. They will give privateer commissions to some of them. A lot of rascally villains and cutthroats, say I. Hornigold, Davis, Carter, Burgess, Vane, to say nothing of Tew and Kidd and Avary."

"Who is this Avary?"

"A great rogue. Oh, a mighty villain! He lives like a king, they say, off Madagascar. 'Twas he who stole the ship out of Corunna and captured a vessel of the Great Mogul. He married the Mogul's daughter. He eats and drinks from gold dishes. He grants commissions to his captains to plunder and rob at will.

" 'Tis said he is so powerful that King William may treat with him and let him

ransom himself to pardon, for all the Mogul threatened to despoil the East India Company. 'Tis said also a fleet has been despatched against him.

"Other wives he hath—and all his men—with slaves to fan him and hand him pipe and bowl. A rare rogue, and richer than Midas. He'll not come to Providence, I'll warrant you. Life is too fat for him in Madagascar. They have writ ballads about him and published a chap-book, here in Boston. My tapster hath one."

"I must get one of them. What is he like, this rogue?"

"A fathom and a half in height, with arms that swing low and hands that can scratch the back of his knees without stooping. His hair is black but his beard red. One eye is hazel and the other blue. He eats glass and fire, they say; and with his own hand he despatched fifty of the Mogul's warriors."

"That is worth more sack, landlord, and another stoup of ale. I must surely get me that chap-book."

Avary's face glowed when the man went out. Here was danger that needed sharp wits rather than a keen blade. His vanity was tickled.

"It would seem I am famous, Rogers," he said, puffing at his pipe. "We have not lived in vain."

But Horton — as Rogers — lacked the other's poise. At sea the gunner-mate was at liberty, a freeman, ready to fight for his range. On shore, with the engines of the law conniving, he felt beset by enemies he could not encounter, by mysterious processes, whispering informers. He set down his empty tankard and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"This is no place for us," he said. "Some of those fools may blab or boast in their cups."

"There is some sense in what you say."

Avary started thinking that a display of gems in Boston at such a time might make it hard to explain how he came by them. He did not much believe in his ability to buy a pardon, nor was he anxious to strip himself of what he had worked so hard to gain.

"We'll put off tomorrow," he said. "We need but little provisioning. Go in and stay with the men. Pass the word to them to come aboard by midnight. They'll be willing enough after you slip them news of that poster."

The mate took his second tankard and went out. Avary smoked on and sipped his sack.

His brain told him he was not in much danger of apprehension so long as he made no attempt to sell his jewels. That vexed him. He had reckoned on staying in America. But his fame offset that for the time.

Ballads and a chap-book! He sucked up his glory as a cloth absorbs water. Proscribed when such villains as Hornigold and Vane were to be pardoned. The pity of it was that he could not swagger as they could. He must lay low a while. He suffered a twinge of depreciation when he thought of the ranee he was said to have married. A daughter of the devil!

He made up his mind speedily what to do. He would sail the sloop to the north coast of Ireland and there find means to communicate with a friend of his in Bristol, whom he fancied he might trust. There were jewelers, none too scrupulous in a bargain, who might treat with him, robbing him, of course; but he had plenty to stand trimming. And there seemed no other way, with the world stirred up about pirates in general and him in particular.

Kidd and Tew might stay at sea, but Avary was done with piracy. He would turn his gems into hard coin and live a life of ease—not as pictured in Madagascar by the chap-book, but a rounded life that would assume the virtues while it satisfied his secret vices. Later—a good marriage perhaps. Then——

The landlord came scurrying in again with a copy of the famous chap-book, a pamphlet with its cover printed in red and black ink and set off with a villainous woodcut that purported to be a portrait of himself. The work was entitled:

The Piracies and Cruelties of Captain Avary

Who Married the Daughter of the Great Mogul, Capturing her after Great Slaughter by His Own Hand and the Gain of Much Merchandise, Gold, Gems and Ivory.

Avary gave the man a crown and told him to keep the change. He would have given twenty guineas for that badly printed brochure he tucked into his pocket. He passed through the taproom with a meaning look at Horton.

At two in the morning the sloop slipped

out of Boston Harbor on the flood, Horton at the helm, Avary in his little cabin, devouring what was to him the gem of all literature.

IN THE meanest room of a mean, tumbledown house in Bideford, seaport of Devon, famed as the home and holding of the sea-roving Grenvilles, Avary, known now as Saxby—his name changed for the third time—sat awaiting the visit of his friend from Bristol, together with certain jewelers of that town.

He had sold the sloop. In his pocket was the change from the last of the gold pieces he had received from the deal. His men had dispersed. Horton had declared his intention of seeking the king's pardon. The rest were to follow suit.

Over in Providence a thousand pirates had assembled and obtained amnesty. Vane had sailed out under the guns of the king's frigate. Kidd was still at large.

"But," said Horton wisely, "this was no time for a man to go against the law."

All round the world, from the East India Company—their gains restricted by the sulkiness of the Great Mogul, waiting for the hanging of Avary and for reimbursement for the loss of his dhow—to the colonies of the New World, tired of having their infant shipping industry throttled by the descendants of the buccaneers, the hunt was up. Europe was making pact for peace, countries were combining in a league of nations, and robbers on sea and land were being frowned on, fired at, hanged, tarred, hung in chains and made examples of.

The exploits of Avary were still fresh. A reward was out for his apprehension. Avary was uncertain when some of his own followers might find themselves stripped of cash and anxious to make the easy Judas-money. Especially since they sought pardoning.

He cut a far different figure from the Avary who had walked the poop of *The Duke* in velvet and brocade, the Avary, drunk with brandy and ambition, who had pistoled his way through the pilgrim-mob of the dhow and shot the eunuchs in the cabin. There his luck had been at zenith. Since then it had suddenly declined. Sometimes he thought the ranee had bewitched him; that the jewels he had taken from the woman, the jewels he had hid out from the rest, had given her malign power over him by his acceptance.

There were a cot-bed, two broken chairs and a rude table in the room. No carpet; a rag across the window to shut out the sun. A low chest in one corner; a bottle or two, half empty. There was no fireplace, nothing to mitigate the chill of the late Autumn that bit into his marrow and made the sun a mockery.

He took his meals at the inn ordinary. His clothes were snuff-colored, with cotton stockings, a plain fall and stock, a three-cornered hat untrimmed with lace or cockade. He looked like a clerk out of employment. He gave out that he had come to Devon for his failing health, having been left a legacy.

He walked the room impatiently. From the window he could get a glimpse of the bridge over the Torridge, across which his guests must come. A crown, a florin and some small silver made up his purse. He was sick of living in burrows like a hunted rabbit, sick of indifferent food and wine, of poor-mouth talk. He ached for the fleshpots.

In the false bottom of his chest was freedom. He would get a thousand guineas advance from these jewel merchants and then —to London Town, where a man might live!

He stood at the window biting his nails. It was a fortnight since the appointment had been arranged for and he had come to Bideford. It had taken tremendous time and patience. His friend—with a big commission in view for his own share—would not play him false; but there had been the necessity of getting a lodging, of sending the address to Bristol, waiting for reply. They should have been on hand two days before.

But the merchants were cautious. The affair was to be secret. There was altogether too much of mystery about the thing, Avary told himself.

Meanwhile his gems were of no more use to him than seashore pebbles. In so small a place as Bideford, if he displayed one of them, tried to use it for barter or to sell it, the news would be taken straight to the Big House where the Grenvilles lorded it. The mayor, the aldermen and burgesses, the recorder, the town clerks, the sergeants-at-mace, a pack of inquisitive fools eying him askance as a stranger whenever he walked the streets, would all gossip. Grenville would hold inquisition. The gems would be kept, recognized as Oriental in cut and setting.

Avary saw the loom of the gibbet too plainly. He should have gone to London where there were many rogues to deal with. Still, London was filled with thief-takers who had their spies everywhere looking for their chance for blood-money.

His eyes brightened. He saw a little troop of three horsemen coming across the bridge of twenty-four arches that spanned the turbid Torridge and united the two parts of Bideford Town. One he recognized for certain as his friend—the others were the jewelers from Bristol.

The tables were about to turn. Soon he would be off to London by stage or post—better, by hoy to Plymouth and the stage from there. No need to show too much wealth at first. Ah!

He took a long drink of the cheap liquor, pulled away the cloth from the window and used it as a cover for the gems, which he took from their hiding-place and set on the table. A sunbeam struck the cloth fairly—a good omen! Another drink and then to listen for the footsteps climbing up the steep stairs. A knock, and he flung open the door inviting them in—his friend, important, sly, mysterious as a conspirator; the merchants, one a goldsmith, the other a dealer in jewels, guild members both with shops on Broad Street, Bristol; gravely clad in black, their warm cloaks lined and collared with mink.

One, Hutton, was a bald man with a vulture's nose, a hump between his shoulders—a grasping, cozening sort. The other, Lindsay, was dour and thin with a face as cold and hard as granite. They brought the Winter with them from Bristol, thought Avary.

Lindsay went to the window and glanced out. Avary's friend went to the stair-heading and looked down, coming back to stand against the door after he had shot a bolt. The eyes of all of them were greedy.

Avary whipped the cloth from the gems. Under the sunbeam a rainbow leaped to life. The jewels lay in a coruscating heap with flashes of vivid crimson and green combining with the iridescent shimmer.

"There, gentlemen," he said. "There is an emperor's ransom for you!"

A FILM seemed to come over the eyes of the buyers. The go-between edged closer. For fifteen minutes they examined the gems minutely. Then Hutton spoke.

"It will be hard to dispose of these, Master Saxby. They are jewels of the Orient, where they choose by color rather than by clarity. Look you, most are badly flawed.

"Their cutting must be done again or inquiry may follow. We have our reputations to guard. Such inquiry would stop all sales lest worse might follow. To recut takes time, means much waste, outlay for skilled workmen. Nor is the time propitious for the sale of jewels. The market is low, very low. Eh, Lindsay?"

"Had I known what they were I would not have come here," said Lindsay. "The risk is too great. I had supposed we should find jewels of good water. Take out the flaws and you have left nothing but chips after they are cut to suit the modern taste. To my mind the thing is not worth the bother."

He turned away to the window indifferently, started to put on his cloak. Avary looked at them in amaze. The sun had passed behind a cloud. The gleaming mass had dulled. They looked only like colored pebbles or glass.

The friendly go-between pulled a long face. Avary gulped. Then he braced himself. They were gulling him. Hutton picked up a ruby.

"You see," he said, "the streak runs clear through. Almost worthless. Most of these Oriental jewels are sadly overrated. Is there a good tavern here, Master Saxby? We shall not start back without a night's rest and sleep; and, faith, the sooner I find a bed the better I shall be pleased. This has been a tiresome venture."

They were going. It was incredible. These jewels that he had bought with his own good gold, thinking himself so clever—these jewels of little value?

Yet the merchants were going. They had their cloaks on. And he had only a crown—a florin—a groat or two. He had hard work to find his voice.

"You mean—you mean you will not buy these? That they have no worth?"

Hutton paused at the door. Lindsay was outside with the go-between.

"I do not say that. We would not be disposed to advance you anything on them. We should have to put out the moneys for recutting and setting to the workmen. It will take time to get rid of them. Months—years before the right opportunity offers.

We are willing to remit to you one-half of what they ultimately bring—less the expense of craftsmanship and the commission of your friend. But only as the money reaches our hands."

Out of despair Avary struck a spark of resentment.

"And meantime you would take all these, without surety, without advance, knowing I have nothing, working on my unfortunate condition?"

Hutton held up a warning finger.

"You speak too loudly, Saxby. We have taken risk by coming here. This is a hazardous matter, compounding with felony. We have our own necks to look to. Lindsay, a moment."

They affected to confer together.

"We will advance you twenty guineas," said Hutton finally. "From time to time we will make remittance as we have said.

"As for surety—there are two sides to that matter. On your side I see little. You can give us no bill of sale, I take it. On our side—we are well known as men of honor and integrity. We stretch a point in your favor.

"But that is our offer—against my own advice. You may take it or leave it."

He turned cold and fishy eyes upon Avary which held such present indifference, such possibilities of malice, that it suddenly stirred within the wretched pirate the conviction that he was in the hands of these men. Fall out with them and they might denounce him to the authorities. Instead of paying out money they would gain a hundred guineas. He must perforce trust them and keep their tempers sweet to savor their generosity withal.

Yet—twenty guineas! He had not the heart to ask for a valuation of the lot.

"I will accept," he said. "You will send me remittance from time to time, as you dispose of the jewels?"

"Assuredly."

Lindsay fished up the guineas, one at a time, dispensing them grudgingly from a leather poke. Hutton did up the jewels in the cloth, and stowed them in an inside pocket. Avary's friend patted him on the shoulder.

"You did wisely," he said. "They will deal fairly with you."

Not until they had gone, until he saw them cross the bridge, did Avary consider that he had not even taken inventory of the stones. He cursed himself for a fool and a weakling. He swigged at the remnant of his thin, sour wine, then flung out of his house to Bideford's main tavern, where he threw down a guinea, demanding the best. Night found him staggering up the hill to his lodging, drunk and maudlin.

He lit a candle and sat on his cot, reading the chap-book that set forth the exploits of "AVARY THE PIRATE," the thumbed and worn pamphlet flattened on the coarse bedding, gesturing wildly as he went over the words he knew by heart, his gaunt shadow semaphoring on the wall—a ghost of the old Avary, leading on his men to loot and victory.

THE twenty guineas lasted him four months. Then he received three. At the end of a twelvemonth he had obtained flimsy excuses, indifferently veiled from carelessness, paltry promises, the entire sum of thirty-one guineas.

His clothes were worn of nap, his linen and leather a disgrace, his hat a ruin. Most of his money had gone for wine; his account was chalked up to its uttermost limit at the tavern. He was lean to emaciation, hollow of cheek and eye, scrawny of limb.

These little moneys came through his so-styled friend. By this time Avary esteemed him little better than a cutpurse and told him so.

"You are in no position to make enemies of your best wishers," said the man, with a smirk that roused the devil within Avary —already stirred by ale into which Oporto wine had been poured, and the product mulled. "One who is looking through a halter must accommodate himself to the view."

"If one is to be hanged," retorted Avary, rejoicing as he felt a swift surge of blood that bore the strength of anger with it, such as he used to find in the old days when he built his bridges for such occasions—"if one is to be hanged for piracy, it can only be done once. They may thank me for ridding the world of such a rogue as you. If they call it murder it will not add to my penalty. I have stood enough thievery and treachery from you, you dog!"

The smirk on the man's face held for a while. Avary was apt to be boastful in his cups, living on bygone glories. Then the "friend" saw the laughing devil that

looked out of Avary's eyes and transformed his face to a demoniacal semblance. He was fat and clumsy.

Avary brushed aside the table and had him by the throat as he still sat in his chair. The bony fingers sank into the flabby gullet. Avary knelt in his victim's lap, rejoicing in the deed. The tongue of his quondam friend protruded; his eyes projected; he breathed like a dying horse, arms hanging limp.

Avary would have choked him had it not been for the fatness of the man's neck and the sudden dying out of Avary's burst of strength.

Avary had him unconscious. As he stepped back, leaning against the table, shaking with reaction, Avary determined to deal no more with this go-between. He was tired of being gulled. He would go to Bristol and see the jeweler and the goldsmith. Close they might be, but not like this traitor.

He rifled the pockets and found seven guineas. His friend had brought him two. Avary had small doubt but that the original payment had been ten and that eighty per cent. had been taken for commission.

He was cooling off by now. He could not leave the man where he was for others to find and to tell his tale to whom he would. Bideford was a quiet abiding-place, one to be preserved. He flung some water on the other's face and set to work to revive him. When he came to the fear of Avary was stamped upon him.

"I have taken the money you robbed me of this time," said Avary. "I did not finish killing you because your fat body might be hard to dispose of and I am not yet inclined to die after all while there are guineas to clink. But you are out of this deal. Interfere again—" Avery showed another brief flash of hellish heat and temper—"and as sure as there is a God in heaven you will stand before him swiftly! I'll slit you as a cook prepares a rabbit."

He kept the frightened commissioner with him until dawn, when they set out together. Five miles along the coast Avary dismissed him.

"I go to Bristol," he said. "You go t'other way; and keep going!"

The other started off between the gorse and the heather. His throat was still sore, his little eyes were filled with tears of rage that blended with those of self-pity. But after a bit, mounting the slope of a combe, he looked back to the white ribbon of road where Avary awaited the coach and chuckled.

"Go to Bristol, will you?" he wheezed. "I would I was there to see you when you meet with Hutton or Lindsay. And after they are through with you I'll have my turn, you ——, murdering pirate!"

For Hutton and Lindsay, traveling incognito on hired steeds, to come to Bideford, where they were unknown, and deal with a man named Saxby, was one matter. For that same Saxby, looking like a desperate rogue of the road, a most conspicuous figure in the decorous trade-center in Bristol—for such a one to come claiming acquaintance with those honest and approved burgesses Hutton and Lindsay, men of parts, men of family, the one a churchwarden, the other an alderman—that was quite another thing.

Avary had drunk just enough for boldness. The margin oozed out of him as he cooled his heels in the outer room of Hutton's shop, calmly overlooked by the apprentices who passed in and out, ignored by the clerk in charge. An hour passed and he saw Lindsay coming across the street, entering by a private door that led to Hutton's house, under which his shop was built.

Presently he was ushered to an inner office where the two sat comfortably, dressed as became their station, very much at ease.

"Is this the man?" asked Hutton of the clerk, and looked at Avary with a gathering frown. "What business have you with us, you rogue?"

The calm assurance took breath from Avary.

"Rogue?" he cried. "You call me rogue?"

"You look like one," said Hutton calmly. "You now act like one. Without doubt you are one, though I know nothing of you."

He passed his snuff-box to Lindsay, who took a pinch leisurely, surveying Avary as if he were a scarecrow, the snuff an antidote to any disease he might carry on his person.

"I doubt not," went on Hutton, "that you have a record to suit your hangdog look. I doubt not but that the police runners would know all about you. Gad, I should be little surprized if there was not a price set upon your head for some villainy.

"We do not allow fellows of your kidney

in Bristol back of the water-front or off the heath," he added in a tone suddenly brisk with authority. "Nor do we do business with such as you. I'll warrant you have stolen goods for barter. Off with you, you scurvy rascal, before we hale you before the justice on suspicion. We deal not with highwaymen—or with water pirates," he concluded meaningly.

Lindsay was still thumbing his nostrils delicately with the snuff, looking at Avary in the same half-tolerant manner. Hutton pulled a cord, and a bell jangled,

"Send me the porter," he told the answering clerk. "You put a bold front on, my man. It is lucky for you you have not told me your affairs, or my oath of office might constrain me to detain you and look into your record. I should advise you, for your own good and that of Bristol, to leave this city with all dispatch. Overseas—that is the place for you."

The porter in his leather jacket, formidable, aggressive, appeared, touching his forelock.

"See this fellow off the premises, Peter," ordered Hutton.

Avary in extremity found his voice.

"You—you order me to leave?" he choked. "You and your partner there?"

"This gentleman is not my partner," answered Hutton composedly. "And I give you very excellent advice. Peter."

The husky porter laid a compelling hand on Avary's shoulder.

"Best be easy," he whispered. "One of them's a magistrate. Now out with you, like a wise man."

AVARY emerged on the street panting and with his eyes wild as those of a hunted, homeless, hungry dog. He had his guineas, but these were his last. Murder welled up within him, sank again. His spirit was broken. Fear held him.

These cold-blooded merchants had outpirated him. They could send him to the gallows, accuse him of having offered gems, even show some of his as evidence, claiming to have told him to return while they set the machinery of justice in motion.

And there was the false friend he had choked. He too was a treacherous hound. There had been something in his face at parting that meant retaliation. Avary had been cozened, undone.

Terror mounted to panic. Every man who looked at him he thought a tipstaff. His cunning prevailed enough to deny himself liquor for the present.

Dread hounded him to the water-front, where he took passage on a trading-hoy to Dublin. From economy he herded in a crowded cabin forward and reached Ireland stricken with typhus.

He came to himself in an attic, lying on a heap of rags, an old hag leaning over him, holding a mirror to his lips. His money was gone. He had a dim recollection of stumbling through the streets and gaining this place. Now they had robbed him without redress.

He begged harborage of the crone. Barely able to stand, he begged in the streets. Now he was all the scarecrow that Lindsay had seemed to fancy him.

One last resolve, faintly colored with hope, remained—to go back to Bristol humbly. He had done amiss in boldly bracing Hutton at his shop. This time he would try to gain audience more covertly. He could surely wring some drop of mercy from them who had made a fortune out of him.

To gain England he was forced to work his passage on a vessel bound for Plymouth. He who had lorded it over a fine ship of thirty guns with a crew of fifty jumping to his word, cringed at the curses of the bullying skipper of a leaking coaster, dismissed at Plymouth sick and weak, without his wage, for a lazy, useless dog.

To make Bristol was impossible. He dragged his way afoot to Bideford. His old lodging was vacant. He summoned the remnants of his cunning and spun a tale of robbery and sickness that his person attested, declaring that a remittance was due, gaining grudging shelter for a night or two.

The next morning a bailiff and two tipstaffs pounded on the door of the house for admission in the king's name. There was a man with them who had been there before—the go-between. The scared landlord fawned upon the officers.

"Avary—the pirate—in my house? It can not be. It is true this man Saxby returned. But he is no pirate. He has not a shilling on him to buy linen for a shroud."

"A shroud!"

"He died an hour ago, gentlemen. My wife is with him to lay him out."

"To rob the body, rogue," said the bailiff, and pushed past the man.

Avary lay on his cot, shrunk to a skeleton, his jaw dropped, his eyes staring at the ceiling. The landlord's ancient wife drew away from the bed as they entered, and one of the tipstaffs caught her by the wrists.

"Show what you found on him, woman," demanded the bailiff.

He had noted the rifled chest, scattered papers and old rags, the disordered clothes belonging to the corpse.

"Nothing—upon my soul—nothing! He owes us for lodgings."

"What did you just take from him? Those papers. Open her fist, Tim."

Trembling, she showed them.

"But a scrap of printed matter, gentlemen," she whined. "My man is fond of reading. I can not read nor write myself."

It was a tattered, dog-eared pamphlet she had taken from the dead man's shirt, wrapped in a dirty cloth as if it were something precious. The bailiff read the title.

"It was Avary," he said. "But you lose the reward. The law does not pay for a dead pirate."

Avary's treacherous friend gloomily surveyed the cover of the chap-book:

The Piracies and Cruelties of Captain Avary

Who Married the Daughter of the Great Mogul, Capturing her after Great Slaughter by His Own Hand and the Gain of Much Merchandise, Gold, Gems and Ivory.

"Avary?" said the old woman. "Him Avary the pirate? Him, what married the king's daughter?"

She laughed shrilly.

"Him, what had millions and now without a shilling to buy a shroud! And owing us his rent. The dirty villain!"

"Get down, woman!" said the bailiff. "He needs no shroud. Quicklime is the winding-sheet for pirates."

The Warriors of the Pecos

By

Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "Cochise," "The Passing of John Ringold," etc.

THE little town of Lincoln, New Mexico, lies drowsing under the pale flanks of the El Capitan Mountains unchanged by time; low gray adobe buildings scattered along the road which follows the windings of the cañon bed. You can see the bullet scars in the walls today; and men who are still hale will tell you how they fought here when the lead was flying thick, how the red light of flames fell on the faces of their comrades, dying grimly with their boots on.

Customs change swiftly, and it is the years that drag; there are those living in firm friendship, calling one another by their first names, who in those wild days endured bitter hardship seeking one another's lives. And every one of them still declares from his heart that his was the just cause and that his leader—outlaw or sheriff as the

case may be—was in the right. Out of it all one fact stands plain; they were brave men, and on that fact it is well enough to rest without attempt toward praise or blame. This then is the story as men tell it who saw some of its events enacted.

In the beginning John Chisum claimed all the Pecos Valley from Fort Sumner to the Texas line and held it against newcomers, as he had held it against the Indians, by force of arms. Two hundred miles of level grasslands lying between low mesas which stretch away to east and west, it offered tempting pasture to those Texans who were seeking new ranges during the early seventies; it gave good passage northward to the adventurous trail drovers who were hunting routes to Kansas for their herds.

In those days there was no law beyond the eastern edge of the Staked Plains; and he who crossed this lonely land of the Comanche and the buffalo named the limits of his territory, put his iron on every cow which he found therein, and in case of dispute justified himself with revolver or rifle according to the distance over which the debate was carried on. So the Texans began drifting into Lincoln County and there was intermittent war.

Lincoln, the county seat, lay up in the mountains to the west of the valley, fifty miles away. To Lincoln came Murphy and Dolan and established a general store. They grew prosperous through hay and beef contracts with the military post at Fort Stanton; they gained political power, and John Chisum's enemies on the flat lands flocked to their support. The day came when they got control of the county government.

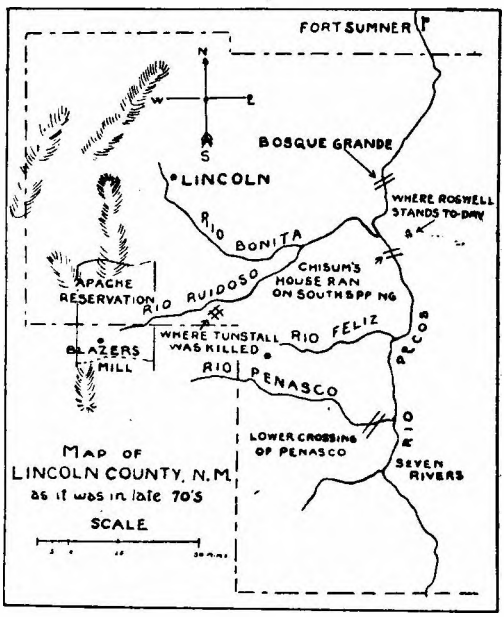
Now each faction had its own leader, and in his own section each leader arrogated unto himself the power of the high justice, the middle and the low. Each did his best to harass his rival by sending into the latter's neighborhood determined men. It was, you will remember, the era of a "wide loop" and a Winchester, when you raided your neighbor's herds without bothering to alter brands; and your neighbor, if he wanted to get rid of you, sent forth his armed retainers to drive you from the country.

Away back in 1873 Murphy & Dolan started in at this sort of thing. There was a Texas outfit over on the Ruidoso in the mountains south of Lincoln, three brothers by the name of Herald, with a few hundred head of longhorns, and they were hard men.

The storekeepers held a bill against them and got a writ of attachment against the cattle. Juan Patron took a posse of thirty Mexicans to serve the writ. At least this was the legal purpose of the expedition. The old-timers tell of what followed, thus:

Ben Herald and Dave Warner were sleeping in the ranch-house when the Mexicans knocked on the door one midnight. They opened to the summons and half a dozen rifles flamed in their faces. Warner was quick enough on the draw to get his man before he fell, dying; but Herald was killed while groping for his gun.

Now the so-called posse started to round



up the cattle; but before they had well begun the other two Herald brothers came down from the hills with a cowboy named Baker and made a fight for their property. They managed to gain entrance to the adobe house and stood off the besiegers for a day and a night.

Under the cover of darkness Baker stole forth on the following evening and hitched up a team to a double wagon. The party broke through the cordon of besiegers, with one man driving and the rifles of the others flaming from the vehicle while the horses kept to the dead run. They made their way down to the Pecos, where they found a Texas trail outfit resting with their herd

above the Bosque Grande. They told their story, and the Texans readily agreed to "throw in with them," as the old saying is.

That day a dozen hard-eyed riders traveled up the cañon of the Bonita to Lincoln, "keeping the news behind them," and reached the county seat in the evening. A big *baille* was in progress in one of the long adobe buildings; and the members of that Mexican posse were among the dancers who crowded the earthen floor. The raiders got wind of the situation, left their horses in charge of one of their number and slipped in silence to the place. The guitars were strumming blithely when some one glanced around and saw a man with drawn revolver standing in the open door.

A woman screamed; the music wavered and the weapon flamed. The heavy report shook the air in the low-ceilinged room, and panic reigned as the Texans advanced, with their guns spitting fire through the fog of powder-smoke. Juan Patron leaped through a window, leaving four of his comrades writhing in their death agonies. For three days the avenging cowmen hunted him and the other survivors, until, when they returned to the Pecos, the list of dead had swelled to eight.

From this time on trouble continued. And he who came into the country soon found himself lined up with one faction or the other. If you happened to fall out with Murphy & Dolan you automatically became a John Chisum man; and if you were one of those who disputed with the old Indian fighter you were under the banner of the Lincoln merchants.

Warriors—to use the Texan term of the 'Seventies—were coming to the Pecos from the Brazos, from Lampasas County and from the Rio Grande; cowhunters from the Nueces, Mexican bravos from old Taos and Santa Fé and rugged buffalo-hunters from the Staked Plains. Men died hard down in the valley, and there was grim fighting in the mountains around Lincoln to the west. This was the condition when John S. Tunstall arrived in New Mexico in the Summer of 1877.

He was a blocky, ruddy-cheeked English youth on fire for hunting and the wild life of cattleland. He came to Santa Fé with a lackey, a huge array of luggage, a blooded saddle-horse which had been shipped by railway as far as Dodge City, and letters of credit from a London banking-house. Here he fell in with Alec MacSwain, a young lawyer, and the two struck up a partnership.

They journeyed down the Pecos to go into the cattle business, and John Chisum advised them to find a range in the mountains to the west. So Tunstall established himself over on the Rio Feliz with four hundred head of young stuff, and his partner "hung out his shingle," as the old saying has it, in Lincoln.

And the year of 1877 drew to a close with the English youth hunting bear up in the big pine while the lawyer was busying himself playing politics against Murphy & Dolan in the county seat. It is doubtful whether either had any idea of the hornets' nest which they were stirring up.

MURPHY & Dolan prepared to drive young Tunstall and his partner from the country in very much the same way as they had driven out the Herald brothers. MacSwain was settling the estate of one Fritz who owed the firm a store bill; and they demanded payment from the insurance money. This the lawyer refused because the distribution was still in the courts. Whereupon the merchants got out an attachment against those four hundred head of cattle down on the Rio Feliz and placed the matter in the hands of William Brady, the sheriff, who was their firm adherent. How much good faith was back of that writ one must judge for himself. Brady was an honorable man and brave, a man who would never connive in evil-doing; the same is true of George Pepin, his deputy. But neither officer was master of the situation; the country was full of lawless men, and what followed soon passed beyond all legal technicalities.

Sheriff Brady sent Pepin after a posse to serve the papers. The deputy gathered more than thirty men from the valley of the Pecos. Some of them were ranchers who honestly believed the expedition was being organized against stock rustlers who had been sent into the hills by John Chisum to harass his enemies. There were a few young gun-fighters who did not care what the issue was so long as there was a prospect of burning powder with the county to pay the bills.

And there was a third element; a half dozen fellows who had come into the country during the past year. They had

put in their time rustling stock down along the Mexican line, driving it from Sonora to New Mexico and selling it to cattlemen; and had fallen in under the Murphy & Dolan banner some months since. They were Bill Morton, George Davis, Tom Hill, Frank Baker, Jesse Evans and "Shotgun" Roberts.

Made up of this mixture, the posse rendezvoused down at Seven Rivers and started up the Pecos for the Rio Feliz. One night they made camp near the mouth of that stream.

That same night a rider spurred his jaded horse across the hills on the last lap of a hard journey from Lincoln, where Alex MacSwain had heard the news of what was taking place. He never pulled up until he reached the ranch-house by the river Feliz. And young Tunstall listened to his tidings surrounded by a little group of cowboys in the main room. He was, those say who knew him, a green English tenderfoot, and of that unsophistication what was to follow gave abundant proof.

"You go out and get the horses as soon as it's daylight," he told his foreman, Dick Brewer, when the rider had finished his recital. "We'll start for Lincoln in the morning."

But Brewer was old in the ways of the country and shook his head.

"There are more'n thirty of 'em," he said, "and they must be near here now. They'd sure catch up to us, and if they did we'd never have a living show there in the hills. Best thing we can do is to stick to the house and stand 'em off till help comes."

"But," young Tunstall cried, "this is a legal matter; and my lawyer will look out for my interests. The sheriff——"

"Listen," Brewer interrupted him, "you don't know Lincoln County. That outfit's not going to bother with serving any papers if they can catch us in the open. They're coming to *get* us; understand; that's what they're for."

The cowboys raised their voices in support of their foreman and backed their arguments with the tale of the Herald killing back in 'seventy-three. But young Tunstall's ruddy cheeks grew brighter red and his jaw set.

"We'll ride to Lincoln and I'll accept service from Sheriff Brady and there won't be any fight. We must do things in the regular way, you know."

He turned again to Brewer.

"Go get the horses," he ordered.

Dick Brewer went. At dawn they started northward across the hills, a half-dozen of them, riding hard. Tunstall was mounted on his sorrel thoroughbred which he had brought out with him from New York.

They traveled all day, and as evening was coming on they were down in the cañon of the Ruidoso. Brewer, who had looked over his shoulder many times during the journey, glanced back now and saw the members of the posse topping the last rise.

There was but one thing to do, and the cowboys knew it. They clapped spurs to their horses and raced for the pine timber which cloaked the mountainsides above them.

But young Tunstall kept his sorrel thoroughbred to the walk. Dick Brewer reined up after the first two or three jumps and called to his employer.

"Make a run for it. We'll dodge 'em yet."

But the British youth shook his head and said something, which the foreman could not catch, about the law. Already the horsemen in their rear were drawing nearer, coming on at the dead run, deploying to surround them. Brewer left Tunstall riding on at unchanged pace. He had barely gained the timber when he heard shots down behind him in the cañon bed.

The thirty-odd possemen surrounded the solitary rider, and six of them rode up to him. They were the half-dozen warriors of whom mention has already been made—Tom Hill, Jesse Evans, Frank Baker, Shotgun Roberts, Billy Morton and George Davis. They shot him down and killed his blooded horse; and then they laid his body in the trail beside that of the animal.

There were good men in that posse, enemies of John Chisum who had been fighting against just this sort of thing down in the valley; Milo Pierce was one of them and he voiced their sentiment when he told Bill Morton—

"If this is what you're up to, I quit right here."

He made good his words by striking off for his home ranch at once. But Pierce and his companions stuck to their faction through the days that followed just as other reputable men stuck to the opposition, in spite of deeds which they found it hard to countenance. And in following this chronicle

one must remember that all these fighters—sheriff, cowboy, gunman and mountain rancher—lived in an era when the law was but an empty phrase and might made right; in a land where one must go prepared to kill unless he wanted to die like that poor British youth.

Frank Coe, near whose ranch the murder had taken place, sent a Mexican to Lincoln with Tunstall's body, and on the night before the burial a grim company gathered at the home of Alex MacSwain. It was the custom back in those days to "sit up with the remains," and they assembled in the silent room about the rigid form to watch the hours of darkness through. Dick Brewer, the dead man's foreman, was there; two or three small farmers from over on the Ruidoso who had liked the Englishman, and, incidentally, had no liking for Murphy & Dolan; and some of Tunstall's cowboys.

The lawyer told them that he purposed to fight this thing right through and bring the slayers to justice. There is small doubt that he thought then—and that some of the others so believed—that there was a possibility of doing this by legal means. They had good backing from John Chisum and there was the chance of getting hold of the county government at the next election. There is also small doubt that there were a few present who cherished no such illusions but looked toward reprisals without any troublesome formalities of law.

Which brings us to one of that company who was to be a dark and tragic figure in days to come.

HE WAS a sharp-featured boy of seventeen, a little under medium size, who wore his brown hair to his shoulders and would have been good looking if it had not been for two buck teeth. His name was William Bonney, and men who knew him called him the Kid, which was eventually lengthened to Billy the Kid.

Born in a New York tenement district, he had been reared at Silver City over in the Animas, where he had killed a blacksmith in some dispute or other. Thence he had wandered through the Southwest, dealing monte in Tucson and old Mexico, stealing horses from the Apaches—which was accounted a legitimate means of making a living—and generally conducting himself like many another boy who fell into bad company during the 'Seventies.

He had come into Lincoln County during the previous Summer with Frank Baker, Bill Morton and Jesse Evans—the ringleaders in the Tunstall murder—and had rustled stock with them from Mexicans along the border—another entirely honorable means of livelihood. He had spent the early part of the Winter with Frank Coe, the Ruidoso rancher, hunting grizzlies up in the big pine timber and had shown himself an expert with firearms. Then young Tunstall had hired him as a cowboy for twenty-five dollars a month.

Save for the Silver City killing he had no record as a warrior or as a bad-man, for Mexicans and Apaches didn't count when it came to filing notches in a revolver butt. The most noticeable thing about him was his gift of plausible and ready speech; and he owned that magnetism which often makes a man a leader among his fellows.

This young cowhand declared that night that Tunstall was the first employer who had ever dealt fairly with him when it came to paying his wages. He showed the company a list of names which he had written down—the ringleaders in the murder—and he said that if no one else hunted out those men, among whom were his former partners in border cow-stealing, he intended to kill them off himself.

But MacSwain, the lawyer, was too wise to go at matters in this direct fashion; he copied the list, and in accordance with the desire to do things in a legal manner, he got the local justice of the peace to appoint Dick Brewer a special constable. He swore out warrants on the charge of murder—and Brewer deputized the members of that midnight gathering. Within two days they started out to round up their men.

Eleven of them slipped out of Lincoln under cover of darkness and rode down to the Pecos. "Keeping the news behind them" is the way the old-timers described such traveling as they did. News flies fast even in an unsettled land. They pressed their horses hard; got new mounts at John Chisum's home ranch on the South Spring and spurred on southward to the lower crossing of the river Penasco, where they had word that Bill Morton and Frank Baker were occupying one of those dugouts in which cowboys used to "hole up" during the raw months of Winter and early Spring.

They came on their men in the hills one afternoon, and there was a hot race for the

dugout, with the fugitives roweling their lathered ponies and the pursuers taking turns to slacken up while they lined the sights of their Winchesters seeking to set their enemies afoot. But Baker and Morton gained their shelter, and what had been a running fight settled down to a siege.

All that night and all the next day the posse lay behind the rocks firing volleys at the mouth of the narrow passageway which led into the bank. At intervals a puff of smoke came from the entrance, and a bullet buzzed close to some one of the besiegers.

Toward evening the pair inside the dugout found their cartridges running low and called for a parley. Dick Brewer crept within earshot and made terms with them. They were to get safe conduct to the Lincoln jail.

There was some dissatisfaction over this, and the story goes that Billy the Kid voiced a hot protest.

"We could have killed them where we were," he said, "and now you've tossed away the chance."

The posse struck off for Lincoln and rode hard until they reached the Chisum ranch, for there were several cowmen in the neighborhood of the battle who were arrayed with the Murphy & Dolan faction. From Chisum's they went on to the hamlet which has since become Roswell and turned westward toward the county seat. When they were in the cañon of the Bonita fifteen miles or so from the valley, they made a detour from the proper trail toward Blackwater Springs.

Now Morton and Baker grew suspicious, fearing the same thing which they had done to young Tunstall; and when the party was strung out in the cañon, with Billy the Kid and Charley Bowdre, a young Texan who owned a little farm up on the Ruidoso, riding in the lead, one of the prisoners edged his horse close to a posseman named McCloskey and managed to steal his revolver. It was all over a few seconds afterward.

McCloskey fell, shot through the throat. Morton and Baker urged their ponies to a run. Billy the Kid had his Winchester out and in action before his companions really knew what was taking place. Two long shots at swiftly moving targets, and the buck-toothed youth who had done the big talking that night when they were sitting up with John Tunstall's body had begun to make his deadly reputation in Lincoln County.

There are those who maintain to this day that the killing was the result of a prearranged plan. Whether that or the foregoing version be the truth, one fact remains undisputed: Bill Morton and Frank Baker died out in the hills near Picacho with more chances for escape than they had ever given young Tunstall over on the Ruidoso, and a sheepherder buried their bodies a few days later.

Then the posse struck off into the mountains on the trail of Shotgun Roberts, who was known to be somewhere about the Mescalero Indian Reservation near the summit of the range. Frank Coe and his cousin George left their farms on the Ruidoso to join this expedition. The band of thirteen reached the agency at Blazer's Mill one morning along toward noon.

Their man was not there, but they learned that he was expected to ride in during the day. They sat down in the agent's house to dinner, and they left one of their number outside on guard. Before the meal had fairly started the sentry appeared in the door.

"There's a fellow just rode up, well armed," he announced, "and I heard one of the men down by the corral call him Roberts."

Dick Brewer nodded to Frank Coe, the Ruidoso farmer, who knew Roberts well and had been on friendly terms with him.

"Go out and see if it's the right man," he said.

Coe left and met Roberts among the adobe buildings.

"Hello, Frank," the latter cried and greeted him with outstretched hand. "What are you doing here?"

Coe told him briefly and explained that the posse held a warrant for him on the charge of murder.

"Oh, ——! You mean that Englishman. Come along; I've got a Los Cruces paper with an account of it that explains the whole thing."

And Roberts led the way to one of those long adobes which were so common at the period in New Mexico, with every room opening to the outside. He started to enter the first door; but Coe glanced within and saw two rifles standing against the wall. Roberts was known as a seasoned warrior, one of that breed that would rather die with his boots on than be taken alive; and Coe realized that this little room, with its

array of weapons and its thick adobe walls, would be an admirable place for a man to stand off his enemies. It occurred to him that, with himself as a hostage, the prospective prisoner would be occupying a remarkably good strategic position, once he got inside. So he balked.

"All right," the other grinned, and shrugged his shoulders; "we'll talk it over out here then."

They did so at considerable length.

"There are thirteen of us," Coe argued, "and you'd never have a living show against the bunch. We'll take you down to Lincoln and you can stand trial there."

But Roberts laughed.

"I tell you what it is, Frank. The Kid and Charley Bowdre are with your posse. If we'd got them down on the Ruidoso last month we'd have killed 'em like we killed Tunstall. And if they get me here they'll kill me. That's all there is to it. I'll not surrender; you can bet on that."

He was a hard man, this Shotgun Roberts, deserter from the army, horse-thief and bravo; but he faced the facts as he found them and he made no evasions when it came to explaining his deeds. In a very few moments he showed them all how bravely a man can die.

Dick Brewer was getting impatient inside the house. He kept looking through the door. Finally he bade four of his possemen go out and make the arrest without more loss of time. Billy the Kid, Charley Bowdre, George Coe and Tom Middleton picked up their weapons and left the room to carry out his order. They reached the adobe building in front of which the pair were still arguing, and Charley Bowdre was first to turn the corner. Roberts heard the footsteps and whirled on his heel.

"Hands up," said Charley Bowdre; and before he had fairly finished speaking both of them threw down and fired.

Frank Coe leaped aside as the two weapons flashed; it was the only thing for him to do unless he chose to shoot Roberts in the back, which was not his way.

Roberts' bullet creased Bowdre's body, cutting his belt in twain. But young Bowdre made a truer shot, and the border cow-thief staggered back through the open door with a leaden slug in his abdomen. And now the smoke hung thick about the place.

George Coe stepped around the corner, raising his double-barreled shotgun toward his shoulder. The dying man threw down again and fired, splintering the weapon's stock and breaking two of Coe's fingers. Then he sank to the floor; for the sickness which precedes a man's mortal agony made his limbs like water.

Watching that open door and holding his revolver ready in one hand, he crept to the bed and dragged the straw tick from it. He placed the mattress against the rear wall, propped himself up on it and settled down to die as a man should die who goes with his boots on.

The rest of the posse had come running from the dining-room. He could hear their voices as they surrounded the building. Always he watched the door. The powder-smoke was thinning, and objects were showing more plainly through it.

"Get down the hill and take a shot from behind one of those saw-logs," he heard some one say.

He waited, clenching his teeth against the weakness that was overmastering him; and he caught sight of Tom Middleton creeping among the logs which strewed the slope. Then he fired his third shot and Middleton fell with a bullet through his lungs. Frank Coe risked death to crawl down there and drag his companion away.

He carried the wounded man to a spring above the house and left him there in a deep swoon. The next day they found Middleton still living by the spring, and he recovered a few weeks later.

Now the posse debated over firing the building, and the agent reminded them that this was Government property. So they made up their minds to try another shot through that open door, and Dick Brewer took a roundabout course until he found shelter behind one of the saw-logs near the bottom of the hill. He slipped the barrel of his Winchester across his breastwork and slowly raised his head. And Shotgun Roberts got him fairly between the eyes.

EVERY struggle between men has its vital moment when the turning-point is reached. A chance blow in the prize ring, the arrival of reenforcements on the battlefield, the accidental admission of some slight testimony in a court-room; such things decide large issues, and no man knows of that decision at the time. Afterward chroniclers turn the attention of

readers to it, making much of the incident. So now let us dwell on the scene at Blazer's Mill when Roberts fired that shot.

It is late afternoon and the yellow light is shaking along the sparsely timbered flanks of the surrounding mountains. The low adobe building stands at the summit of a slope. One door is open, the one at the end nearest the agent's house.

Within the room lies Shotgun Roberts propped up against the mattress at the rear wall, and you do not need to look at the congealing blood on his flannel shirt to know that he is very sick; his whole body from his booted feet to the sweat-beaded brow is eloquent of weakness.

Down on the hillside Dick Brewer crouches among the tangled saw-logs. Slowly he moves; the barrel of his Winchester glides across the prostrate trunk which shelters his form. He raises his head; his cheek presses the weapon's stock; his eye seeks the sights.

Within the room the face of Shotgun Roberts shows all twisted with pain as he raises his body, and his lips are white; the sweat-drops are coursing down his forehead while the Winchester leaps to his shoulder. The lips tighten; the weapon flames; the smoke fills the room like a thin fog, and Dick Brewer's limp body slides back behind the saw-log. That shot turned the tide of the Lincoln County war.

For there has always been a tremendous potency in a nickel-plated star. The wearer has the backing of the law; the whole fabric of civilization is behind him when he draws his gun. He owns—and his followers share it with him—what old-time gamblers call the edge. And this enables him to carry on his actions along lines which would otherwise be impossible. Without the backing of one of those metal emblems the armed warrior sooner or later finds himself facing odds which are too great for him.

Dick Brewer, you will remember, wore a star. When he died his authority died with him. Alex MacSwain was never able to get another constable appointed to fill his place.

It took Shotgun Roberts all that night and a good part of the next day to do his dying. They buried him on the hill above Blazer's Mill. They took their wounded and the body of their dead leader away in an old Army ambulance.

The agent notified the military authorities at Fort Stanton of what had taken place, and the commanding officer sent a troop of cavalry to hunt down the men who had violated Federal territory by this attempt to serve a warrant. The soldiers narrowly missed an encounter with the survivors of the battle and returned to the post without accomplishing anything.

From now on the twelve who had ridden forth from Lincoln with Dick Brewer* were no longer a posse out man-hunting; they were wanted men with warrants for murder out against them; with Sheriff Brady against them; with the United States cavalry against them. Murphy & Dolan now owned the odds.

Outwardly matters continued as before; it is doubtful if any one took these changes into consideration at the time—unless perhaps it might be Alex MacSwain, who, being a lawyer, must have realized. The Lincoln County war raged as hotly as ever. Raid and reprisal followed one another, turn about.

The twelve warriors on their return from Blazer's Mill chose a new leader. They picked young William Bonney, known as Billy the Kid. Those who fought under him will tell you to this day that he owned rare qualities of leadership in spite of his youth; the men who tracked him down in the black period of his outlawry which followed the Lincoln County war, voice this same judgment.

It would be interesting to speculate as to where he might have ended—to what heights of fame he might have risen in the West—had he been equipped with one of those white metal badges which give a man the backing of the law. Oftentimes such an insignia has had a remarkably steadying influence on its wearer. There are ex-sheriffs in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona today, who will confess to youthful years when they "swung a wide loop," and when they were not so careful in their shooting as they might have been. But all of this is aside from the narrative.

John Chisum's enemies down in the valley were roused to action now. There was fighting on the flatlands.

*Brewer as a constable used his authority under the law to enlist the posse members as citizens to help him arrest a wanted felon. When Brewer died these posse members legally lapsed to their former positions as ordinary citizens. They now had only the same rights as any other men. On this same point, by the way—that is to say, on the rights of citizens and officers when it comes to making arrests—there is still much vagueness in the laws and in the practical application of the statutes. F. R. B.

One night a number of the smaller stockmen surrounded a house where the cattle king was visiting in Roswell. It was their intention to brand him with one of his own irons and earmark him like one of his own steers; and they had the fire going before Chisum's host got wind of what was taking place. He managed to slip his guest out of the house and mount him on a fleet horse at the last moment, and the old Indian fighter raced away with a dozen pursuers hot on his trail.

In Lincoln Sheriff Brady swore in new deputies. Johnny Riley, who was recruiting men for Murphy & Dolan up in Santa Fé, sent a number of Panhandle warriors down the Pecos. In reviewing events after all these years it is easy to see that the aggressive had passed from the hands of young John S. Tunstall's avengers; they were fighting on the defensive now.

A band of thirty-five gunfighters, for the most part Texans who had hired out under the Murphy & Dolan banner, started from the valley toward Lincoln with the idea of ambushing Billy the Kid and several of his warriors who were in the county seat. They were resting at the Spring ranch on the river Bonita late in the afternoon.

Frank Coe and his partner Bud Saunders came riding out from John Chisum's ranch, with Chisum's foreman, Frank McNab. They too were on their way to Lincoln, and they had no idea of the presence of these enemies. They traveled up the Pecos and turned off to the west at Roswell, crossing the wide mesa and coming down into the cañon of the Bonita. They were passing the Spring ranch when the flat report of a rifle sounded among the adobe buildings below the road. Coe's horse fell dead under him.

Now the other two ponies wheeled violently and threw their riders in the dusty road. A second shot came from a bunch of cottonwoods; and Saunders, who was scrambling to his feet, collapsed with a bullet through his body.

McNab turned and ran up the hill toward a narrow cañon which came down to the main stream. Coe lingered trying to catch one of the horses. Dust spurted about his feet, and the voices of the rifles arose in a venomous chorus among the ranch buildings Several forms showed crossing the road below him, bent low with running.

He let the pony go and struck off for the arroyo where his companion was already vanishing; but the bullets were coming thick and there was a considerable interval of open ground to cross. He saw a sinkhole which last Summer's rains had gullied out from the side hill and plunged into it.

McNab found a cluster of boulders near the mouth of the cañon and dropped behind it. The men from Texas crept up the hill on either side of the gully, keeping to such cover as they could. They climbed above him and they rained their bullets down upon him. He stood them off for something like half an hour with his six-shooter before one of them got him through the heart.

Coe crouched in his sinkhole fighting it out with Bob Ollinger, who lay behind a cluster of rocks on the hillside below him. The two men knew each other well and had often practised pistol-shooting together. So now they took it slowly, using plenty of care not to show themselves before they fired.

Between their shots they heard the rattle of the rifles where McNab was dying hard over in the cañon. Once Ollinger raised his head a little farther than usual, and Coe's bullet passed through his hat. They had exchanged five shots apiece when a fifteen-year-old boy who had come up from the ranch-house with an old Sharps single-shot buffalo gun, gained a position directly above the sinkhole and opened fire. Coe felt what seemed like a rough hand plowing through his hair. His hat fell at his feet with a big hole in its crown.

Warren Ollinger, who had just witnessed McNab's death in the cañon, came to join his brother Bob and got a glimpse of the cornered man.

"——! That's Frank Coe!" he shouted. "Hold up. Don't shoot, you fellows. Now, Frank, you come out and I'll stay with you. I'll give you my word, there's no one will hurt you. Throw away that six-shooter; that's all I'm asking."

Coe surrendered, and the party rode on the next morning to Lincoln; but word of their coming had preceded them, and they found Billy the Kid and his companions entrenched in Alex MacSwain's big adobe house. They took their prisoner to the Murphy & Dolan store and placed Warren Ollinger on guard over him in an up-stairs room. Then they went outside to reconnoiter.

The two men looked each other in the

eyes when the rest of the party had trooped down the stairs which led on the outside of the building to the ground. Warren Ollinger said nothing, but rose and went into the next room. He came back with an old Sharps buffalo gun and a handful of cartridges. He laid them on the floor.

"Now," said he, "you just look out for yourself, Frank."

And with that he too went down the stairs.

"Where's the prisoner?" one of the Texans demanded.

Warren Ollinger was always slow of speech, and now he spoke even more deliberately than usual.

"Well, sir," he drawled, "I clean forgot him, and I reckon I done forgot, too, and left a gun up there along with him."

There was some hard language, and three of the Murphy & Dolan men started up the stairs together; but Coe, who had been listening from a window, opened the door a bit and thrust the barrel of the rifle through the crack.

"First man that comes another step, I'll kill him," he announced.

The three fell back and started to talk the matter over out of range.

Just then George Coe, who was with the other faction in the MacSwain house, fired at a Murphy & Dolan man who was coming up the main road, and the sound of the shot broke up the conference of the Texans at the foot of the stairs. They started toward the lawyer's home, and Coe slipped away before they were fairly out of sight.

He gained the cover of the brush down by the river Bonita and managed to beat them to the house, where his friends welcomed him and the more warmly because they had heard that morning that he had been killed the day before.

There was some skirmishing in Lincoln that day, but there were no casualties; and the Murphy & Dolan warriors retreated in the evening, leaving their enemies in possession of the town.

A WEEK or so later—it was the first day of April—Billy the Kid did the thing which was the beginning of the end. He sent a man to Sheriff Brady with tidings that a band of John Chisum's warriors were riding up the canon to the county seat.

Brady took George Hindman and Billy Matthews from Murphy & Dolan's store to gather their forces. As the three were hurrying down the street Billy the Kid who had hidden behind the adobe wall of the MacSwain corral with Charley Bowdre and others, opened fire on them. The sheriff and Hindman fell dead at the first volley. Matthews fled to a blacksmith shop near by, where he managed to stand off the murderers until others of his faction who had been attracted by the shooting, reached the place.

There was no particular difference between that killing and the ambush which had left Bud Saunders wounded and McNab dead down by the Spring ranch. War and reprisals—that was the rule.

But Brady was the sheriff. And that changed matters. Sentiment was pretty evenly divided in the community; Murphy & Dolan had their share of enemies. But a sheriff is a sheriff; and even in those days there were men who regarded the statutes as an institution which must be respected.

That deed left a different impression in many quarters from any that had preceded. And those who had ridden forth in February, armed with warrants, to avenge the murder of a friend, found themselves in April virtually outlaws.

IN THE month of May, George Pepin, who had led that posse after young Tunstall's cattle, was appointed sheriff. He named Marion Turner as one of his deputies and placed him in charge of forty gun-fighters in the Pecos Valley, while he himself held down Lincoln with about the same number of warriors.

The Chisum faction, who had been rallying in the flatlands, were kept on the run in a series of skirmishes; and the twelve wanted men, who were keeping close together these days, found strong forces arrayed against them in the hills. They spent a good deal of their time over on the Ruidoso, making an occasional sortie to the county seat. In this manner the time passed until early in July.

Billy the Kid and his eleven followers slipped down from the mountains to John Chisum's home ranch on the South Spring. The Turner posse learned of their presence and laid siege to the place.

But Chisum's house had been built with the idea of standing off Indian raids, and the defenders had small difficulty in holding the

building against a series of attacks. Turner withdrew his men to Roswell, five miles up the Pecos, and left a scout or two to watch the neighborhood.

Some days later the twelve fugitives made up their minds to have another try at Lincoln. They left the Chisum ranch at night and rode straight up the Pecos to convey the impression that they were bound for Fort Sumner; but when they had traveled northward for something like twenty miles they turned westward into the hills and pressed on hard toward the county seat. They did not know that Turner's thirty-five warriors were riding less than twelve hours behind them—until they reached the little town in the cañon bed; and then it was too late.

Sheriff George Pepin met them with a force three times the size of their own, and they took refuge in MacSwain's adobe house. Turner and his horsemen arrived a few hours later.

The twelve men plucked up heart when Martin Chavez, who had been a Murphy & Dolan man in days gone by but had changed his allegiance that Summer, appeared with twenty-odd Mexicans and these allies entrenched themselves behind a stone breastwork on the mountainside overlooking the town. But that joy was short-lived. A troop of cavalry rode over from Fort Stanton and established themselves before the MacSwain house. They trained a machine-gun on its walls.

During the two days which had now elapsed since their arrival there had been intermittent firing between the lawyer's home and the Murphy & Dolan store. Now the commanding officer sent word to the former building that the next shot from that place would be the signal for his machine-gun to go into action. It is stated that he gave the same warning to the Murphy & Dolan faction; but whether or not this is true makes no difference. The twelve fugitives knew that they were in a trap.

During that day their enemies surrounded the house, finding cover under the river-bank and behind adjacent buildings, while the cavalry looked on. Marion Turner took eight men from the Murphy & Dolan store and walked up close to the front windows demanding surrender, which demand met profane defiance.

Mrs. MacSwain, who had left her home for refuge with a neighbor, visited her husband; and the fighting men withdrew into another room while the lawyer and his wife had their last talk together.

Evening was coming on when Mrs. MacSwain left. The front door closed behind her and was barricaded from the inside. A man appeared from the direction of the street; and she halted, facing him. It was Jack Long, one of Sheriff Pepin's deputies, and he was carrying a bunch of oil-soaked shavings. She pleaded with him not to set fire to her home; and while she begged he edged closer to the wall.

George Coe stood in the front room lining the sights of his rifle through a loophole in one of the barricaded windows; but every time he drew his bead on the deputy the form of the weeping woman showed between. He waited in grim silence until she gave up her attempt and started on down the path. Then he pulled the trigger; but Long meantime had come so close that he was able to leap within the angle at which the weapon could be trained before George Coe made his snap-shot. A moment later the burning bundle was on the roof.

In those days they covered their houses with a mixture of brush and adobe, and the heat of Summer had long since dried this wattle until it was like tinder. The flames shot up, casting a wavering red light about the place.

Dusk deepened to darkness. Outside the area of radiance the blue-black night of New Mexico hid everything. The thin orange flame of a rifle cut the gloom down by the river bed. A bullet spatted on the adobe wall. Several shots followed, and the close rooms were shaken with the heavy explosions of Winchesters answering through the loopholed windows.

"They done got us in a tight place this time," Charley Bowdre said. "Reckon they're going to smoke us out."

The yellow fumes were filling the front room now. A patch of blazing wattle fell among the men. They went back into the next apartment.

Tom O'Phalliard, a tall, lanky young Texan who had thus far been entrusted with an old Sharps rifle and had been given the task of holding the horses when the others were fighting, had got a Winchester and was making the best of his weapon at one of the windows. An ember fell on his shirt sleeve; he slapped it out and grinned at Billy the Kid. He was getting into action

at last. Some one cursed the negro cavalry for interfering.

"Only for them niggers we'd 'a' made a running fight, and the greasers could of throwed in with us," he growled.

The smoke thickened. They dropped back into the kitchen. It was ten o'clock when Frank Coe called from a window that the besiegers were closing in.

"Coming up from the brush down by the river," he announced. "Guess they're going to make a rush."

And before he had really finished the charge had begun. They waited until the foremost of their enemies were within a few yards. Then they flung open the rear door and it was every man for himself and the brush down by the river for their goal.

Bob Beckwith, a Seven Rivers cowman, was in the lead of the advancing party. Billy the Kid got him between the eyes, and he fell before the doorway. The bullets were buzzing thick, kicking up little spurts of dust among the fleeing men. Tom O'Phalliard stopped to pick up Harvey Morris, who had stumbled and fallen ahead of him.

"No use, Tom," Charley Bowdre called. "He's dead."

O'Phalliard looked into the face and let down the body gently before he ran on. He was getting all the action he wanted now. Three Mexicans from over on the Ruidoso who had been members of the Blazer's Mill posse fell between the house and the thickets down by the Bonita.

Alex MacSwain was the last man to leave his blazing home. Perhaps it was because he was thinking of young Tunstall, perhaps it was because he was no warrior and meant to keep to his rôle as a lawyer; at any rate he came forth at a slow walk. And he never changed his pace until a bullet halted him. He stopped, then bowed his head and pitched forward, dead.

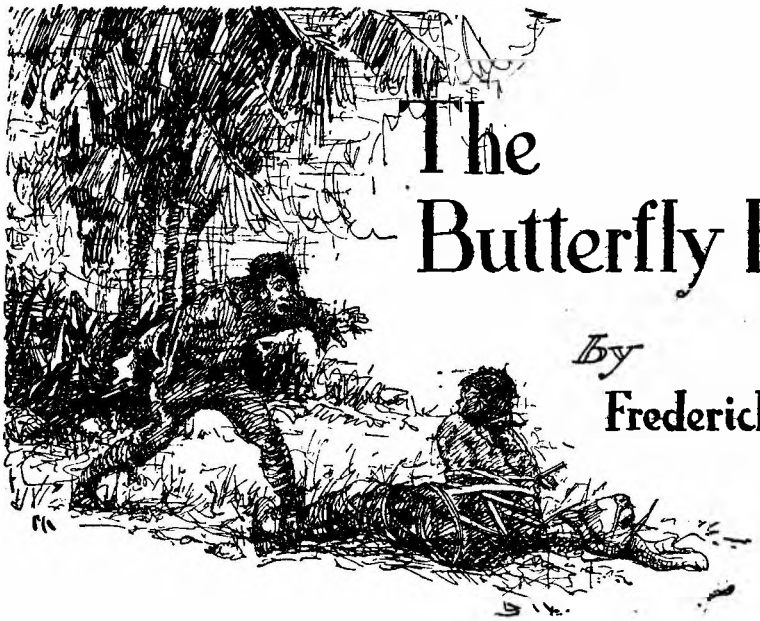
Five dead and several wounded was what the survivors found when they rendezvoused on the hillside above the town that night.

There remains but one brief scene to this tragedy of the Old West. It was enacted in the month of August when Governor Lew Wallace came to the little town of Lincoln and held a midnight conference with these men whom the law wanted on the charge of murder.

"Go," he bade them, "and stand trial. If the court convicts you, you will then come into my hands. And if your cases are not fairly dealt with, you have my word that I will give you justice."

There came the parting of the ways. The farmers of the Ruidoso, who had gone into this thing seeking to arrest Tunstall's slayers, accepted that offer; and the courts freed them a few months later. But Billy the Kid, with whom the author of "Ben Hur" talked at great length that night in Lincoln, refused to trust himself to courts of law. He argued that, after what had come and gone, his only safety lay with his weapons; and he did not propose to give them up to any man.

So he rode away, and with him rode Charley Bowdre, Tom O'Phalliard and John Middleton. A year or so later the last named left him up in the Panhandle and became a law-abiding citizen. But Bowdre and Tom O'Phalliard stuck to him through the dark days of his outlawry that followed, until they died, as he in his turn died, from the bullets of those who hunted them down.



The Butterfly Hunter

By Frederick Moore

Author of "The Picture," "Fool's Luck," etc.

ONE of the company's trading-schooners brought a white man to Rasgana Island and dumped him down on the beach with his baggage, just below Thusby's bungalow. The schooner was due in a day or two, so it did not stop, but, having a favoring wind, picked up its boat and filled away.

The stranger stood beside his bundles on the white and burning sand, waiting for Thusby, who was walking down from his bungalow to welcome the visitor. This newcomer wore a heavy and embowering cork sun-helmet of white with a pale green *puggaree* drooping over his neck; he had on the ordinary white coat and trousers of duck, a trifle soiled after the passage down from Manila in the schooner.

From the watch pocket of the trousers, just above the belt, hung a bit of wide black ribbon which was split at the bottom after the manner of a battleship's burgee, and on it was the filligreed Greek letters of a university fraternity embellished with chip diamonds. The man's face was comfortably fleshed into well-fed roundness, though he had a ruddiness of skin which indicated that he was accustomed to a life in the open. He was big and sturdy looking in comparison with the slightness of Thusby, who was now close to him.

Thusby was in charge of a detachment of company police on Rasgana—a few men who prevented raids from adjoining islands, put down head-hunting among the natives and preserved a certain amount of order without attempting to control the tribes. A tall, slender man was Thusby, with a lean and sun-browned jaw. His gray eyes had a peering look about them, as if he had spent most of his life squinting at the sights on rifles—which he had. He wore khaki riding-breeches that had been washed in salt water till they were bleached to the creamy color of buckskin; faded canvas leggings, and a felt hat of the American cavalry. His shirt was of a tawny pongee silk, a color that merged well with the jungle during the dry season. About his middle there was a belt studded with cartridge clips, and on each hip hung heavy box-like automatic pistols with the butts free to the hand in the open holsters.

He looked like a man who would do almost anything with amazing precision—anything, at least, in the fighting line. For Thusby, before he joined the company police, had served with Chaffee in China and the Philippines.

"My name is Wheaton," began the stranger, "Mortimer Wheaton, the butterfly expert. You are Mr. Thusby, in command here, I presume."

"Correct, sir," said Thusby, "What can I do for you?"

"I have a letter from the manager in Manila," said Wheaton, and he handed it over with a genial smile. "A couple of years ago I found a rare specimen in Borneo, which I believed was blown up there by the monsoon from this island."

Thusby glanced at the letter. It was written by an official of the company who had never been to Rasgana and knew little of the place—one of those letters in which strangers are perfunctorily passed along as a matter of courtesy.

"Probably you've heard, Mr. Wheaton, that the natives on this island are a dangerous lot. Did they tell you that in Manila?"

"I didn't inquire," said Wheaton calmly. "You see, I'm not new to the tropics. I'm acquainted with many of the wild races."

"Oh, are you?" thought Thusby; but to Wheaton he suggested that they go up to the bungalow, leaving the baggage to be brought by servants. "There are five white men here," said Thusby as they walked up the beach. "The other four have gone into the hills to bring back a bad character—a native chief named Asama—and he's one of our worst little head-hunters on the island. They've got him, and I'm expecting my men to be in at any time now."

"Isn't there a great deal of talk about taking heads—and little actual head-hunting?" asked Wheaton. "I generally find that wild natives are not as bad as they are painted."

Thusby gave him a sidelong glance.

"As far as this island goes, they are bad enough," he said. "I'd advise you to keep close to my bungalow when you're after butterflies—and not be alone."

"Oh, that's not my idea at all," said Wheaton. "I shall have to go over the island pretty thoroughly—across the hills anyway, and perhaps around the whole of the shore. I want to finish the job, and explore carefully."

Thusby stared at him.

"Then, of course, you'll want some of my men with you—a guard?"

"Not at all," said Wheaton airily. "I am competent to go it alone."

"Alone!" cried Thusby. "Why, that's sure death!"

Wheaton shrugged his shoulders with a self-satisfied air.

"I am accustomed to taking chances," he said.

"Then you are well armed, I take it?"

"I never carry weapons," said Wheaton. "I believe that a show of force only brings hostility from jungle people," and he glanced significantly at Thusby's revolvers and supply of cartridges, as if in disapproval. "I never have trouble with wild natives," he added. "I have always been able to smile my way among them—I give kindness, and get it in return."

"Do you mean to tell me, sir," demanded the amazed Thusby, "that you intend to go into those hills over my bungalow without any guard or any weapons?"

"That's precisely what I mean, Mr. Thusby," said Wheaton.

They had now reached the steps of the bungalow, and went up the steps to the veranda. Wheaton dropped into a grass chair and bounced his helmet on the flooring, relieved at being out of the pitiless heat of the sun.

"Then if you go out alone, you go at your own risk and peril," said Thusby.

Wheaton laughed merrily.

"Mr. Thusby," he began, "I'm not afraid of your simple, gentle, child-like natives. I've seen consuls go into fits because I summered in Mongolia where there were Chinese bandits—and they rented camels to me; I was told on the Arabian coast that I'd be killed by Bedouins because I was a Christian—and they wanted me to marry into the tribe. The same almost in Borneo. Why, if I had listened to British residents, I'd never have a specimen worth more than a postage stamp."

Thusby shut his teeth down hard on his pipe-stem.

"Wasn't there a gunboat in the offing, or soldiers who would punish the natives in case they killed you?" he asked.

"Not always," said Wheaton. "I've often been hundreds of miles from civilization."

"Then the natives had learned their lessons before you got there—and had good memories. I've heard that kind of talk before. The legations in Peking prayed that the relief forces would arrive in time to save the women and children, and a lot of rough-neck soldiers and marines got

there. They saved the women with Krag rifles, for which the rescued people thanked Providence. But the Boxers had their own ideas—and haven't forgotten yet."

"I believe that the meek shall inherit the earth," said Wheaton quietly.

"Yes, six feet of it," said Thusby. "Or they'll inherit while somebody is protecting them while they inherit. Remember, this is Rasgana, and it is the head season, and the natives are mad as hornets because we have caught Asama. If you go into these hills alone, it means death, and we'll risk our lives to show these natives that they can't kill white men and get away with it.

"Seven years ago there was a sailor who killed the mate of a tramp steamer down this way, and swam ashore in this neighborhood. He got into the hills, and that was the last seen of him. His head is hanging in a head-house somewhere up in those jungles above us."

"Nevertheless, I'll start in the morning," said Wheaton, and Thusby shrugged his shoulders as if he were unconcerned further in the matter.

"I'll send a couple of black boys down for your baggage," said the policeman; and, leaning out over the end of the veranda, he raised his voice in a queer high-pitched cackle.

Two natives came out of the palm grove in the rear of the house. They were naked except for wire-grass fringes about their middles and breech-cloths of trade cotton. Their long, black hair hung over their shoulders, and they walked with the peculiar high-stepping stride of men accustomed to hunting in close jungle.

Thusby cackled at them again, and they hustled down toward the beach to bring up Wheaton's stuff—a light tent, specimen cases, butterfly-nets and a haversack.

"Dravidian types!" exclaimed Wheaton. "What splendid creatures of the wilds!"

"Yes," said Thusby, "they are."

And then he added dryly:

"One was caught with heads, and the other ran *amok* and killed five Malay women with a knife made from an old file. We hold 'em here by feeding 'em, but they don't quite understand that they are prisoners. The company has no power of trials or execution, you see, but I'm supposed to keep such birds herded up and out of mischief—if I don't happen to kill 'em when I'm catching 'em."

"It seems so unfair," said Wheaton. "White men with modern weapons, interfering with the child-like people of the jungle. That is what makes them lawless—they realize their helplessness, and they protest in their own way. After all, this is their country."

"But they would be at constant warfare with each other, if we did not interfere," said Thusby. "We have practically put down head-hunting and tribal feuds. You believe we make them lawless, when as a matter of fact we protect the weak against the strong, and give the women and children a chance for life. We five white men on this island prevent it from becoming a shambles."

"Do you teach them to follow the ways of peace by making war upon them? Why, we white people ought to be able to teach them something better than modern ways of killing!"

"I am dealing with things as they are, not as they ought to be," said Thusby. "If you want to go up in the hills and take your own chances, that's your affair—I can't prevent it. You're likely to want a couple of my men—and their modern weapons—before you're done. And if you do, you'll not be the first trusting white man that's prayed for one of your own kind to hurry to his rescue—with a gun."

And Thusby departed from the veranda abruptly, to tell the Chinese cook to get lunch ready.

Wheaton kept off the subject of the natives during the meal that followed on the veranda, but he did get from Thusby some rough maps of the hill trails across the island, and all the information that the policeman could give on going one way and returning another. It was Wheaton's plan to make a circuit of the interior part of the island, unless he got the specimens he desired on the first or second day out.

The trip he settled on would take him a week or more, and he announced his intention of leaving early the next morning. His heavy baggage would remain at Thusby's bungalow; and the butterfly-hunter carried only a light silk tent, his mosquito net, simple cooking-utensils and a supply of the lightest and most concentrated foods.

"The darn fool!" growled Thusby as he saw Wheaton disappear into the jungle just after daylight. "I sometimes believe that the Almighty has His own scheme for

getting rid of people who lack a decent supply of brains—they just go and get themselves killed, and that settles the problem."

He anxiously scanned the higher and open spots in the jungle trails for signs of his four men who were out for Asama, the head-hunting native, but there was no sign of the party.

WHEATON struck into the damp and dark jungle, finding the trails to be closely overgrown with bushes, so that he frequently had to push his way through them. The path he was following zig-zagged up the mountain slopes, and when he had been going for an hour or more he came upon crude clearings with their thin patches of native rice. In these patches he knew he had his best chance for butterflies, for otherwise they soared over the sun-bathed tops of the thick jungles, far out of his sight and reach.

But here there was a plenitude of insect life, for the birds were wary of traps and gummed branches, which the natives had set up to keep the rice-eaters from fretting the growing crops. And Wheaton observed crude charms in the corners of the fields, to keep away evil spirits. Somewhere in the field, he knew, there must be buried a human head for the purpose of assuring a good crop of the wild rice. He was now in the haunts of the jungle people, though he did not know how far away their huts might be.

As he stood for a time in the edge of the clearing to watch such vagrant butterflies as flitted among the blossoms of the creepers he was conscious of watchers. And as he moved on in search of another clearing—for the butterflies he observed here were not rare to him—he realized that he was being furtively followed. But this did not worry him, and he did not stop and peer into the bushes when he heard slight sounds that told him natives were close at hand, though hidden.

Toward noon he came upon some rude shelters, which at first he supposed to have been long abandoned. But he found a small fire burning, and about it the bamboo vessels of crude cookery. He saw now that these had been used in the last few minutes for brewing dart-poison. There were bamboo spoons covered with the brown, sticky mess of the dried *ipoh*, or poison from the *ipoh*-tree.

One of these trees was not far away, its bark cross-scored with knives so that the poison-juice was dripping from the frayed bark. He was a little worried now, for he had no wish to be struck by a poisoned arrow—and he understood from the fire and the other signs that the natives had fled before his approach.

Careful not to walk about the clearing too much, for fear of spring-traps with poisoned arrows, Wheaton slung off his pack and made himself some tea over the fire, using dry brush to build up the flame under his tiny aluminum kettle. And after he had refreshed himself, he lingered in this spot, hoping that some of the natives would return and that he would be able to make friends with them before night.

Before long he heard them moving close by in the brush. When he disregarded the lurkers, they became bolder, and moved out into sight—at least he could see a black, grizzled head or a brown shoulder in the shadowy recesses of the surrounding jungle. Now he raised a hand and made the peace sign.

They were reluctant to come in, but Wheaton knew that in time their curiosity about the white man would overcome

their mistrust, especially when they came to understand that his intentions were not hostile. One thing he feared—that they might mistake him for one of Thusby's policemen. To reassure them on that point he took up his butterfly net and pursued and captured a stray butterfly. Then he sat down and smoked in the shade, working with his field specimen case that they might see his purpose in being there held no menace for them.

Presently a brown man stepped out of the jungle. He was naked except for a breech-clout of some poor cotton stuff which he had probably obtained from traders in exchange for dammar. His long, black hair was down his back, held off his face by a band of thin rattan about his forehead. He carried a blow-gun in his hand, and from his hip hung the bamboo case which held its arrows.

Wheaton rose and made the peace sign, beckoning the savage toward him. The native was reluctant to approach too closely to Wheaton; but, calling to his fellows, the black urged them to go with him. In a minute Wheaton was surrounded by a dozen or more half-naked men, all armed either with blow-guns or parangs of the Malay type, the blades of the latter being encased between flat strips of wood, and tied.

And Wheaton now observed with some disquiet that the blow-guns all had spear-points lashed to the muzzle-ends—a sign that the natives were out on a war jaunt, and not simply hunting. He smiled upon them.

Wheaton tried them with a few words of Malay, but they gave him no heed. If they understood, they pretended that they could not. They crowded about him, examining his gear, and thinking that his specimens of butterflies were some kind of charms. They handled his stuff like curious children, gabbling among themselves and refusing to meet Wheaton's eyes when he looked at them. This, he knew, was not good. But he continued to smile at them.

One of the bolder ones reached forward and fingered the black ribbon-fob which stuck from his trouser watch-pocket. The filigreed and gem-shot fraternity insignia attracted him mightily.

With such a charm he felt that he would be safe from the spear of any enemy, and from the bullets of the white man. He snatched it away and ran into the jungle.

Wheaton did not move. He knew that he was in great danger, and that this was no time to make any protest. He smiled upon the others about him; and, emboldened by the success of the fob thief, another native grabbed the butterfly net and made off with it.

Wheaton now stepped forward into the ring of natives. He wanted to get clear of them in such a way that none would be behind yet he did not dare walk backward, for that would prove to the natives that he was afraid. He held his hands before him, to push them gently out of his way, and they fell back—then a tangle of rattan vines was thrown over his head from the rear, and he found himself enmeshed.

Before he had a chance to try to get loose from the rattans he was seized from behind, thrown down and bound. The natives yelled wildly at having thus captured him, and dozens of others came running out of the jungle. And now this fierce and frenzied host danced howling around Wheaton, fighting among themselves over his equipment.

This uproar went on for a few minutes, and then the savages suddenly fell silent. There came to Wheaton's ears the distant report of a revolver, dull and heavy, for the jungle muffled the sound. But Wheaton thought it could not be far away.

Some of the black men made off in the direction of the shot. The others talked among themselves, and Wheaton could see that they shifted their dart-cases behind them, while others with the parangs shoved them forward so the weapons should be ready to their hands.

Now there came several shots, and the distant shouts of natives. Then a scattered fusillade, as if several men were firing. Wheaton divined that Thusby's men—the four he had said were out for Asama, the head-hunter—had been attacked by a strong force, and were defending themselves.

Of all the lot who had set upon Wheaton, but four natives now remained. He understood that they had been left to guard him, for they squatted around, listening to the sounds of distant battle and talking among themselves.

The sounds of firing went on for fifteen minutes or more, and then there was a lull. Wheaton lay on his back in the blinding

sun, hoping that Thusby's men had overcome their attackers, and might come along that trail and rescue him.

Before long they heard a noise in the jungle. The natives stood up, peering into the brush, their weapons ready. Somebody was stumbling through the thick underbrush, as if in flight, and hurrying in a panic to find a trail.

Wheaton turned his head, and saw a white man stagger out into the clearing—a man without a hat, in a blood-streaked gray shirt, and a revolver in a wavering hand. His other hand was held to his head.

"Hello!" cried Wheaton. "Help me—you're one of Thusby's men—they've got me!"

The man swayed unsteadily on his feet, and two of the natives scampered away. The other two retreated a trifle, but one lifted his blow-gun, slipping in a dart.

The policeman slowly lifted his revolver-hand, and taking good aim, fired. The man with the blow-gun fell. His companion grabbed him by the heels and dragged him away into the jungle.

The policeman staggered forward to Wheaton, and the butterfly hunter saw now that the man was terribly wounded. He still kept his hand to his head, behind his left ear. His left side was drenched with blood from a bad cut in the neck close to the shoulder.

Wheaton fought to get loose, but, finding himself unable to help himself, asked the policeman to cut the thongs about him.

"I'm Bradden," said the man as he collapsed close to Wheaton. "They've killed Whitlaw and Brennan—and I don't know where Welch is. I'm done for myself—but I'll do my best for you——"

His voice failed him, and he lay on his right side, the revolver out of his reach. His face was ghastly gray, and Wheaton was sure the man could not live long.

Bradden recovered after a while and set to work to cut Wheaton free. But he had not the strength to drive the blade of his knife through the half-green rattans, so Wheaton took it from him, once his hands were free, and worked hastily.

"Look out for your revolver," warned Wheaton to the gasping man.

"Empty," whispered Bradden. "Yell—for Thusby—he'll be coming this way—he heard——"

And he fainted.

Wheaton freed himself, and pulling off his light cotton undershirt, bound as best he could the terrific wound in Bradden's neck. But the policeman did not recover his senses, and before long Wheaton knew him to be dead. He hid the body in the edge of the jungle, that the natives might not take the head; and then, putting on his coat, he fled down the trail in hopes of evading any more of the hostiles.

He had not gone far before he came out upon a hummock that gave him a view of the sea below, and part of the rising upland beneath him. And all at once he caught sight of a man out on the edge of a ravine along a hog-back of land that ran down as a buttress from the heights—it was Thusby!

Wheaton whistled and waved his arms to draw the attention of Thusby. The latter turned, and, looking, saw him, and beckoned him down. Wheaton was about to go on and join him, but stopped, for he saw Thusby lift a revolver and fire. The report came soon after, and three times more Thusby fired, evidently hard-pressed by a throng of natives. Wheaton understood, when he saw Thusby push along the edge of the ravine, that the natives were trying to force him over the steep cliff. But there were places where the ravine was very narrow, and Thusby was seeking for one of these spots, that he might get across.

Wheaton waited to see how the business might turn out. Thusby kept firing, stopping now and then to reload. The brush shut off Wheaton's view of the natives, but now and then he caught the glint of a spear-head over the green sea of the underbrush in what had once been a clearing.

Thusby crouched and ran across a bare spot—and then there came a flight of spears. The policeman fell, and Wheaton saw the natives rush in upon the stricken man. Realizing now that he was probably the only white man left on the island, Wheaton plunged along the trail which led to Thusby's house, thinking that there might be arms there and that if he got to the bungalow in time he might secure them and hold off the attackers. Also, he knew that he must get to the shore, for his only chance of escape lay in some boat which might take him off the island.

He stopped for nothing now. When

thorny creepers caught his clothes, he pulled himself free regardless of the fabric; he scratched his arms and legs, yet he kept on, pushing the bushes out of the way, mindful only of the fact that he kept to the proper trail.

Once, when he heard voices, he stopped and listened. But when he knew them to be natives off on the left, he plunged ahead. And when he came to an open space, he ran into a group of natives sitting round in a ring, as if in a council. Almost breathless, he turned to run, but he was knocked down by a native with a club.

He saw the flash of several spears as he fell, but one man raised his voice among the natives, and the attackers did not strike him or thrust at him. But he was held down and bound securely, and with exclamations of satisfaction the natives returned to their discussion.

WHEATON lay on his back, close to the rim of the jungle, but his shoulders were lifted somewhat so that he had a view of the natives. There were wounded among them, which indicated that these were some of the men who had assailed Thusby—and probably those that had killed him. And their tempers were such that Wheaton knew his chance would be small with them. He felt that he had come to his end this time.

One old man sat on a fallen tree. He was chattering away vehemently in a sing-song way, but only a few of the others stood by and listened to him with any attention. This old one appeared to be some kind of chief—or perhaps witch-doctor—and it looked to Wheaton as if he were the subject of the oldster's harangue.

Another man stood apart—a big fellow, of greater girth and muscle than the others. His brown chest was covered with a kind of shield made from pounded bark which was strapped across his back with thongs made from dried sinews. His head was bound with a rag of a turban, and knotted in the back so that the free ends fell down upon the back of his neck after the fashion of a *puggaree* to a helmet. This man, too, was talking, though in a quieter manner than the old witch-doctor; and he was holding the attention of the natives better than the ancient fellow.

In time some decision was reached, and the whole party prepared to move out. Three young men came to Wheaton, and, loosing his feet, pulled him up roughly and drove him ahead of them into the jungle.

The underbrush was thick here, and was hard going for Wheaton, as his hands were bound behind his back. It was well along in the afternoon, and he was faint from hunger and thirst and dizzy from lying much in the sun. He fell many times, but was prodded up by the three men, who gave him their full attention. When they came to fallen trees he was dragged over them by his heels, so that his torn clothes were ripped from him till he was almost naked.

Before long they reached a village of tree-houses, and a long, low building of thatch and bamboo with galleries under the eaves. Women and children welcomed the returning war-party, and there was a great gabbling. The men then gathered in a hut-like building which Wheaton had not observed before, for it stood inside a thicket. He was thrown down and his legs bound again, while all the warriors went inside for a council and a jubilation.

The sun was well down by this time, and already the swift night was descending. Wheaton could see the glimmering fires of the village, not a dozen yards away, through the thicket. He was thankful for the coolness of the place where he lay, for his head ached violently and his throat was burning with thirst. But he thought little for his misery, because he was sure he should never see another day.

The council over, the men returned to the village and sat around their fires, eating. They made a great racket, for they were now masters of the island, having undoubtedly disposed of the hated white men, who interfered with their head-hunting and killed or captured their most daring warriors and takers of heads. From the many times he heard the name of Asama, Wheaton assumed that the man had been rescued from Thusby's police, and all his captors killed.

Wheaton heard cautious footsteps close at hand—a mere rustling of the leaves, as somebody pressed through the close-growing thicket from the side away from the village. He twisted himself about in an attempt to look in that direction, and wondering who could be lurking in the brush.

He wondered if it might be one of Thusby's men, who had escaped alive and sought to save the stranger from the wild hillmen.

A hand closed over Wheaton's mouth. At first he thought that he was to be seized, but in a minute he understood that the hand was intended to prevent him from crying out. Then above him, seen in the faint flickers of light through the thicket, Wheaton saw the head and shoulders of the big native—the man with the turban and the bark shield on his breast.

The hand was removed from his mouth, and Wheaton was lifted to a sitting position, and a length of bamboo full of water was held to his lips. He sucked up the water to the last drop, and once more a hand was clapped over his mouth to prevent him from uttering any sound.

Soon the big native pulled Wheaton carefully under the house, and, pressing upward with his shoulders, lifted some of the flooring, which was probably loosely laid down upon the bamboo floor-beams. Working carefully, the big fellow hove Wheaton upward and laid him on the floor inside and covered him with mats. Wheaton felt his hand squeezed, as in a silent signal to remain still, and the native left him.

Shortly afterward there was a wild yell outside—some one had discovered that the white prisoner was missing! There was a clamor of voices, and the natives dashed away into the jungle, answering the call of some man who seemed to be directing the way in which the pursuit should be made.

The voices of the men in the jungle became fainter in the hillsides above the village, but Wheaton could hear them beating the bush for him. As he lay almost smothering under the pile of mats, he wondered how long it would be before he would be found. And he could not understand why he had not been freed, if the big native intended that the white prisoner was to escape death.

He felt the house vibrate as some one came up the ladder. The flooring snapped under the weight of an intruder. He thought that some one who had remained in the village had come blundering in, and might discover him.

But the mats moved cautiously. Once more a hand was put on his mouth and held for a second, and Wheaton knew that the native who had hidden him had returned. He was breathing heavily, and the butterfly hunter suspected that this fellow had been the one to give the alarm that the white prisoner had escaped—and had led the chase in the hills to draw the warriors away on a false scent.

Having uncovered Wheaton, the native now cut the thongs which bound the prisoner, and Wheaton sat up. He bumped his head on something that bounced away, and swung back in the darkness and rattled against him. It was dark in this upper chamber of the house, but presently the native crawled to the front of the shack and pulled inward a lattice window which hung under the gable.

The light from the fires in the village flooded the interior of the place, and Wheaton saw what he took to be a lot of baskets hanging from the rafters by single strips of rattan—each basket on a single length. He pushed one of these aside, for it cut off his view of the village, and his hand sank in a soft, fuzzy substance. It was hair! And he knew that he was inside the tribe's headhouse!

Wheaton suffered a chill, and the scalp on the back of his head had a curling, crawling sensation. Against the light of the fires in the village he could see the native crouched inside the window, just under the dozens of black, bulbous heads swinging gently in the soft breeze that floated in through the opening. The cords which held the ghastly relics were put through the tops of the skulls, and held inside by toggles. And there was a nerve-racking rattle as the heads moved.

The butterfly-hunter remembered now some of the things that Thusby had said to him, and he remembered poor Thusby fighting for his life against a swarm of warriors—and losing! And he was conscious of some vague, mental reckoning of the value of Thusby's life, and the lives of his four men, in comparison with these men of the jungle—the natives who Wheaton himself had insisted were simple, and gentle, and childlike.

Thusby had known them for what they were, reflected Wheaton, and now he knew them also. But this headhouse was no place for smiles.

The native in the window listened to the distant calling of the parties seeking in the jungle for the white man. In a few minutes Wheaton saw the black come crawling back

under the heads. He felt for Wheaton's hand, and pulled him gently along. Wheaton crawled after him to the back of the building. Another "window" on the far side was opened, and the native put down a crude ladder into the darkness.

Wheaton gained the ground safely, and followed his leader into the rim of the jungle. The white man felt a strip of rattan pressed into his hand, and the native drew it taut. Wheaton understood this was a leading-line. Then the native swung off outside the village in the blackness of the jungle, moving away from the sounds of the searching natives on higher ground.

Presently they were in a trail, and they traveled fast, going down for the coast. Wheaton knew that any descending path meant they were headed for the sea, and at last he felt hope.

In an hour they had gained a beach; and, keeping inside the shadow-rim of the jungle to avoid the bright moonlight, the native guided Wheaton to a rocky shore with overhanging cliffs. And here they began to climb over big boulders along the sheer sides of the precipice rising above the sea. Suddenly the native popped into the entrance to a cave, high above the breakers.

Wheaton climbed up the wrack of surf-swept rocks and scrambled into the cave. He knew it would serve as a hiding-place till late the next day, when the schooner which had brought him would be returning to Thusby's bungalow. The vessel would pass close in here, and Wheaton could signal it and be taken off.

The native stood in the entrance to the cave, and waved his arm seaward, as a sign that the schooner should be carefully watched for by the fugitive. Wheaton stepped close to the burly figure outlined against the moonlight, and patted him on the bare back in gratitude for having rescued him from the headhouse and the murderous tribesmen.

"Good man!" exclaimed Wheaton, thankfully and earnestly attempting to express his appreciation.

He had nothing left to reward the black with, for all that was left to the butterfly-hunter now was the remnants of his white trousers.

The native grunted, and moved as if to go down over the lip of the cave.

"You good man!" went on Wheaton, grasping the native's big hand and shaking it heartily. "You save my life—savvy!"

And then in an outburst of emotion as he thought that but for this native his own head would be swinging in the headhouse, he cried out:

"Oh, you have proved that what I said to Thusby was right! You poor savage, you can not understand that you are a living example of the fact that there is goodness and humanity in the wild folk of the jungles! Poor Thusby! If he'd only used *my* methods in dealing with them, he might have saved the lives of his men, and his own. I've had a tight squeak, but I've come out all right, just as I said I should. Good man, you! Good man of the wilderness!"

The native dropped to the ground; and, shaking his head from side to side and slapping his bare leg with his hand, he broke out into gurgling, hilarious laughter.

"CAN it be that you understand?" cried the astounded Wheaton. "Do you know enough of my language to realize how grateful I am that you have saved my life?"

"Sure; I understand, matey!" came the startling reply. "Say, you're funny! Are you boob enough to think a black —— would have slipped you away? That anybody but a white man would have bothered about saving your head?"

And the "native" burst out into laughter once more.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Wheaton. "You're white!"

"I was once," said the man; "and maybe I'll be one again—a regular white man."

"But how have you lived here—among natives—and not been killed? The fact that you have, proves I'm right—I'm right——"

"Forget it! I've got tattoo marks on me that the —— thought was charms—the Statue of Liberty on my chest—they thought *that* was a god. And I done a few sleight-o'-hand tricks that scared 'em so they broke out in a rash. But this was the best——"

And the man held up a small object which caught a glimmer of moonlight from the entrance to the cave, and glittered.

"What is it?" asked Wheaton.

For reply, the man swept it to his mouth, and blew from it a few swift bars of jig music—a harmonica!

"They think the devil makes the music—or that I'm a boss devil," said the man. "And as long as I've got this—well, I've got their goats. But they've done for Thusby and his men—the lot of 'em—and Asama is loose again. It's him that wanted your head in particular."

"Then I'm not saved by a native, after all," said Wheaton. "But how are we to escape from the island?"

"We!" said the man. "I'm not going. You stick here till morning. The schooner is due back then, and it'll pass close in here. Wave what's left of your pants to 'em, and they'll take you off."

"You not going!" cried Wheaton. "What are you going to do?"

"Go back with that black gang of mine."

"But why not come along with me?"

The man hesitated before he replied.

"Say, matey," he began, "I'm not hankerin' none for white men—not in these parts anyhow. And seein's I've got you out of a bad jam, you might do a good turn for me."

"Anything!" exclaimed Wheaton. "I'll help you——"

"You just forget about me when you go aboard the schooner, that's all—nary a word about a white man livin' with the blacks."

"The sailor!" whispered Wheaton. "The man who—seven years——"

"Sure; I reckon Thusby told you about me," growled the sailor. "They think the natives got me. Well, if the whites catch me I'll stretch a rope. Yes, I killed a man—a human devil of a second mate—that was in a company tramp. That's why I'll take my chances with the natives. I'll take the gamble with the blacks. Well, I'll drift back before I'm missed, and they suspect that I rigged it on 'em to git you away."

And he slid toward the lip of the cave.

"Wait!" begged Wheaton. "You've done me a greater service than I can pay you for, and I want to help you. What can I do to help——"

"Keep your mouth shut about me; that's what, matey."

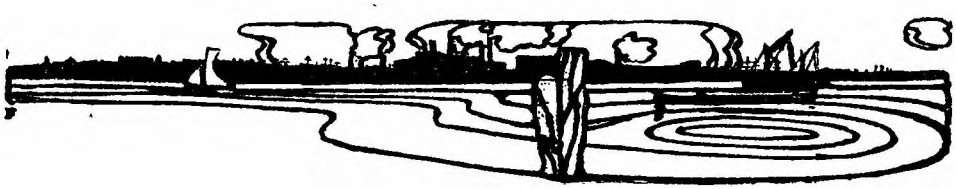
He let his feet drop over the edge of the cliff, to feel for the stones below.

"But I can use influence for you perhaps," went on Wheaton hastily. "My name is Mortimer Wheaton, of the University of California. My home is in San Francisco, and the street——"

"'Frisco!" exclaimed the sailor. "'Frisco!" and he stared out over the sea that sparkled in the moon-track. "What wouldn't I give to be tonight at Lotta's Fountain and see the crowds go down Market, and the light in the clock of the Ferry, and the trolleys buzzin' up Kearney! Say, matey, as you stand on the corner and look down Third Street, you see a big electric sign with the letters E-A-T-S—that's Gunboat Joe's hash-house, and I'd sell a leg to go in there for a plate of beans! So you're from 'Frisco! So long, matey—lay low till you've got the schooner slap abeam of the point o' rocks."

And the head and shoulders of the white man who had saved Wheaton slipped out of sight below the edge of the cave.

The butterfly-hunter heard the rattle of loose stones and leaned out to look down over the brink of the precipice. He saw the figure of the sailor disappear into the jungle.



The Wolf-Chaser

A Complete Novelette

By Harold Lamb

Author of "Rose Face," "The Gate in the Sky," etc.

CHAPTER I

ARUK AND THE KRIT

BOURAGUT, the great golden eagle, was flying high over the snows and rocks of the Altai Mountains. It was a brisk day in Spring, that year 1660—eventful year for Central Asia. Six feet from wing to wing, the golden eagle soared, alone and calmly bent on his own business.

Rarely indeed was *Bouragut* to be tamed, to be hooded and shackled into a falcon, used by men to strike down prey. He went as he pleased, for he feared no one. Alone of the feathered folk he would sweep down, to attack with talons and curved beak foxes and even wolves. For that he was called the Wolf-Chaser, and men were proud to have him at their call.

Unlike the vulture, the golden eagle did not wait for others to make his kill. His telescope-like eyes sought for game on the mountain slope, peering down between the cloud-flocks.

He was *Bouragut*, the Wolf-Chaser; his brown, black-and-white-flecked coat of feathers glistened; his wings, moving lazily, supported him in the vastness where he had his kingdom by right.

Yet it was not a king but an old falconer, a native Mongol and Christian, who had made himself master of *Bouragut*.

FROM a thicket by the snow of the Urkhogaitu Pass, Aruk the hunter looked up, recognized the golden eagle and waved cheerfully. He was a young Tatar with alert eyes. His hut was in the thicket, nearly two miles above the verdant plains of Tartary, to the north, because he was the keeper of the gate. It was his duty to watch for enemies coming over the pass from the south, where was the land of the Kalmuck and the Turk.

Just now he was stringing his bow with fresh gut, in an excellent humor. That morning the omens on the mountainside had been good. A rainbow had come after dawn. Now the eagles were on the wing, and—yes; he cocked his head attentively—his horse neighed.

All at once Aruk was on his feet, his bow strung. Up the pass another horse had neighed. Now the snow in the pass was still unbroken, for no riders had come over the Urkhogaitu—the Gate of the Winds—that Winter, owing to the severe cold and the storms that swept the gorge between the rocky peaks of the Altai.

Still, a horse had neighed, and where there was a horse in the Urkhogaitu, there was a rider. In a moment Aruk had

mounted his shaggy pony—a Mongol of the plains will not move afoot if he can ride—and had drawn an arrow from the quiver at his saddle-peak.

When he broke from a fringe of firs into the trail Aruk found himself facing a tall horseman. In fact the horse—the Tatar's eye made swift note of this—was massive and long-bodied—a bay stallion. Aruk had never seen such a beast nor such a rider.

The man who came down the pass had deep-set eyes under shaggy brows, eyes that held a fire of their own. Aruk's bow was lifted, the shaft taut on the string. A slight easing of the fingers would have sent the arrow into the throat of the stranger, above the fur-tipped cloak that covered his long body.

The rider halted when he reached Aruk, but apparently for the purpose of looking out from the pass over the wide plain of Tartary, visible here for the first time from the pass—the plain speckled with brown herds and adorned with the deep blue of lakes, like jewels upon green cloth.

Here and there below him were the tiny lines of animals that barely seemed to move, camels of the caravans that came from China to Muscovy.

Under a close-trimmed mustache the thin lips of the stranger smiled, as if he made out a curious jest in the aspect of the sparkling plain.

He looked at Aruk, and the hunter lowered his bow.

"This one is a falcon," thought Aruk, taking counsel with himself. "May the —— eat me though if he isn't a Frank."*

In the minute just passed Aruk had seen that another Frank, one of the two servants who rode after the leader, had drawn a long pistol and pointed it at him. The hunter had no great respect for Turkish pistols, but it occurred to him that the rider in front of him must be a personage of importance if others would fight to see that his path was cleared.

Surely the Frank was a chieftain from the west, from the lands of the Christians that lay beyond Muscovy—so Aruk had heard. Being keeper of the pass many tales came to his ears.

"Are you a khan—a chief?" he growled.

The tall stranger seemed to find food for mirth in this. He half-smiled, and when he did so his thin, dark face with its down-curving nose was likable.

"I am not a khan," he made response tolerantly, and—to Aruk's surprize—in fair Tatar speech.

Yet his manner was that of one who was accustomed to pass sentries without being challenged, even to having honor shown him.

The stranger was a man in ripe middle age. His heavy boots were of finest morocco and well cleaned. The doublet under the torn cloak was rich blue velvet, and, above all, the hilt of the curiously thin, straight sword was chased with gold.

"Then you are an envoy from God."

"I?" The Frank raised his brows. "No!"

Now the last traveler from the lands of the Franks, the only one who, to Aruk's knowledge, had come over the Urkhogaitu Pass, had been a priest. Those few among the Tatars that had been baptized by the priest called him an envoy from God. The lives of envoys were inviolate. So the priest had not been slain. Something in the face of the tall Frank reminded Aruk of the priest.

"If you are not an envoy or a chief what is your business in Tartary, Sir Frank?"

" 'Tis the devil's affair, not yours."

Aruk blinked reflectively. The stranger might be speaking the truth. There was an eagle's feather in his hunting-cap. And the lords of Galdan Khan, chief of the Kalmucks who were deadly enemies of the Tatars, wore such feathers. Moreover there were Franks among the Turks and Kalmucks of Galdan Khan, mercenaries from Genoa and Greece. This might be one of them, sent as a spy to gather news before a raid on the part of Galdan Khan.

That would be the devil's business surely. And that was why Aruk had all but shot down the stranger with his bow.

Yet Aruk, whose life hung on his wit, could read the faces of men. He knew that no spy from the Turks would come to the fair fields of Tartary wearing one of the feathers of Galdan Khan. Nor would he come boldly in daylight with blunt words on his lips and a contempt for the keeper of the pass.

Seeing that the stranger was paying no further attention to him, Aruk drew aside and spoke under his breath to the dog-faced Mongol who was the second servant.

The Mongol, a scowling, sheepskin-clad Dungan, answered Aruk's questions briefly:

*A European.

"He was a paladin of the Franks. But now he has no tribe to follow him. Still, there is gold in his girdle and costly garments in the packs on the horses. I will tell Cheke Noyon, the khan of the Altai, in the city of Kob, to let out his life, so I will have some of the gold——"

"*Hai*," Aruk grunted, "where are you from, dog-face?"

The Mongol's eyes shifted.

"I was a captive of the Christian Poles. This warrior was fighting under their banner. He freed me, telling me to guide him to Tartary. When I saw first him he lived in a castle with servants. Now he has only one dog to follow him. As he makes his bed, he shall lie in it."

Aruk's lined face twisted reflectively.

"You are a jackal, and the skies will spew out your soul when it leaves your body. *Kai*. It is so."

"Nay," the servant grinned surlily, "I will tell my tale to the *baksa*, the witch-doctors, and they will make a sacrifice for me to the spirits. They have no love for the Krits* who come here and say that they can work wonders. It is so."

"What is the name of the Frank?"

"He calls himself Hu-go."

Impatiently the archer moved to the side of the Frank as the latter gathered up his reins.

"An hour's ride, Sir Hu-go, will bring you to the hut of Ostrim, the falconer. He is a Krit, like you, and he will not steal. Beware of the *baksa*, for they will strip you of wealth and skin."

When the three riders had vanished around a bend in the gorge, Aruk settled himself in his saddle to watch the Urkhogaitu. He wanted to be very sure that no Kalmucks were coming behind the stranger called Hugo.

Although the spot was exposed to the icy winds that made a channel of the pass, the archer did not move for hours. He watched the golden eagle circling over the network of forest, muttering the while a song that was half a prayer chant:

"Oh, bright falcon,
My own brother,
Thou soarest high.
Thou seest far——"

A slight sound on the mountainside behind him caused Aruk at length to wheel and ride swiftly down in the trail left by the three travelers. Other ears might have caught it as an echo, but Aruk was sure that a shot had been fired near the hut of Ostrim the falconer.

THE reason for his haste was soon apparent. Half-way down the mountainside, where the snow lay only in patches in the gullies and the larch thickets, Aruk came upon a brown-faced maiden no larger than he.

From a clump of larches she was peering, bow in hand, her slant eyes intent on the trail, teeth gleaming between full, red lips.

"*Ohai*, Yulga, daughter of Ostrim," he hailed her, slowing his pony at once in an effort to appear unconcerned, "was the devil firing off his popgun down here, or did a boulder crash from the cliff? I heard——"

"A splendid protector, you," the girl mocked him, unstringing her bow.

The sight of the hunter had relieved her fear and now she teased him.

"You come nimbly after the fight is finished, like a jackal instead of a wolf. Our heads might have been hanging to the saddle-peak of the robber band who just passed this way, for all the aid we had from you!"

Aruk grew red and muttered beneath his breath. Under Yulga's laughter the hunter always waxed clumsy as a bear cub. He despaired of ever gathering together the horses and furs necessary to buy Yulga for his wife from the old Ostrim. In like degree he had small hope that the fair child of the falconer would ever look upon him and smile without mockery.

"Perhaps," pursued Yulga, tossing her long black hair back from her eyes, "it is because you are so tiny that you dare sit up yonder to watch the pass. You think that anybody will take you for a ferret, or a fox looking out of its hole——"

"Peace, little woodpecker," growled the hunter.

His lined cheeks grew red, for he was acutely conscious of his small figure. Although no man might belie Aruk's boldness, or hope to outdo his ready tongue, he was at a loss for words before Yulga.

"Did the Frank draw sword on Ostrim?" he demanded. "I will let the life out of him for that——"

"*Ohai!*"

*Christians.

Yulga threw back her head and laughed delightedly.

"The big Frank would swallow you, pony and arrows, and only swear that his gullet tickled him," she cried. "Nay, the robbers were black-boned Mongols with faces like dogs. Here they are——"

They had come to a clearing where a thatched hut stood among the larches. At the door sat a white-haired Tatar, a small *bouragut* perched on his shoulder. On the rooftree of the dwelling a hawk screamed gutturally, flapping its wings so that the bells on its throat jangled.

On the grass of the clearing lay five bodies, distorted and sprawling. Aruk went from one to another, turning them over with his foot.

"Dead," he commented. "*Hai*—here is that dog-brother who led the Frank. Well, the evil spirits from below will be the gainer by a dung-picker. No one need kill a horse for him to ride in the other world. He turned his back to the simitar, it is clear. Hum—this black beetle was shot in the face."

"By the servant of the Frank."

Ostrim lifted his venerable head and spoke quietly.

"The robbers were four. They sought to pick my poor hearth. As they came up the party of the Frank rode into the clearing. So the black-souled ones scented gold and attacked with their swords, slaying the follower and striking down the old servant, who had no more strength than a sick woman."

"And the Frank—he let out the lives of three?"

"With the point of his sword that is long as a spear. He warded their cuts and thrust, once each time. The Frank wiped his sword in the grass and picked up the servant, who was cut in the belly, and rode off, saying that he sought a hut for the sick man and a doctor to close up his wound."

"He is an old buck, that one," admitted Aruk grimly. "He has a horned soul in him. Three dead with three thrusts! I could do no more with my arrows."

"Aye," responded Yulga, hanging up her bow; "you might do that, Aruk, among the suckling litter of boars up in the larches—if the old sow were away."

"By the mane of my sire!"

Aruk bared his white teeth. He caught the girl by the luxuriant coils of hair that hung down her breast. Her round face he held close to his, while his anger melted.

"Ho, I will bind your tongue for you yet. Now bring me *kumiss* to drink, for I ride to Kob with news. This dawn there were beneficent omens in the pass."

Curiously enough his sudden act quieted the girl, who looked at him long and withdrew for the mare's milk he sought.

Aruk emptied the bowl Yulga brought him at a gulp and wiped his mustaches.

"Ho, it would have been better for the tall warrior if he had left his body and that of his servant in your keeping. The *baksa* will make short work of him in Kobdo. They like not these Krits who come from the other end of the earth and oppose the *baksa*."

"The other Krit was a holy man."

A light came into the mild eyes of the Christian falconer.

"He was an envoy from God. And this one is like him, in face."

"The other had dove's eyes; this one is a falcon," Aruk retorted.

Aruk jumped into his saddle, pretending not to look at Yulga.

"He has a horned soul in him. *Tfu!* The killing of him would be worth seeing."

CHAPTER II

THE CANDLES ON THE ALTAR

THE man called Hugo did not ride far with his wounded servant. The shattered body he supported easily in his arms, for he had a strength that matched his great stature. The bay horse bore them both easily.

But the life of the old servant was flickering out. Too many times had Hugo witnessed this passing of nature on the battlefield to mistake it now. So he turned the bay aside from the road into a faint path that ran among the pines.

It brought him to a hut of logs. Hugo carried the servant to the door, kicking it open with his heavy boot. As the windows were only slits in the logs, Hugo could make out the interior of the cabin only vaguely. Noticing that it was empty, he laid the old man on what appeared to be a long bench and covered his limbs with his own cloak.

He went out and presently returned with his leather cap full of fresh, cold water, taken from a near-by stream.

"A sorry bed, Pierre," he observed in French, "and a poor drink to speed you on your way. Now a goblet of good Burgundy——"

"Ah, *monsieur le comte*, no."

Pierre lifted his thin head wistfully.

"If there were but a priest in this wilderness! Or—or a holy spot where the sign of the cross is to be seen."

Hugo Arnauld, Count of Hainault, castellan of Grav, once captain of musketeers at the court of Paris, then colonel in the border armies of the King of France—the man who now called himself Hugo—tugged at the small tuft of his beard and raised one shaggy eyebrow without answering.

Having no good to say of priests or the houses of priests, he held his peace before the dying man. Seldom indeed had he failed to speak boldly to priest or minister, wherefore was he now an exile from France, publicly proclaimed an intriguer.

It did not make much difference to Hugo. It rather amused him that the worthy ministers should now be hoarding the revenues from Hainault which he had squandered so royally when he was young. Doubtless, he reflected, the very intelligent courtezans who were great ladies were drawing their tithes from the ministers.

"Ah, *monsieur*," breathed Pierre again, his thought returning with the habit of a lifetime to his master, "there will now be no one to—to brush your cloaks, to set out your linen and clean your swords."

Hugo laughed. Facing the gleam of sunlight in the door, now that his hunting-cap was off, gray was to be seen in his black hair. His dark countenance, on which the skin stretched taut over the bones, bore the stamp of pride; his wide mouth under the trim mustache was hard, his long chin stubborn. Women in other days had looked twice at the man who was Count of Hainault.

"One forgets, my Pierre," he remarked gruffly, "that here there exists no need to wear fresh linen or draped cloak over a scabbard. Judging by the manners of the *habitants*, we have arrived at last in the land of Gog and Magog, so inscribed in the charts of the geographers. My faith, the end of the world—Tartaria. I have made good my promise."

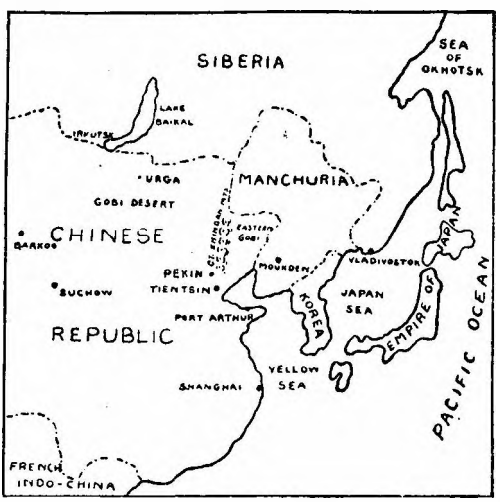
Pierre coughed and lay back weakly. *Monsieur le comte* had always been such a stickler for the niceties of dress. Even now, with the habit of a soldier, his coat and shirt were clean. The promises of *monsieur le comte* were always kept.

IT HAD been at Zbaraj.

They had wandered, exiled, from France to the court of the Commonwealth of Poland. Here honest Pierre had taken heart again, seeing cathedrals and the retinue of great nobles. But his master had declared that the nobles reeked of fish, and the mead soiled his mouth after the red wine of Burgundy.

So, hearing that the Cossacks and Crimea Tatars were making war on Prince Yeremi, the champion of the Commonwealth, on the southern marches of Poland, they had enlisted under the banner of the prince, had marched for years through blazing forests and over the steppe that was like a sea of grass.

When Zbaraj, the stronghold of the Poles, had been besieged, Hainault, as castellan, had been called the lion of Zbaraj. Pierre remembered that one night when they had been eating horseflesh, the



warrior-priest, Yaskolski, had made the round of the walls in the procession of the holy sacrament.

Candles borne before the tall figure of the priest had shone upon gilded monstrance and swinging censers, even while cannonballs plunged through the air overhead.

Pierre had fallen to his knees as the procession passed, and bared his head. Hugo, the doubter, rose from his seat in a trench,

but kept his steel cap in place. Yaskolski had looked at him just as a flight of balls drove overhead with the scream of a thousand hawks.

"Those cannoneers should be herding cattle," the burly priest had said to Hugo. "They can not aim."

Hugo had looked after the calm figure of the priest curiously.

"That priest is a man. He has smelled powder before."

When the war was over Hugo had waxed restless, as always. He had been offered a county by Yeremi himself, with an income sufficient to support a noble of his rank, if he would swear allegiance to the Diet.

"Be under the orders of swine who stink of ale? Pfagh!"

In view of his services, Hugo's insolence was overlooked, but thereafter he drank alone in Zbaraj, until Pierre brought to his chamber the warrior-priest, Yaskolski, who offered the exile the colonelcy of a regiment of armored cavalry.

Hugo had hesitated. He respected Yaskolski. Unfortunately he had been in his cups.

"So, you would buy a man's sword—the sword of a Hainault. Well, you are another breed from the shaven polls who prune their souls and nourish their bellies with tithes from the peasantry. But—death of my life—I will not do business with you."

Then he smiled.

"Your words, Sir Monk, are an echo of my brother, who is likewise a priest. Doubtless he is still praying for my soul. I have not seen him for a dozen years. They tell me he has gone, probably with others of his cloth, to the particular demesne of the devil on earth. That is Tartary. Well, I have a whim to go and see how Paul and his brethren relish the devil's demesne."

These words had been like wine to the faithful Pierre, who had yearned for a sight of the young son of Hugo's brother. Paul had promised Pierre that he and Hugo would yet sleep in the same bed. And Hugo's cynicism hid anxiety for the welfare of the priest, Paul.

Yaskolski raised his great hands.

"What, Sir Count? In Tartary are hordes of savages, and werewolves. That is a land beyond the domain of God. No man would go there, for he would be skinned alive and roasted by pagans."

"Permit me to correct you. I would go there. These burghers and butchers are but tedious society. The domain of the devil would at least be entertaining."

In these words, Pierre knew, *monsieur le comte* had declined a colonelcy to go to search for his brother. And from place to place as far as the Urkhogaitu they had had news of Paul, for few Franks passed over the caravan route that led from Moscow to Tartary.

PIERRE came out of his stupor with a rattle in his throat. He caught his master's hand.

"You will be—alone, *monsieur le comte*," he whispered. "There will be no one to laugh at your jests. If Monsieur Paul, your brother had not left you——"

"The conversation of Monsieur Paul ceased to interest me years ago. These savages are, at the worst, originals. I learned somewhat of their speech in the Polish campaigns and more from the dog who led us on our way."

On their way hither! Pierre groaned at memory of the endless steppe where wild Cossack bands attacked them, cutting down the rest of their followers, of the gaunt mountains that led to a desert of sand and clay, and then the snow of the Altai. All at once his eyes started, and he pointed toward the interior of the hut.

"A cross! I see the cross of the Redeemer hanging on yonder wall."

He closed his eyes and clasped his frail hands.

"*Monsieur*—a holy spot to which we—have come."

As his master continued to stare idly at the sunlight in the door at Pierre's back, a sudden anxiety clouded the pallid face of the old servant.

"Look, *monsieur*, and tell me if it is not true—what I see. There, in the shadows, over your shoulder. It is so dark I did not see the blessed cross before. And, look, Monsieur Hugo, there is the figure of the Mother of Christ and the silver candlesticks—on the altar. See——"

The count turned his head casually. He felt that the fever-ridden old man must be the victim of a hallucination.

And actually his eyes, dimmed by the sunlight at which he had been staring, saw nothing in the shadows.

"There is——"

He was on the point of saying there was

nothing to be seen. But the cold hand of the dying man was on his wrist. Again Hugo shrugged and made up his mind anew.

"There is the cross indeed," he responded. "And the altar, as you have said."

So Hugo, to his own mind, deceived Pierre. It would make the dying man rest easier.

"Ah, *monsieur*, you have never lied," the servant muttered. "Now I can believe the miracle."

He began a litany under his breath. When his voice ceased his lips moved. Presently Hugo glanced at him, reached over and closed the eyes of the dead man. He freed his wrist from the grip of the clay that had been Pierre.

After drawing the cloak over the other's face he rose to seek some tool with which to dig a grave. A gleam of metal came from the interior of the cabin, and he strode toward it. He saw for the first time two silver candlesticks standing on a rude altar of wood.

"*Peste!*" was his thought. "Pierre has cast a spell over me, that is all."

Still, a closer inspection disclosed the wooden effigy of Mary beside the skilfully carved cross on which hung the figure of Christ. Untold labor must have gone into the making of it.

Hugo glanced from it to the body of his servant, to the cabin of logs with the thatched roof, made after the fashion of peasants on his old estate. The floor was earth, strewn with pine needles.

He was glad that he had said what he did to the dying man. Probably, he reflected, there were some Christians among the Tatars here. Yes, that old Ostrim, the falconer up the mountain, was one. Well, this was their chapel.

And Aruk had said something about another Frank! That might well have been Paul. What had the Tatar hunter said? An ambassador from God? There was no one here, and the place bore no traces of occupancy.

Suddenly Hugo raised his head and adjusted the pistols in his belt, looked briefly to the priming, and went to the door. He had heard the tread of horses without.

The pine grove was filled with riders. Some wore the skins of beasts over armor. All bore weapons. They sat in their saddles gazing at him curiously. One held the rein of his horse.

"A strange congregation," thought Hugo, freeing his sword in its scabbard, "has come to mass."

For the first time *monsieur le comte* was face to face with inhabitants of the land in a body. His quick eye ran over the throng, noting the ease with which they sat their ponies, their garments of leather and coarse wool and furs, their wild faces and direct eyes. He picked out two that appeared to have authority—a huge, gray rider with but one eye, and a scrawny figure in a long purple tunic and square, yellow cap. Hugo suspected this last was one of the *baksa*, the witch-doctors.

This was the one who spoke first.

"I am Gorun," he chanted, "of the *baksa* of the Altai. I know when a tongue speaks a lie. I can, without touching you, place a serpent in your mouth and summon it forth. If I do not take it out it will sting you to death. Have a care, Frank—" his eyes gleamed shrewdly—"for you have come to the place of the other Frank!"

Hugo did not see fit to answer.

"You are a spy of Galdan Khan," growled Gorun resentfully. "You wear an eagle feather, like his officers."

A smile crossed Hugo's lips. It was like child's play. But, much in this manner, he had heard himself accused by a great cardinal at the court of France. So, he was an exile. What next?

"You came to learn the secrets of the other Frank, who came to spy upon us—and tell them to Galdan Khan," muttered the *baksa*. "I saw omens in the sky this dawn and said that evil was afoot. It is so. You shall have your skin pulled off and the noble khan of the Altai will take your weapons."

For the first time the one-eyed warrior seemed to take an interest in the words of the *baksa*. He glanced with interest at the silver-chased pistols and the long sword with its heavy hilt.

Just then a horse pushed forward into the cleared space between Hugo and the khan. Aruk bent down and touched his forehead.

"Grant me speech," he chattered. "May the fires of Yulgen burn me, but this is no spy. He is a falcon, or I am a toad. He is a chief of warriors."

"Proof!" screamed the witch-doctor.

"It is lying in front of Ostrim's *yurt*, feeding the crows. Aye, with four thrusts of his sword this falcon slew four robbers."

Aruk bethought him of something else.

"Before his coming the omens in the sky were good."

Hugo was surprized that the little hunter seemed to be speaking in his behalf—much of the meaning he lost, being rudely schooled in the chuckling speech of the Tatars. The exile did not know that a few hours ago he had unwittingly saved the life of Yulga, the beloved of Aruk.

At this Cheke Noyon, khan of the Tatars, raised his head and spoke for the first time.

"To the dogs with this squabbling. If this Frank is a chief of warriors, he is not a spy. Then let him use his sword so that we may see the truth with our own eyes. So, let him fight with all his strength. If he conquers our strongest, then he is a falcon and a chief, and no man of mine will raise hand against him."

ERE the last words had left his lips, Cheke Noyon was off his horse. Stalking toward the French noble, Cheke Noyon drew a heavy, curving sword as wide at the head as two hands joined together.

Hugo, hand on hilt, bit at his mustache. This was something of a Gordian knot. If Hugo should by chance strike down the chief of these barbarians, his own life, he thought, would not be worth a broken ducat.

So he reasoned, not knowing the absolute obedience of these men to the word of a chief, living or dead. Cheke Noyon made no salute with his weapon, or any feint. His first stroke was a swishing lunge that would have cut Hugo to the backbone if that gentleman had not stepped aside.

In so doing he felt the logs of the cabin against his back.

"Horns of Panurge!" he grimaced. "What a *duello!*"

Well tempered as was his long campaign blade, he could not oppose it squarely to one of the Noyon's cuts without having it break in his hands, so great was the bull-like strength of the old warrior and the weight of his huge sword, which seemed to be designed for two hands rather than one.

Nor could Hugo step back any farther. True, a swift thrust and he could pierce the cordlike throat of the other. But the mail on the chieftain's body made impossible any disabling thrust.

Quickly, as the Tatar lifted his weapon for a second cut, Hugo's blade darted forward and its edge touched the Noyon on the brow over his good eye. Blood ran down into the eye, but Cheke Noyon merely grunted with rage and lashed out again, blindly.

Cleverly the tall Frenchman warded the other's weapon, before the blow had gained force. For all his strength the Tatar was a child before the master of a dozen duels who had learned the tricks of fence as a boy. Hugo's skill was the more in that he never seemed perturbed.

His long blade flashed here and there, and the Tatar's rushes were staved off. The blood in his eye maddened Cheke Noyon. He seized the hilt of his sword in both hands, raised it above his helmet with a roar—and stared about him, dazed, with empty hands.

Hugo had stepped forward and engaged his blade in the other's hilt. The curved weapon of the Tatar lay a dozen feet away on the ground.

"*Hail*"

A yell burst from the onlookers.

Cheke Noyon peered at his foe. Then, shaking his brow clear of blood, he caught up his weapon, tossed it in air, snatched it in his left hand and struck as a wolf leaps.

But the gray eyes of the other had followed his movement, and the blow was parried. There came a clash of steel, a grunt from the Tatar, and his sword lay at his feet again.

Gorun spurred his horse forward with a shrill shout, seeing his opportunity.

"Sorcery!" he asserted. "O khan, no living man could do this thing to the greatest of the Tatars. A hand from the spirit world has helped him. He has bewitched your sword. How otherwise could he overcome the lion of Tartary? Let him die!"

Hugo stiffened, realizing the danger that lay in the appeal of the wily *baksa* to the vanity of the old chief. By agreeing with Gorun, the khan could wipe out the stigma of his defeat in the eyes of his followers.

Cheke Noyon puffed out his cheeks, and his bleared eye flamed.

"Dogs!" he bellowed. "Is my word naught but smoke? You heard my pledge. This khan goes free."

He glared at Gorun.

"Liar and toad. That was no witchery.

It was the blow of a man who can use a sword."

As the chief mounted, Hugo stepped forward, drawing the Turkish pistols from his belt. He held them out in the palm of his hand to the khan.

"A gift," he said, "to a brave man. In a battle you could strike down four to my one. I know, for I have seen the Cossack fight, and the Ottoman, the janizary, and the Russian hussar."

With a nod the khan took the weapons, looked at them, pleased, and stared at the stranger. He observed the dark face of the Frank, the keen eyes and the long, muscular arms.

"By the mane of my sire, I will take you to serve under me. You are no nursling in war. Is it done?"

Hugo shook his head with a laugh. To serve under such as that!

The broad face of Cheke Noyon grew black with anger.

"Go your way, Frank, in peace," he growled, "but keep out of my sight. You have made me angry."

Hugo watched the riders trot out of the grove.

"*Canaille*—dogs," he thought. "Cerberus, it seems, has left offspring on the world. Ah, well, the old chief has good stuff in him."

He looked around.

"Ho, Aruk, you are still here. Tell me, where lives the other Frank who came before me?"

Aruk wiggled his mustache and pointed to the chapel.

" 'Tis a queer world," Hugo ruminated, leaning on his sword and looking at the wide vista of the mountain slope that already cast its shadow on the grove. "Here in the place of the giants—or dwarfs—ruled by a blood-lusting Œdipus—why, he must have been a Mongol, a misanthrope or a madman to come here. Paul—would he have come here?"

To Aruk he added—

"Did the Frank wear a long, black robe, and have a shaven poll?"

"Aye, my falcon! He was an envoy from God."

"His name?"

"Paul, it was," said the hunter carelessly, "and something else I can not remember."

"Paul!"

Hugo lifted his head.

"Paul—of Hainault. Of Grav?"

Aruk rubbed his chin and yawned.

"Perhaps. How do I know? Yulga said it is written in the book of the Frank, under the altar."

Hugo disappeared into the chapel. Feeling in the darkness under the rude altar, his hand came upon crisp parchment. Drawing the sheaf from its resting-place, he shook off the dust and opened the goat-skin cover.

On the parchment fly-leaf was the seal of a Carmelite and the name, neatly written in Latin—

Brother Paul of Hainault.

Well did Hugo know that writing.

Paul, who had spent his youth shut up with books of the Latins and Greeks; who had pored over the journals of the Fras Rubruquis, Carpini and the Nestorians who carried the torch of Christianity into Asia six hundred years before. He had come hither alone.

While Hugo had become notorious among the gallants of the court, Paul had given his life to priesthood. Paul had never been as strong as his brother, but he had the great stubbornness of the Hainaults. They had quarreled. Hugo remembered how the pale cheeks of his brother had flushed.

"So," Hugo had said bitterly, "you go the way of the coward to pray for your soul. I go the way of the damned. The world is wide; one road to you, another to me."

"Our roads will meet. Until then, I shall pray for you, Hugo."

And now, Hugo reflected, they had come to the same spot on the earth; and such a place. It seemed, then, that he had wronged Paul. The youngster—Hugo always thought of him as that—had courage. If he had come here alone he was no coward.

All at once he was filled with a longing to see the yellow hair of his brother, to hear his low voice. They would talk of the wide, sweet fields of southern France, and the high castle from which one could see the river——

And then Hugo remembered that there had been dust on the Bible.

"Where is the other Frank?" he asked Aruk, who was watching curiously.

"Under your feet, my falcon. Ostrim buried him beneath this *yurt* when the snow came last."

Hugo's mustache twitched and an ache came into his throat. He questioned the hunter and learned that Paul had died of sickness; his body was not strong. Yes, he had made only a few Krits out of the people of the Altai—Ostrim, Yulga and two or three more.

"Leave me now," said Hugo after a while. "I have something to think upon."

"Will you stay here?" Aruk asked. "I like you, my falcon. But you have made old Cheke Noyon angry, and he is like a bear with a thorn in its paw. Come and share my *yurt;* then he will not see you and bite you because of his anger."

Hugo waved his hand impatiently.

"I stay here."

DURING that afternoon, when they had buried Pierre, Hugo walked moodily among the pines, twisting his hands behind his back. The words of Paul had come true. Their paths had met. But now Hugo could not say to Paul that he had wronged him—could not delight again in the gentle companionship of the boy with whom he had played in what seemed a far-off age.

"I am an exile," he thought. "There was no roof where I might lay my head. So, I came here, where no one knows my name. But Paul, why must he come to this place of desolation?"

From the log hut came the murmur of a low voice. Hugo moved to one side and saw, through the door, that the candles were lighted on the altar. With a sudden leap to his blood, he made out a figure covered by what seemed a white veil, kneeling between the candles.

Straining his ears to catch the words that were neither French nor Tatar he at last made them out—for the murmur was only two or three sentences repeated over and over:

"*Requiem æternam dona ei Domine*—grant him the peace everlasting, O Lord," he repeated.

Now the figure stood up to leave the chapel, and he saw it was Yulga, a clean white hood over her long hair. She left the grove without seeing him. Hugo reflected that she must be repeating the ritual she had heard Paul say many times, without understanding its full meaning.

So, he wondered, had Paul's life been taken that the souls of two or three barbarians might be saved?

Hugo's head dropped on to his chest as he sat on a bench in the hut. Weary, exhausted by hunger, he slept.

For a while the candles flickered. Then one went out and the other. The cabin was in darkness. Outside the night sounds of the Altai began—the howl of a wolf, the whir of a flying owl.

CHAPTER III

THE STORM

ONE night in early Summer, from the fastness of the Altai, Aruk the hunter heard a whirring in the air, a rustle in the underbrush. Against the stars he made out the flight of birds, going north, down the mountain. Against a patch of snow—for in the Urkhogaitu Pass the snow never quite melts—he saw black forms leap and pass.

Aruk knew that those leaps were made by mountain sheep. They were running down the rocks from the pass. Near at hand several deer crackled through the saxual bushes. A soft *pad-pad* slipped past him.

That was a snow leopard, leaving his fastness in the bare rocks of the heights.

Aruk was on foot in a trice, and slapped the halter on his pony without waiting for the saddle. Snatching up his bow, he was off on the trail to Kob.

Behind him black masses moved against the snow, and horses' hoofs struck on stone. An arrow whizzed past his head. Another. The nimble feet of his pony carried him out of range, and presently to the *yurt* of Ostrim, the falconer.

Reining up at the door, he struck it with his foot and shouted:

"Up and ride! 'Tis Aruk that calls."

Too wise to ask questions, the old man got together his several ponies and sprang upon one, the great *bouragut*, the golden eagle, on his wrist. Yulga carried the hawk.

"The Kalmucks are in the pass," Aruk called to Yulga. "They are stealing through like ferrets, hundreds of them. Galdan Khan has loosed the vanguard of his dog brothers on our Tatar land."

Yulga, at this, urged her pony the faster with voice and heel. Like three ghosts they sped down to the rolling slopes of the foothills.

"The Krit warrior said," observed Ostrim after a space, "that ten could hold the

summit of the pass against a thousand. Why did not Cheke Noyon post a guard in the Urkhogaitu?"

"Because the ten would be food for the crows by now," grunted Aruk. "When did our Tatar folk ever post a guard——"

"The Krit!" cried Yulga suddenly. "We are passing his *yurt*, and he will be slain in his sleep if he is not warned."

Swearing under his breath, Aruk reined in, calling to the others to ride on and take the news to Kob. He would go for the Krit.

"Be quick!" Yulga was alarmed. "Do not let them take you——"

But Aruk was a fox in the night. The chapel in the grove proved to be deserted, Hugo having gone far afield on his horse that night; and the hunter edged down to the steppe by paths that did not meet the main trail on which the Kalmucks had already passed him in force. He did not fear for Yulga or her father.

"The hut of the Krit will soon be ashes," he muttered, for fires were already making the night ruddy behind him.

The Kalmucks, seeing that their approach was observed, were slaying the people of the countryside and setting fire to their *yurts*.

Once, crossing a clearing in the gray of the false dawn, Aruk saw a patrol of the Kalmuck Turks surround a nest of tents. He could make out the black, quilted coats of the dreaded riders, could see their round, sheepskin hats and the points of their long lances.

They were driving the flocks of sheep in the clearing, and harrying out the tents whence men and boys ran, half-clothed, to be spitted on lances or hewn down with simitars.

The wailing of women rose on the air, to subside into moans. Aruk made out the small form of a young girl fleeing toward the trees. Three of the Kalmuck horde ran after her, on foot. The squat men of the Turks dragged her down as dogs pull down a hare.

Only a black blotch showed on the grass of the clearing. Safe within the screen of the poplars, Aruk hesitated, fingering his bow.

"Dogs and sons of dogs!"

From his pony the hunter fitted shaft to string and discharged his arrows swiftly, heeding not whom he struck; for he knew the sheep-herder's child was as good as dead already.

The unexpected flight of arrows from nowhere set the Kalmucks to yelling. Two fell writhing in the grass. Another began to run back toward the *yurt*. The girl lay quite still on the grass, a shaft through her body.

A last arrow whistled from Aruk's bow, and the fleeing man dropped to his knees.

"*La allah—il' allah!*"

Aruk heard his groan. Others in steel helmets were running out to the sound of conflict. The hunter turned his pony and was off again, changing his course to strike for Kob, leaving the sounds of pursuit behind him.

"I was a fool," he assured his pony's ears, "since the —— only knows where I will get more arrows. There is small store of weapons in Kob, and Galdan Khan has mustered the hordes from the Kalmuck steppe and the Moslem hills to his aid. A Moslem cried out back there. This is not at all like a joke."

Indeed, the dawn disclosed a forest of spear-tips streaming out from the shadows of the foothills toward Kob. The black coats of the Kalmucks were mingled with the green and red of the Turks. Fur-clad archers from Sungaria rubbed stirrups with the fierce, mailed riders of the Thian Shan.

Behind these, down the broad, grassy trail, sheepskin-clad footmen escorted the creaking carts of the Kalmucks. A camel-train appeared when the sun was high, dragging small cannon.

Above the tramp of the horses, the squeaking of the wagons, the shouts of the drivers, rose the mutter of kettle-drums, the shrill clamor of the pipes and the hoarse song of disciplined Moslem soldiery.

Like pillars along the line of march ascended shafts of smoke into the transparent air of a mild June day.

On each flank dust rose where the masses of cattle were driven in and turned over in a bedlam of bellowing and trampling, to the butchers who rode among the wagons. Here and there prisoners were dragged in by groups of horsemen, to be questioned briefly by the mirzas and beys of the horde, then to be slain and tossed into ditches.

In this manner came the Kalmucks to the old mud walls of Kob and the moat that had been dry for an age. Before sunset the cannon were set in place, and a

roaring, flashing tumult spread around the beleaguered side of the doomed city.

Before darkness served to reveal the flashes of the guns, the walls of mud bricks were caved in here and there. Like disciplined bees, the spearmen and horse of the Kalmucks swarmed forward into the openings.

A half-hour's dust and flashing of weapons where one-eyed Cheke Noyon struggled in fury with his groups of Tatar swordsmen, and the yelling mass pressed in among the houses.

Surprized, ill-prepared for defense, beset by a trained army of relentless fighters, Kob changed masters in the dusk of the June day. The standards of Galdan Khan were carried through the alleys, into the market-place.

GALDAN KHAN was preparing to write his name large upon the annals of inner Asia. Chief of the Kalmucks, ally of the Turkish Kirei and the "wolf" Kazaks of Lake Balkash, as well as the Moslem Sun-gars of the Thian Shan, the Celestial Mountains, he was reaching out from his homeland in the great Sungarian valley.

This Sungaria lay between the Altai on the north and the Thian Shan on the south. Galdan Khan vowed that he would seize for himself the fertile grass lands of the Tatars on the north before turning his sword upon the richer temples and caravan-routes of the south.

"I will take to myself the lands of high grass. I will take in my hand the herds, the cattle, the sheep, the furs and the weapons of the men of the North," he proclaimed in the council of chieftains assembled. "Thousands of captives I will keep to serve my army and do siege work. The rest my men will slay, for a dead enemy can not strike again."

Years after the events narrated here, Galdan Khan had carved for himself an empire out of the heart of Asia. He had driven the Chinese back across the Gobi; he held the northern Himalayas, Samarkand, Yarkand. His men had looted the lamaseries of Thibet. His "wolves" pushed the Russians back from Turkestan.

But his first step was toward the pastures and villages of the nomad Tatar tribes beyond the snow wall of the Altai. And in Tartary a strange thing happened.

"The van of my army," he had explained to the mirzas of the Kalmuck and Kazak hordes, who sat picking their teeth and chewing dates, "will be under your standards. Your simitars will be resistless as the sword of Mohammed—upon whose name be praise."

Galdan was not a Moslem, but saw fit to cater to his savage allies.

"I will supply you with siege cannon and mailed footmen. You will sweep through the Gate of the Winds like a storm and gobble up Kob. The clay walls of the city of the herdsmen will melt before you like butter. The sack of the city will fill your girdles. Your swords will exterminate the unbelievers, their wives and children. Then you will set the captives to rebuilding the walls, this time with stone."

Nothing could have been more to the liking of the chiefs of the wolves.

"By holding the Urkhogaitu Pass, which is the only path into Tartary, and the near-by city of Kob," Galdan had pointed out, "you will make clear the way for the main army which I shall lead to join you, and together we will rub off the face of the earth two hundred thousand Tatars; for, like the plague, we will spread over the valleys of the North, through the lands of the Torguts and Chakars to the far Buriats before they can unite to defend themselves.

By this it might be seen that Galdan was a shrewd schemer, that he arranged to make his allies bear the brunt of the fighting, and that he knew how to appeal to the religious zeal and the lust of men.

Perhaps because of this the first part of his plan was carried out to a word.

AT THE first rumble of cannon the wise bay horse of Hugo of Hainault pricked up its ears. Long before dawn that day Hugo, unable to sleep, had mounted and galloped to the shore of Kobdo Lake, beyond the city.

Returning after sleep for the man and rest for the horse, they met lines of riders, silent women and tired children, bellowing cattle and disordered sheep. Often he had to turn aside into a grove to let a flock of the fleeing pass. There was no outcry.

Pressing on with some difficulty and making his way toward the north wall, by avoiding the main highways that were choked with humanity, he caught the unmistakable rattle of musketry.

Mounting a rise in the plain his experienced eye could discern the lines of the besiegers on the far side of the city. He traced the cannon by puffs of smoke and the breaches in the clay rampart by clouds of dust. It meant to him merely that it would be difficult to retrace his way to the cabin in the grove.

This had been but a rude *hôtel* for *monsieur le comte*, and he had fared haphazard on game brought there by Aruk, and grain and fruits bought from Yulga. Still he found that he was unwilling to leave it. It held him. It was, he reflected, the grave of his brother.

Forcing his way through one of the gates, he beheld the scrawny figure of Gorun, the *baksa*, his cap gone, his eyes starting from his head. The priest, followed by a cavalcade of his kind, struck and kicked children and animals in a mad endeavor to clear the city.

"My faith," thought Hugo, "he seems as anxious to leave as I am to arrive."

On the heels of the priest came a sheepskin-clad rider, blood flowing from his forehead and his shield broken in two.

"Wo! The wolves of Galdan Khan are in the market-place!" the man was crying, over and over. "Fly, all who would save their lives. The wolves are here."

Accustomed to tight places, Hugo twisted his mustache and shrugged. Ahead of him in the narrow streets of Kob, between the flat-roofed clay houses, he heard the clash of weapons, saw smoke uprise, to make of the sun a red ball. Behind him, the flood of the flying.

He had no wish to thrust himself into the crowd pressing out of the city. So he drew the bay into an archway and pondered. Soon the alleys around him were deserted.

A last bevy of Tatar riders galloped past—archers without bows, old men, wounded and silent. A man who carried a musket turned and flung his weapon at a group of helmeted, black-coated horsemen.

Hugo saw several Tatars struck down in the doors of the houses they tried to defend.

"The cattle!" he thought. "They are driven like animals. No discipline, no powder for their muskets, no leaders. Pfagh! The Turks at least know what they are about."

A sharp-featured bey of a Kazak regiment led his men up to the alley, stared long at the quiet Frenchman, lifted his hand in a salute.

"*Salamet, effendi!*"

He called out to his men, who began to run into the deserted houses, laughing and jesting. Hugo, palpably not of the Tatars, remembered that there were Europeans with Galdan Khan, and that the feather in his cap was some kind of a symbol of rank. The bey must have thought him a man of Galdan Khan. Seeking to leave the alleys, he turned back through the arch, into a small square.

Here he reined in sharply with an oath. This was the quarter of the Chinese merchants. In the teakwood doorway of a cedar house sat a fat man in embroidered silk, a knife in his hand. Through the opened door Hugo could see the bodies of several women, some still stirring feebly. There was blood on the knife in the merchant's hand. His broad, olive face was expressionless. Having killed his women, according to the code of his caste, the Oriental was awaiting his own fate.

Hugo could go no farther in that direction. A group of Kalmucks were harrying a small pagoda. Others were intent on seeking out the unfortunates who still lived in near-by dwellings. Captives were being roped together by the necks. Children were lifted on lances, to guttural shouts.

Almost within reach, Hugo saw a Tatar's eyes torn out by a soldier's fingers.

A sound caused him to turn. From a post by the gate of the merchant's house the Kalmucks had cut a stake. Upon this they had drawn the passive Chinese. While Hugo looked he wriggled convulsively, his eyes standing from his sweating face.

Never before in the wars had Hugo seen the deliberate slaughter of a people. It sickened him, and he was beating his way through the square when a song arrested him.

"O, bright falcon,
My own brother!
Thou soarest high,
Thou seest far——"

It was dusk now in Kob, a dusk thickened by a pall of smoke and reddened by mounting fires. The song had come from the entrance of the pagoda. Aruk was the singer. Hugo could see the little hunter clearly in the glow from a burning house across the square. Beside Aruk were clustered a handful of Tatars, women among them.

With spears and swords they were defending themselves, for they had used up

all their arrows. Aruk, half-naked, was fighting desperately, swinging a simitar too large for his short arms. His broken body was streaked with sweat and shining blood; his teeth bared in a grin of rage.

Suddenly he caught sight of the tall form of the Krit.

"Aid!" called Aruk. "Aid, my falcon."

For a space the clash of weapons had stopped. The Kalmucks, ringed around the pagoda steps, were waiting the coming of more men.

"Aid, my Krit," urged the hunter. "Chase these wolves away before others come."

It simply did not occur to Hugo to draw his sword in a quarrel between peasants and common soldiers. He was already gathering up his reins when his eye caught the anxious face of Yulga. She did not call to him, but her clasped hands were eloquent of appeal.

This made him ill at ease. Yulga had come daily to say her garbled prayer at the grave of his brother. She was a handsome little thing, and her eyes were tragic.

"*Peste!* What is it to me?" he grumbled.

Then he growled at the watching Kalmucks:

"Back, dogs! Back, I say. These Tatars are my prisoners."

The soldiers hesitated at the ring of command in the voice of the tall Krit. They eyed the feather in his cap, the accouterments of his horse, sullenly. Were not the Tatars their legitimate prey? Who was this tall bey they had not seen before?

Aruk, Ostrim and his daughter and the other Tatars gathered about the horse of Hugo, fingering their weapons defiantly.

"These are prisoners, to be questioned by the chiefs," Hugo asserted, watching the Kalmucks. "Would you taste a stake, that you disobey the command of a bey? Be off, before I am angry. Loot the temple yonder."

Sight of the deserted doorway of the pagoda decided the Kalmucks. Here was easy spoil. The Tatars could still bite. Let the bey have them if he wished. They made off.

At a sign from Aruk, Hugo urged his horse toward the archway through which he had come. The fires had not yet reached that quarter, and once in the darkness they would be reasonably safe from discovery.

Abreast of the burning house he reined in with a muttered oath. Several riders paced out of the alley to confront him. He saw a stout officer in a fur kaftan and the round, white hat of a Turkish janizary.

In response to the man's question Hugo answered that he was escorting prisoners to be questioned. But the other stared evilly and shook his head. Prisoners with arms! They should be bound by the necks.

He peered closely into Hugo's bearded face and drew back with an angry hiss.

"You are a Christian. I have seen you before. What are you doing here?"

Without replying, Hugo edged his horse nearer the other. Suddenly the Turk snatched at a pistol in his belt.

"Caphar—dog!" he screamed. "You have fought against the believers. You were at Zbaraj. I was there——"

Before the long pistol was fairly in his hand his words ended in a groan. Drawing his sword, Hugo had caught the Turk under the chin with the hilt while the point was still in the scabbard. The janizary swayed, choking and clutching his throat.

Putting spurs to his mount, Hugo rode down another rider, his big bay knocking the small Arab off its feet.

"Kill, kill!" cried the other Turks.

Before they could put their weapons in play, the Tatars were dragging them from their horses, slipping under their simitars. One or two of the Tatars fell in the short struggle, but the rest were now mounted. The feel of horseflesh between their legs put new heart into them, for a Tatar is at sea without his horse.

Under the guidance of Aruk, who knew every alley of Kob, they made their way unmolested to one of the gates. The sack of the city was beginning in earnest, and no guards had been posted as yet by the Kalmucks. A drunken cavalry patrol fired shots after them as they sped away in the darkness.

Some distance out on the quiet plain toward the lake, Aruk dismounted and came to Hugo. He seized the stirrup of the Frank and bent his head.

"Our lives are yours, my lord. Have I not said to these other jackals that you were a falcon and a wolf-chaser? *Hai*—they will believe me now."

Out of the darkness came the guttural answer of the other men.

"Our lives are yours. We have seen you strike a good blow against the wolves."

Hugo moved impatiently, wishing to be gone.

"Because of that blow," went on Aruk slowly, "you can not go back to your *yurt* on the mountain. The Turks would skin you alive and set you on an ant-hill. Besides, they have set fire to the *yurt* where you slept, and plundered your goods. Come then with us, with the men of the Altai."

"Come," echoed the others.

CHAPTER IV

THE GATE OF THE WINDS

THE water of Kobdo Nor was like a mirror under the stars, a mirror that reflected as well the scattered glow of fires about the shore of the lake. Water-fowl, roused by the presence of men in the unwonted hours of darkness, flew about with a dull screaming.

Cattle lowed from the plain, whence riders came in on sweating horses, from the steppe, from the more distant tribes of Tartary, to learn what had befallen at Kob.

They saw the crimson spot in the sky that showed where the city still burned on the second night of the sack.

On his back near the reeds where the women and children from Kob had taken refuge, Hugo of Hainault lay, his head on his hands, his eyes closed. He was rather more than hungry. Never having accustomed himself to the *kumiss* of the Tatars, or the poorly cooked meat they ate, his one meal of the day had been black bread and fruit, washed down by cold water from a spring near the lake.

Above the whistle of the wind in the reeds and the murmur of a woman quieting her child, his quick ear caught a light step. Opening his eyes he saw a slim figure standing over him.

"It is Yulga, my lord, and I scarce could find you. I have some cold lamb's flesh and a bowl of wine. Aruk said that you have a throat for the wine of China, so I had this from a merchant whose caravan has wandered here."

"Wine!"

Hugo sat up and brushed his mustache.

"You are a good child.

"The girl has manners of a sort," he reflected, "and it is necessary to remember that here one is not *monsieur le comte*, but a vagabond of the highways. Even the remnant of my clothing and money is gone with my forest château."

"My lord," Yulga's low voice broke in, "the *kurultai*—the council of the clans—has been assembled since the setting of the sun. The wise ones among the *noyons* are trying to discover the road we must follow. They have heard that Galdan Khan has ordered the death of all the souls in Tartary. His main army is on the road leading to the Urkhogaitu Pass. Soon he will arrive with his banners in Tartary, and with him will be five times ten thousand riders."

Yulga spoke quickly, almost breathlessly.

"My lord, we will not flee, for where would we go? Cheke Noyon yielded his breath in Kob, and others of our bravest are licking their wounds here. More horsemen are coming in from the Torgut and Buriat clans, and before long others will ride hither from the north.

"We have no khan like Galdan," went on Yulga sadly, "for the *kelets*—the evil demons of the air—bring him news, and he is invulnerable. Gorun shivers in his tent and says that Galdan Khan has made magic. The priest can make no magic for us."

She paused and then lifted her head.

"My lord, there is a magic that can help us. I heard of it from the Christian priest who is dead."

"The one for whom you pray?"

"Aye, my lord. He told us that God opened a path through a sea, so an army of Christians could pass with dry feet."

Hugo was silent. Once at a banquet at the Palais Royal he had made a jest of this, remarking that if the Israelites of Egypt had been monks and the Red Sea a sea of wine they would not have passed unwet.

"And an evil horde," pointed out Yulga eagerly, "that pursued the Christian khans was swallowed up in the sea. Is not that the truth?"

Thought of Paul stayed the gibe that rose to Hugo's lips.

"If the Christian priest said it," he responded grimly, "it is true. He was my brother."

Yulga pondered this.

"Then you must be a Christian from God, because he was an envoy, and you are a khan, a leader of men. And you came to help us in our need. If we do not have a miracle we will all die."

Breathlessly she kneeled beside the wanderer. He could hear her heart beating. So, he thought with a wry smile, a price must be paid for one's supper even in the wilderness.

"Then you will die," he said gruffly.

Yulga laughed patiently.

"My lord jests. How else could the priest who was your brother live after death came to him?"

"Live? How?"

"In the *yurt* where we pray. When we are there we hear again the words he spoke to us. And how did you, my lord, find his *yurt* if you did not know where it was?"

Emboldened by the silence of the man, she went on swiftly,

"Tell us how we can overthrow Galdan Khan. In two days he will be at the pass. He has ten times the numbers of the riders that are here. Soon we will have as many as he perhaps, but then it will be too late. And he has powder and cannon and muskets."

She pointed at the glow in the sky that was Kob.

"See, yonder the mirzas of Galdan Khan are building new walls. They are putting their cannon on the walls. Our horses can not ride over stone ramparts.

"Do you tell us what we must do, my lord," she sighed. "And I will bear the counsel to Aruk, who is sitting in the *kurultai*."

"My faith!" thought the Frenchman. "I would not care to go myself. They smell too rank of horse and mutton."

He glanced at the near-by campfires, noting the anxious men who stood weapons in hand beside their sleeping women. Again he heard the plaint of the sick child and the murmur of its mother.

A blind man sat patiently, the nose-rope of a solitary cow in his hand. More distant from the fire, herders slept on their horses; fishers and skin-clad peasants armed only with sticks stood staring numbly at the crimson spot in the sky.

"What an army!" he thought. "What animals, that Paul should waste his life among them! Pfagh!"

Touching Yulga on the shoulder, he said:

"You have wit. How many Kalmucks and Turks are in Kob?"

"Aruk says four times a thousand. There were more, but many died in the battle."

"Well, tell Aruk this. Say that your horsemen are useless except as horsemen, skirmishers and archers. Still, you can win back Kob. Spread a circle of riders about the place. Cut off all food. If the Kalmucks sally out, draw them off to the hills, or the marshes by the lake. Tire out their horses, then attack them if you will. It does not matter, so food is kept from their hands. They have but little."

"Aye, my lord. But Galdan Khan will be at Kob in three days."

With his hand Hugo turned the head of the girl toward the black mass of the Altai mountains.

"There is the barrier that will keep out Galdan Khan. Through one gate only can he come. You have heard the tale of the army that passed through a gate in the sea. Well, it is easier to close a mountain than to open it. Your khans can not spare many men, for a space until others come in from the north. But two hundred can hold the Urkhogaitu Pass, among the rocks. Let them hold it then until your allies are here."

Yulga sped back with her tidings, and whispered long into the attentive ear of Aruk, while the assembled khans talked and stared into the fire. When the hunter rose to speak he was listened to, for as the keeper of the pass he was well known.

When he had finished repeating the advice of Hugo, the khans gazed at each other grimly.

"Who will hold the pass?" One voiced the thought of all. "There is no man who does not fear Galdan Khan, who fights with the devil at his back."

"I will try, good sirs," spoke up Aruk.

"A pigmy to match blows with a hero?" The Buriat spat. "You are bold enough, but the warriors will not take you as leader."

"What leader," countered another, "could hold the bare rocks of the Urkhogaitu against fifty thousand with artillery and—Galdan Khan?"

They were silent, uneasy, while the khan of the Buriats, who had ridden far that day, traced figures in the sand by the fire with his gnarled finger.

"It is a good plan," he ruminated, "a wise plan, that of the hunter. For we could cut communication between Galdan Khan and his wolves in Kob."

"But if the mirzas who hold Kob sallied back to the pass——"

"Fool, they will not do that. They have orders to roost where they are. They will

expect Galdan Khan to appear every day. When he does not come, they will be suspicious—likewise hungry. Then will they sally out, not before. Yet then our allies will be here; aye, we will be stronger than they, if Galdan Khan is held at the pass."

At this, silence fell again. The chiefs who squatted, looking into the fire, were leaders of tribes but not of nations. There was no one to give commands in the place of Cheke Noyon.

They were not afraid. They knew not how to build a fort to oppose Galdan Khan, even if they all went to hold the Urkhogaitu. And if they did that, there would be no one to keep the mirzas hemmed in Kob.

So each one avoided the glance of the others, and the Buriat who was a famous sword slayer snarled in his throat as he drew lines in the sand.

At length Yulga, who had left the council-ring, reappeared at Aruk's side and whispered to the hunter.

Aruk looked surprized; but his eyes gleamed, and he rose.

"Good sirs," he said, "Hu-go, the Krit lord, will hold the Urkhogaitu Pass."

The khan of the Buriats grunted and smoothed the lines in the sand with his sword.

"He is mad!"

"Not so. For the plan you have just heard, the plan I bespoke, was his. Yulga brought me the word."

"With what will he hold the pass?"

"Noble khan, with twice a hundred picked men, bold men—he asks that they be from your clan."

Pleased, the Buriat grunted and looked around.

"He must have likewise," went on Aruk, "all the powder in our bags, and steel shirts for the warriors, and we must seize him cannon from the broken walls of Kob——"

"This is a wise khan," barked the Buriat. "He is no madman."

"But," pointed out Gorun, who squatted behind the council-ring, "he can not work wonders."

To this old Ostrim from the outer ranks made rejoinder:

"Once, when the horde of the Krits in another land were being slain in battle by a powerful foe, the prophet of the Krits went to a mountain, and talked to God, holding up his hands the while. So long as his hands were held up, the Krits conquered; and before very long they had cut off the heads of their enemy and taken many horses. *Kail* It is true."

"But why," asked the khan of the Buriats "will Hugo Khan go against Galdan?"

At this Yulga broke the custom of ages, and a woman spoke in the council.

"To me he said it. My lord Hugo would sleep in comfort in his own *yurt.* Galdan Khan is like a buzzing fly, that keeps him from sleep. He said that he was tired of the buzzing and would drive away the fly."

For a space the flippant answer of Monsieur le Comte d'Hainault sorely puzzled the councilors. Then the khan of the Buriats struck the sand before him with the flat of his sword, roaring:

"That lord is a great lord. He is a hero. The men will follow him. He thinks of Galdan Khan as an insect. No fear of Galdan Khan has he!"

"No fear has he," echoed others.

"I will go!" cried Aruk, and his voice was followed by many others.

In this way did Hugo offer to defend the mountain pass. The thought had come to him that these people were after all the people to whom his brother had ministered, and if they were slain the work that Paul had done would be lost.

CHAPTER V

THE BED OF *MONSIEUR LE COMTE*

GALDAN KHAN, general of the Turco-Kalmuck army, was not disturbed when for three days he received no couriers from the mirzas who had captured Kob. The mirzas were officers who would rather fight battles than report them.

With pardonable pride he watched the van of his well-trained army surmount the slope of the Altai, cutting away trees on either side of the trail through the timber belt to make room for his wagon-train, and bridging over the freshets. He planned to make the passage of the Urkhogaitu in one day, so as not to pitch camp in the snow at an altitude where sleep was hard to come by and horses bled at the nostrils.

The approach to the pass was a wide rock plateau, something like a vast Greek theater, from which the glaciers rose on either side to the white peaks that stood against the sky like the banners of Galdan Khan.

From the plateau the advance of his army—irregulars, supported by a regiment of Black Kalmucks—filed into the ravine that ascended to the Urkhogaitu. One curve in the ravine, and they would be at the summit of the pass.

Galdan Khan announced that the plateau was an auspicious spot—he would break his fast there while his men crossed the pass. It was a clear day, the sky as blue as the kaftan of a dandy of Samarkand. Pleased with himself, Galdan drank spirits and chewed dates.

Came one of the stunted, skin-clad irregulars who prostrated himself.

"O lord of the mountains, there is a great crevice in the pass that we can not surmount."

"Bridge it," growled the khan, "with rocks and the bodies of wagons from the rear."

The man hurried off, but presently there was a stir among the officers under the standards, a murmur of whispering, and a helmeted bey of the Kalmuck regiment approached his leader. Men, hostile to Galdan, held the other side of the crevice. They would not be dislodged by arrows; horsemen could not get at them.

Angrily Galdan spat dates from between his sharpened teeth.

"Let a company of janizaries climb into and over the ditch; let the horsemen cover them with arrow-flights. Begone, dog, and if you value your head do not delay the march!"

But the march was very much delayed that day. The Kalmuck bey died at the ravine with many scores before Galdan decided to ride up and see for himself what was holding up his advance.

When he rounded the turn in the ravine he growled under his breath. Here the glacier sides rose steeply, and the footing—the bottom of the pass was the dry bed of a watercourse—was treacherous. Snow was everywhere save on a massive rampart of rocks built on the far side of the broad ditch, rising to the height of three spears.

Both flanks of the rampart were protected by rough towers of stones fitted together, as broad as they were high. Flanking the towers were the moraines, where no man could stand on the ice.

When Galdan saw that the ditch had been blown out of the frozen earth with gunpowder, he was puzzled. An organized force of his enemies stood against him. Yet there should be no enemies between him and the victorious mirzas.

He ordered a storm, by Turkish spearmen, and withdrew behind the bend in the ravine. It was well he did so. Cannon roared in the pass, and the groans of wounded rose into the air.

At noon the mirza of the Turks came to Galdan wrathfully.

"Lord," he cried, "send your own men against the wall of rocks. Mine are lying in the pass, slain by arrow and cannon while they climbed the ravine. The river of the pass runs again—with blood!"

Galdan snarled and laid hand on sword. Remembering that he must have the aid of the Turks, he stifled his rage. He learned for the first time that two pieces of artillery were in the hands of his foes—one in each tower, so that they cross-raked the narrow chute leading up to the ditch.

"Send men to climb the slopes above the rampart," he ordered.

The Turk sneered.

"By Allah, the all-wise, do you think my soldiers are birds, to fly up a slope of ice!"

"Then stand aside," growled the Kalmuck. "Tomorrow I will pitch my tent beyond the pass."

After thinking for a while, he ordered scouts to be sent out on either flank to explore the near-by slopes of the Altai for another way into the plain of Tartary.

It was dusk when they returned, wearied, and reported that single men might perchance climb the snow summits here and there, but the army with its horses, its wagon-train and cannon must go through the Urkhogaitu or not at all.

The lips of Galdan Khan smiled, but he did not touch the food that was brought to his pavilion on the plateau. He had learned that there were but twice a hundred defenders in the pass. Well, he would crush them like ants upon a stone.

He wondered how the stone fort had come to be built. It was contrary to the custom of the haphazard Tatars.

He did not know that for three days and nights before his coming, two hundred men had grappled with the stones of the ravine, mortaring them together with moist dirt, thrown up by the explosion of mines in the bed of the ravine, and fixing between the stones the pointed trunks of trees, under

the orders of a man who knew more about fortification than Galdan Khan.

For three days the big Buriats had labored, trembling with fatigue in the thin air, bleeding at the hands and ears, sleeping only fitfully and chilled by the cutting wind that swept the pass, scarce warmed by fires of pine branches. They had been cursed by their commander, beaten by the flat of his sword.

When the hundred paces of massive rampart had been built, and the wide ditch excavated, they murmured when he commanded the erection of towers for the cannon that, plundered from Kob, had just been brought up.

Whereupon the blue-faced commander ordered them to flog each other until they were exhausted. Under the lash of his tongue the bartizans had been erected laboriously. And in the evening of the third day the Frankish commander had approved the work.

"Our bellies are empty, father," they said. "We can not fight with empty bellies."

The Frank had foreseen this, and ordered them—all except a half-dozen sentries that he kept by him at the rampart—to repair to the abode of Aruk down the mountain where there was mutton and huge fires and liquor and a place to sleep in comfort. He wondered when they staggered off whether they would come back.

Before dawn they did come back, and he heard them from quite far away. They were quarreling among themselves, and staggering, though not from weariness this time. They sang guttural songs and roared a demand to be shown their enemy. They clutched their bows and heavy swords and surged round him.

Monsieur le comte drew back his soiled cloak from their touch and snarled at them. And then came Galdan Khan and the first day of the attack.

THE dawn of the second day showed a change in the aspect of the ravine. During the night patrols from the Kalmuck camp had almost filled in the ditch with stones, small trees and bodies of the dead. This the Tatars had been unable to prevent.

It was just after sunrise had made clear the outlines of the rampart that the attackers came up the ravine, silently at first, then with a clamor of kettle-drums and wailing of pipes as if to frighten the defenders by the very noise.

They ran full into arrow-flights that splintered shields and tore through chain armor. Notwithstanding this they pressed forward until there was a yellow flash from each tower and a rain of small shot cut up the ranks in the rear. Now the Kalmucks were accustomed only to round shot, and they gave way with cries and oaths.

But they were reformed by the beys and advanced again, this time with picked men in the front ranks. These crossed the ditch and began to climb the steep slope of the rampart, despite the slow discharges of the cannon.

They were met with battle-ax and sword from above, and, clinging to the sharp rocks, could use their spears only at a disadvantage. Those who gained the top of the rocks were hurled back on their comrades.

It was, for a time, a hand-to-hand affair in which the steel helmets and mail shirts of the struggling defenders saved them from being cut to pieces by the spears and similtars of the Kalmucks and Turks.

The sun was high enough to cast its light full into the ravine, and Galdan Khan, seeing that the fort was on the verge of falling, had ordered up fresh clans from the plateau, when the explosion came.

The rock walls of the gorge echoed thunderously, and a pall of smoke rose from the center of the Kalmuck ranks. Stones hurled into the air fell back upon the bodies of dazed men.

As he had done more than once before, Hugo had constructed a mine midway down the ravine, bringing a powder-train, deep in the frozen earth where the moisture of the snows could not penetrate, back to the rampart. He did not know, of course, whether the powder-train would burn.

But the mine had gone off. Probably Hugo himself had not foreseen the full consequences of this. The shock of the explosion displaced masses of ice and rock on the morains at either side. Single stones falling from the buttresses that led to the peaks carried others along with them.

The echoes were still in the air when the crashing of the boulders began. One of the towers of the Tatar fort was wrecked. The Tatars themselves, protected by the stone mound, did not suffer greatly; but the havoc among the Kalmucks was a grim

thing. Bodies lay where men had stood a moment before. Then the bodies were covered with glacier ice. Stones still muttered and rolled down the length of the ravine.

The thinned groups of Kalmucks that made their way back down the gorge looked like men fording a river of snow. They had no thought but to escape from the rocks before a second blast went off.

Never having experienced a mine before, it was a blow to their morale; and the avalanches seemed to them to be the work of demons.

Galdan Khan knew otherwise. After midday prayers that day, he sent a Kalmuck officer with a white flag up to the gorge and the rampart. For the first time it had come to the ears of the khan that a Frankish lord commanded the fort on the heights.

The message the Kalmuck bore was for the ears of the Frankish lord alone, and it was brief:

The prayers and greetings of Galdan, Khan of the Kalmucks, of the Thian Shan, of Sungaria, to the lord commander of the fort. You, lord, have a hundred unwounded men; I have fifty times a thousand. If you keep on fighting beside the Tatar dogs, your bones will never leave the Urkhogaitu; if you surrender to me, I will give you ten thousand thalers and five regiments for your command. You are a brave man; I think you are also wise. *Salamelt*

The Kalmuck added under his breath:

"Lord, there are Greeks and Wallachian officers with Galdan Khan. He will keep his word with you, and will cut off the faces of these, your men, so that no one will know what has passed. Otherwise he will bring up the cannon and make dust of the stones you hide behind."

Hugo twirled his beard and raised one eyebrow. It was a fair offer, all things considered, and the cold of the Urkhogaitu had eaten into his bones. He had not slept for three days and his eyes were burning in his head.

Taking the Kalmuck away from the staring Tatars, Hugo led him a little down the ravine to the point where they could see the northern plain. Some herds of Tatar cattle were visible; but no smoke rose from the villages, and the quiet was ominous to the eyes of the invader.

"Tell Galdan Khan what you have seen," smiled Hugo. "Say that he will never see his mirzas again. On the first clear night I will come into his lines and speak with him."

But on that night, and for three days, no men crossed the rampart of the stone fort. Clouds gathered, above and below the pass. Snow came, and hail.

The loose snow in the pass was covered with an icy coating at the touch of the wind that screamed through the walls of the Urkhogaitu. The temperature dropped many degrees; and the few sentries on either side were changed often, or they would have frozen to death.

Truly was the pass the Gate of the Winds—the winds that brought with them the cold of outer space, and snow. Attackers and defenders alike retreated down below the snow-line and camped under the canopy of the forest, Galdan Khan going down to the main body of his troops among the foothills, and Hugo to the camp of Aruk, where his men slept, allowing their wounds to heal.

On the sixth night of the siege the stars were clearly to be seen. The snow-flurries passed from the peaks of the Altai, leaving the white pinnacles framed against the sky in the light of a three-quarters moon.

Promptly Hugo returned to his battlement with his Tatars and some others who had come up to the pass for news.

Hugo, his tattered cloak wound around his tall figure, stood in the snow of a tower-top and stared reflectively into the gleams and shadows of the ravine. In the half-light he could see no bodies; for the storm had blanketed the slain, and the dark outline of a frozen limb or a rusted weapon was softened by the moon.

The wind, gentle now, stirred in the ragged beard of *monsieur le comte* and caressed his hot eyes. He lifted his eyes to the stars, picking out the ones he knew.

It reminded him of a night when he had made the rounds of the guard on the walls of a mountain fort in the Pyrenees. There had been snow on the ground, and he remembered a chapel bell that tolled during an all-night mass. But he had listened, then, to the song of a woman in the château of the town—a fair woman, that.

He hummed to himself the air of the *chanson*, twirling his mustache with a hand that trembled from the cold—

"O mon amante—sachons cueillir——"

Well, the woman, whose slipper he had

kissed, was no doubt dead—as dead as the soft-hearted Paul who had prayed for her soul.

"Paul," murmured Hugo, making a sweeping bow with his hat—on which the plumes were quite bedraggled—"I commend her to you, a beautiful and a virtuous woman. There were few like her, my brother. Paul, will you tell me why in the name of the —— I should waste my life on these brats of yours back yonder, these Tatars who make but sorry Christians at best? That would be but a foolish end to a career that at least has had its distinctions."

Replacing his hat, for he was cold, Hugo reasoned tranquilly, although the rarefied air, as always, made him a little dizzy. Galdan Khan would bring up his cannon. A slow and difficult matter that, and not much gain in the end. But another assault over the ravine floor, leveled by the snow, and over the broken rampart—Galdan Khan would take the fort, such as it was, on the morrow.

Well and good. Then why should Hugo stay where he was, like a cow in the butcher's pen?

"That is not how I would choose to be remembered at court," he reflected. "*Monseigneur* the cardinal—if he is still *monseigneur* the cardinal—would laugh over his cards at such a droll thing. And then every one else would smile because, forsooth, *monseigneur* made a jest. That would be droll. Perhaps they have forgotten Hainault. By the horns of Panurge, if I should return——"

Hugo laughed, reflecting that the soul of Pierre would be offended, up among the stars; for Pierre, the valet, had always believed that *monsieur le comte* would never break his word even to a Tatar.

Well, it was too cold to stand there any longer. So Hugo, his long sword clanking at his side, strode down to where his men had gathered in a black bulk behind the rampart. For the first time they had horses in the pass, one to each man.

They numbered a hundred and twenty, Hugo counted. Respectfully they waited for him to speak.

"Eh, my dogs," he cried, "have you your weapons? Have you eaten well!"

"Father, we have."

"And each warrior has a horse? Good. It is time—time. Will you come with me, my dogs?"

A guttural murmur answered him.

"Aye, father. We will go with the Wolf-Chaser."

Tugging at his mustache, Hugo slapped Aruk on the back, a twinkle in his eye. He no longer minded the smell of sheep that exuded from the Tatars.

"You will do better in the saddle than behind a wall, —— eat me if you won't. You have called me Wolf-Chaser. Eh, we will look for the wolf."

So saying, Hugo mounted a shaggy pony that made its way with some difficulty over the rocks of the rampart on the hard-packed snow. The others followed irregularly.

They headed down the ravine toward the Kalmucks. Keeping close to one side of the ravine, they were within the shadow, and the snow dulled the sound of the horses' hoofs. So it was some time before a shape rose in the shadow to challenge them.

Two Tatars spurred past Hugo and cut down the Kalmuck sentry, with only a dull *clink* of steel on mail.

Other figures were stirring, though, down the ravine, which was broader here where they neared the bend in the gorge. Hugo quickened to a trot.

A pistol flashed and roared, echoing from the rocks.

The Kalmuck patrol shouted and turned to run; but they were afoot, and the riders from the upper gorge caught them up at the curve in the ravine. A few blows, and the bodies of the Kalmucks sprawled in the snow.

"Swiftly now," instructed Hugo.

The Kalmuck camp in the plateau into which the ravine gave, was occupied only by two regiments of foot. These ran from their tents, snatching up the first weapon to hand as the Tatar horsemen reached the lines of the encampment. A few muskets barked, and arrows flickered in the moonlight.

The Tatars shot their arrows as they galloped, for here the snow surface was level. Their beasts crashed in among the tents, trampling belated sleepers—for an attack from above had not been thought of.

Over the horses' heads sabers flashed and rose again. Men leaped to grapple with the riders. The fight was silent, except for the scream of an injured horse or the wild shout of a Tatar who felt death.

More slowly now, the horses pressed forward. Old Ostrim, shooting the last of his

arrows, drew an iron war-club and laid about him.

"*Hail*" he muttered. "Taste this, wolves."

His arm was caught, and a tall Sungar warrior buried a knife in the chest of the falconer. Ostrim was pulled from his horse and disappeared.

Many had fled from the camp, believing themselves lost. But when the struggle had spread to the center of the tents, other warriors began to appear, running up from below where the main body of the Kalmucks had taken alarm. The tangled knots of men had been pushed almost to the edge of the plateau, and more than once a horse or man crashed off to fall on the rocks below.

The cries of "*Hail*" grew fainter, and fewer horsemen were to be seen. Reinforcements came up to the Kalmucks, but the Tatars did not give ground, choosing instead to die where they were.

Galdan Khan, riding up with his officers, heard from fugitives what had happened.

"It is the Frankish lord," they cried. "He has come to seek you."

Starting, the khan clenched his fist. For three days he had pondered the message sent back by Hugo, wondering whether the Frank meant to come over to him.

"He has slain a score," reported those who approached the khan. "His sword is like a spear, and we can not slay him. He looks for you, and shouts that he has kept his word to you."

But, being a prudent man, Galdan Khan did not desire to face Hugo. So the chief of the Turks remained below the plateau until the fighting was at an end. Meanwhile it was only too clearly to be seen that the courage of his men was shaken, that they stared uneasily into the pass where they had encountered once too often the grim visage of death.

IT WAS late the next day when a crowd of Tatars rode up the trail toward the pass, from Kob. They found the débris of the fort, on which perched Aruk, the keeper of the gate, his shoulder slashed in two, his armor cut and bloodied.

Beside him stood a single Tatar, a Buriat, looking down the gorge to the south. By the fire the two had kindled, a badly wounded man lay, moving restlessly. Yet the snow around them was unstained and marked only by the hoofs of scores of horses.

The khan of the Buriats strode to Aruk.

"The work at Kob is finished—the wolves scattered," he said. "What of the pass, O keeper of the gate?"

"Galdan Khan has gone back to his own land."

Galdan Khan was a shrewd man. News leaked in to him, brought by stragglers over the Altai, that the mirzas were cut up and their followers scattered. Including the affair at the plateau, he had lost two thousand warriors at the pass. Meanwhile he knew the Tatar clans had gathered in the northern plain, heartened by victory. His men, disheartened by the night attack, were murmuring.

So Galdan Khan knew that the hour for the conquest of Tatary had passed.

"What of Hugo, the Krit?" asked the Buriat khan, when he had heard the details of the defense of the pass.

Aruk pointed to the single sentry who stood over a figure covered by a cloak that had once been elegant with bows and satin lining. The khan of the Buriats drew back the cloak and looked into the dead face of Hugo. He lifted his hand toward the rocks of the gorge.

"He kept his word," he said.

Aruk nodded.

"Aye, did I not say he was a falcon, a wolf-chaser? *Kai.* It is so."

"It is so," echoed the Tatars.

After consulting together they buried the body of Hugo beside that of his brother the priest, in the flame-blackened hut where the crucifix was still to be seen over the altar. In this fashion did Hugo and Paul come to sleep in the same bed.

In time the name of Hugo of Hainault, and that of Paul his brother, were forgotten in the stirring of the troubled land of their birth. But the children of Aruk and Yulga and their children after them came to the hut, repeating prayers that grew more indistinct with time because they did not know the meaning of the words.

Too Much Progress for Piperock

By W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Law Rustlers," "The Spark of Skeeter Bill," etc.

I NEVER seen anything like her before—not alive. One time I found a piece of an old fashion magazine, and there was a picture of a female in that—a female that some feller drawed; but I just figured that it was all imagination with him. I take one look at this live female and then I takes off my hat to the artist.

She said she was an artist. What in —— anybody could find to draw in Yaller Rock County—except guns—was more than I could see. Me and "Magpie" Simpkins was down at Paradise, setting in Art Wheeler's stage, when she got on, headed for Piperock.

Art got one look at her and then jackknifed his four horses in trying to turn around and go the wrong direction. Magpie Simpkins never took his eyes off her. Magpie's old enough to know better, but he didn't seem to. Art's eyes don't foller the road much, with the result that he runs a front wheel off Calamity grade and danged near sends us all to our final destination.

She said her name was Henrietta Harrison. Art pulls up for a breathing spell at Cottonwood Crick, and we stops in the shade of a tree. She looks at the big tree and then she says—

> "Under the greenwood tree
> Who loves to lie with me,
> And tune his merry note
> Unto the sweet bird's throat——"

"Me," says Magpie, kinda foolish-like.

"You!" snorts Art. "Tune your merry note! Haw! Haw! Haw! You could 'lie——'"

"Mebbe you could!" says Magpie, meanlike. "But your wife wouldn't let yuh."

"Set down, you ancient he buzzards!" I yelps. "Ain't yuh got no sense?"

"I don't understand," says Henrietta.

"Nobody does," says I, consoling her. "If we did, we'd know whether to lynch 'em or send 'em to the loco lodge, ma'am."

"Magpie makes me tired," declares Art. "Any time he wants to tune his note——"

"It's my note, Mister Wheeler. If I want to tune my own note——"

"I was merely quoting Shakespeare," says the lady.

"Giddap, broncs!" says Art Wheeler, and we rocked on into Piperock.

I'll tell you right here and now; beauty ain't even skin deep in Piperock. We've got wimmin folks—that is, some has—but nobody ever kidnaped any of 'em.

If they belonged to me I'd trust 'em with any man.

There's Mrs. "Wick" Smith, who jars the hay-scales to two hundred and seventy-five, and wheezes plentiful. Art Wheeler's better half tasted of life and found it sour, and never got the acid out of her system. Mrs. "Testament" Tilton looks upward for guidance in all matters except when it comes to flattering Testament's head with a skillet. When Mrs. Pete Gonyer is in sight, Pete's voice sinks seventeen inches below a whisper. Somebody remarks one day that Pete's kinda henpecked.

"Henpecked, ——!" says Pete. "Orstrich—if there ain't nothin' bigger what wears feathers."

Mrs. Steele, the wife of our legal light, is six feet two inches tall, and she's always oratin' about the sanctity of the home, whatever that is. One cinch, the prize never hands down any decisions in his own home.

Mrs. Sam Holt goes through life worrying about somebody alienating the affections of old Sam, who can barely hear himself yell, and has to eat his spuds mashed or miss the taste of 'em.

There's the Mudgett sisters, who must 'a' been the originals of the first cartoon of "Miss Democracy." Cupid would have to use a .30-30 if he went to work for them. Scattered around the range is a occasional female, but nothing that you'd bet your money on in a beauty contest. Annie Schmidt is cooking for the Triangle outfit, but the same don't seem to cause any of the other ranches to go short of help.

HENRIETTA HARRISON horns into Piperock. Piperock takes a deep breath. Bad news travels fast, and it ain't long before there's a need of another hitch-rack in Piperock. Sam Holt runs the hotel—or thought he did; but Ma Holt got one look at Henrietta and shut up the book.

"Every room is taken," says she.

"Who by, Ma?" asks old Sam.

"Me!"

"Ma'am," says Magpie, "I reckon mebbe Mrs. Smith will take a boarder."

Wick said she would. Wick locked up his store and took the valise in one hand and Henrietta's elbow in the other, kinda rubbing Magpie and me out. We sat down on the sidewalk intending to speak unkindly to Wick when he came back, but Henrietta came back with him. Wick sets the valise down on the sidewalk.

"Ma said she was goin' to have company, and won't have no room."

"This Summer?" asks Magpie.

"I ain't no hand to argue," says Wick.

Pete Gonyer comes over, and Magpie asks Pete about taking a boarder.

"Y'betcha," says Pete. "Pleasure's all mine. Mrs. Gonyer'd be plumb tickled stiff. Live all your life with us, ma'am."

Pete almost stands on his head, bowing and scraping like a ground-owl; but just then Mrs. Gonyer comes down the sidewalk, but Pete don't see her.

"Pete!" she snaps.

"My ——!" gasps Pete. "The rope broke!"

Mrs. Gonyer looks at Henrietta and then at Pete.

"I run out of horseshoes," says Pete. "I had to come to the store——"

Pete goes on into the store and Mrs. Gonyer follows him inside.

"I must find a place to board," says Henrietta, kinda sad-like.

"Eatin' part's easy," says I; "but it begins to kinda look like yuh might have to hive up under that greenwood tree."

"I'll take her in before I'll let her sleep under a tree," says Magpie.

"You'll take her in?" says I. "You mean, we'll take her in, don't yuh? Half of that cabin is mine."

"It was my idea, Ike."

Just then Testament Tilton and his wife drives into town. Testament is a sanctimonious-looking old pelican. He looks at Henrietta, and his lips move, but I know they don't move in prayer.

"Miss Harrison needs a place to stay," explains Magpie. "Have you folks got any extra room?"

"Brother Magpie, we have," says Testament. "We have."

"Where?" asks Mrs. Tilton.

Testament turns and looks at her kinda queer-like for a moment and then back at us.

"That's the question," says Testament. "I thought we had room, but where is it?"

"Well, get out of the wagon," says Mrs. Tilton, nudging Testament. "Me and you have got to do shoppin'."

"I think it is an insult," says Henrietta. "I've half a notion to leave."

"I've got a —— good notion to leave with yuh," says Magpie.

"Let's make it a trio," says I.

"What are you insulted about?" asks Magpie.

"I ain't so danged particular that I'd mention any one little thing."

"I came here to recuperate," sighs Henrietta. "I escaped from every one and went to one country where they would never expect to find me, and I am not welcome, it seems. I thought I might find a new theme in the wild dances of aboriginal tribes. That sort of thing is new and original, I think."

"I think so too," nods Magpie. "They sure do dance wild around here."

"Often?"

"Every time we can find somebody what can call a quadrille. Round dances don't go yery good, 'cause there's always some woman accusin' her husband of huggin' some other man's wife——"

"I don't mean civilized dances."

"Neither do I," agrees Magpie.

THEN cometh "Muley" Bowles, "Chuck" Warner, "Telescope" Tolliver and Henry Peck, the four disgraces of the Cross J outfit. Muley, the poet, is too fat to work. Telescope, the tall thin tenor, is too proud to work. Chuck Warner wiggles his flexible ears, lies fluently to every one, and proves an alibi every time "Jay Bird" Whittaker, his boss, tries to make him work. Henry Peck has kind of a dumb way of going through life, and plays a banjo.

They sees us and don't lose no time getting off their broncs and investigating. Muley takes a look at Henrietta and swallers real hard. Telescope stumbles over Chuck's foot and almost falls into her.

"Will you introduce me?" asks Henrietta.

"Well'm," says Magpie, "Miss Harrison, I makes yuh used to Muley, Telescope, Chuck 'n' Hen. They're jist common or ordinary cow-punchers. Cowboys, meet Miss Harrison, a artist."

"T' meetcha," says Telescope. "Mr. Simpkins misinformed yuh, ma'am. My name is Tolliver—one of the Kentucky Tollivers, ma'am."

"Oh!" says she.

"I'm named Bowles," wheezes Muley. "One of the Oklahoma Bowles."

"His paw was a famous man," says Chuck. "He'd 'a' been greater, but the posse roped him just short of the State line. I'm named Warner—a name made great by some doctor who built a patent medicine. Pleased to meetcha."

"Speak up for yourself, Hen," urges Magpie. "Tell the lady about yourself."

"I'm named Peck," says Hen. "I can't think of any smart thing to say today."

"I am Miss Harrison. For a reason," says she, "I am incognito."

"My ——!" gasps Telescope. "Is that so? I used to know a family of that name. They was Eyetalians—or Mexicans. Good family though."

"I detest a *nom de plume*," says she, smiling.

"Me, too," agrees Muley. "I never had one, but the looks of one was a plenty for me."

"The lady can't find a place to live," says Magpie. "Nobody is willin' to sleep her."

They lets this soak in, and then Telescope says—

"What's the matter with her?"

"Nobody got any room."

"My trunks will be here tomorrow," says she.

"Female drummer?" asks Hen.

"I?" says the lady, kinda dignified-like. "I am an arteest."

"Oh—yeah. Kinda like what, ma'am? Do yuh paint?"

"I dance."

"By cripes!" grunts Muley. "We'll give a dance."

"I—I am an interpretive dancer," she explains.

"Oh, yeah," nods Telescope. "I see."

"You're a kindly liar," says Chuck, "because you don't see nothin'. Ma'am, I'm plumb ignorant of the word you used."

"Why—I—er—do nature dances, don't you know?"

"Nature? Oh, yeah."

"Oh, yeah," mimics Hen. "You see just like Telescope did, Chuck."

"I—er—really, I do not believe I can explain it to you," says she. "Unless you have seen one done, it is difficult for the lay mind to grasp——"

"That's a word I've been tryin' to get for years," says Magpie. "Every time I've looked at this Cross J bunch I've tried to think of a word to describe their mentality. I thanks yuh for the word 'lay mind,' ma'am. Them four snake-hunters sure have that kinda minds."

"It ain't the hoochie—" begins Hen.

"It ain't!" yelps Telescope. "The lady never said nothin' about muscles. Henry, your horns are gettin' too long."

"Clip 'em, cowboy," challenges Hen. "Start clippin' and see which one of us gets dehorned first. You've got a pretty fair spread yourself. If the lady don't do that kinda dances it's her lookout, ain't it? Yuh don't need to whoop about it. I noticed yuh down at Silver Bend at the circus——"

"Now have a little sense," advises Magpie. "You pelicans are too danged anxious to show off before the lady. You fellers

spillin' lead up and down the street ain't gettin' her a place to lay her head, is it?"

"If she only wants to lay her head—" begins Chuck; but Muley steps on Chuck's ankle and shoves him aside.

"Ma'am, I apologizes for my friends. They mean well, but they ain't got no sense. Now, it appears to me that you are lookin' for a place to sleep."

"It took that idea a long time to appear to you, Muley," says Magpie. "Jist in what shape did you get this here bright vision? I don't think that Piperock needs any assistance from the Cross J cow-outfit when it comes to housin' our guests. I'll take care of Miss Harrison, y'betcha."

"Can't she get a room at Sam Holt's place?" asks Chuck, serious-like.

"Ma Holt," says Magpie, winking at Chuck; "Ma Holt says that every room is full."

Chuck wiggles his ears at Magpie and then looks over toward the hotel. Then he grins and says:

"You wait, will yuh? I *sabe* the cure for that."

CHUCK goes over to the hotel, and in a few minutes him and old Sam comes over to us. Old Sam says—

"Ma'am, we've got a vacancy and can sleep yuh fine."

Chuck grabs her valise, and him and the lady and old Sam beats it for the hotel.

"Now, what in —— did Chuck do to cause such a condition?" wonders Magpie.

"Chuck lied," declares Muley. "The son-of-a-gun lied; but what did he lie about?"

Naturally none of us knowed, so we went over to Buck's place and had a drink. We waited around for Chuck, but he didn't show up; so me and Magpie went home. I said "home," but it wasn't home any more. Magpie got dissatisfied right away.

"Hawg-pen," says he. "Anybody could tell that hawgs lived here. Lawd never intended for men to live alone this away."

"You living alone?" I asks.

"You don't count, Ike. A man like me kinda pines for the soft things of life."

"Mush?"

"Mush! Naw-w-w! Always thinkin' of your belly, Ike. A woman don't mean nothin' to you."

"I don't mean nothin' to her, Magpie; so it's fifty-fifty. Have you gone and fell into love again? Why, you danged old gray-backed pack-rat!"

"Age ain't no barrier to happiness, Ike. It ain't kind of you to point out a man's failin's thataway. Love knows no barriers."

"Nor nothin' else, Magpie."

Magpie Simpkins is about six feet and a half in his socks, and he's built on the principle of the thinnest line between two points. He's just got hips enough to hold up his cartridge-belt—if he's careful. His face is long and his mustaches look plumb exhausted from just hanging down past his mouth. His mind is full of odds and ends that never fit into anything.

A ordinary man in love can be handled, but Magpie ain't ordinary. Love is quicksand and no help in sight to that *hombre*. I've herded him past several affairs of the heart, liver, and lungs, but each time the attack is harder. The D. T's are a cinch beside what that pelican suffers when the little fat god of love stings him with a poisoned arrow.

Mostly always I hangs a extra gun to my belt and fills my pockets with rocks. Listen to reason? Say, that feller's ears don't hear nothin' but "love, honor and obey"—that, and the church bells ringing.

I went to bed that night, leaving him setting on the steps, talking to himself about the gentle touch of a woman's hand. I asked him if he remembered the one what "touched" him in Great Falls. There wasn't anything gentle about that one, being as she took his watch and three hundred dollars. That was another case of love at first sight, and then he went blind.

As I said before, bad news travels fast. The next day is Sunday, but that ain't no excuse for every puncher from Silver Bend to Yaller Horse to come to Piperock. I don't think that the Cross J bunch went home Saturday night.

Sam Holt never sold so many breakfasts before in his life. Some of them hair-pant specimens ate two or three times. Muley Bowles comes back to Buck's place with his belt in his hand, and groans when he tells me that he thinks he got ptomaine poisoning for breakfast.

"You done et three orders of ham and aigs," says Hen.

"You say 'ham and aigs' to me again and I'll massacree yuh, Hen."

Magpie comes back from breakfast and acts kinda sad-like.

After everybody is back from breakfast, old Sam Holt shows up. The bunch kinda crowds around him.

"I has to come away," informs Sam. "Ma's goin' t' feed the strange lady, and she won't allow nobody in the dinin'-room."

"Won't allow nobody in the dinin'-room?" parrots Telescope.

"She has her orders," grins Sam. "Only one man is allowed to see her."

"One man?" asks Magpie. "Sam, who is that there man?"

"Why, Chuck Warner, of course."

"Chuck Warner, of course," nods Magpie, like a man talking in his sleep.

"Chuck Warner," wheezes Muley. "Of course."

"Of course," says Telescope. "Chuck Warner."

Then we sets around and looks at each other.

"Chuck Warner?" says Hen, like he was trying to remember somebody by that name.

"Works for the Cross J outfit," says I. "Kind of handsome *hombre*. You must remember him, men."

"Oh-o-o-oh, yeah," nods Telescope, fussing with his gun. "Chuck Warner."

MAGPIE gets up, yawns and walks slow-like out of the door. Art Miller kinda saunters out, and then Telescope seems to desire fresh air. Muley kinda groans and starts to get up, but them three orders of ham and aigs has sort of depressed him, and he sinks back into his chair.

He takes out a piece of paper and a pencil and begins to write. You've got to hand it to Muley when it comes to poetry. In about fifteen minutes Magpie, Telescope and Art drifts back, and the three of 'em lines up at the bar.

"Here's hopin' he breaks a leg," says Magpie.

"Or splits a hoof," adds Art.

"Who yuh wishin' all such luck to?" asks Hen.

"Chuck Warner," says Telescope. "He's—Ma Holt wouldn't let us in, but we peeked in the winder and seen Chuck dancin' a war-dance for the lady."

"I'll dance for her!" says Muley. "I'll dance Chuck's scalp for her. Why won't Mrs. Holt let anybody in?"

"She's got her orders," says old Sam.

Just then "Scenery" Sims, the sheriff, comes in. Scenery is a squeaky little runt, and suspicious of everything and everybody. Magpie gets right up, takes Scenery by the arm and leads him outside.

"Now," says Telescope, "what kind of a frame-up has Magpie got under his hair?"

We hears Scenery say—

"Aw-w-w, is that a fact, Magpie?"

Magpie nods and jerks his head toward Holt's place. Scenery nods, and they starts for the hotel, with me and Telescope, Art, Muley, Hen, "Half-Mile" Smith, "Dough-god" Smith, "Tellurium" Woods, "Mighty" Jones and Pete Gonyer.

Magpie leads Scenery to a window of the dining-room, and they both peers in. Scenery looks at Magpie, kinda queer-like and nods his head. Then he tries to go in the door, but it's locked. Mrs. Holt comes to the door and scowls at Scenery.

"You can't come in," says she, and starts to shut the door; but Scenery shoves a foot inside and blocks it.

"Mrs. Holt," squeaks Scenery, "yo're defyin' the law. Actin' thataway puts yuh liable for contempt of court."

"Well," says she, kinda dubious-like, "mebbe that's so, Scenery. I'll let you in, but the rest of you snake-hunters'll have to stay outside."

"We bows to superior intelligence, ma'am," says Magpie.

In about a minute here comes Chuck Warner with his hands in the air, and behind him marches Scenery with a gun poked into Chuck's back. Chuck looks at us and says—

"What's the matter with this —— fool?"

"Head for the jail!" squeaks Scenery. "Head for the jail!"

"You're crazy!" wails Chuck.

"All right, all right," squeaks Scenery. "We've both headed th' same way."

Henrietta Harrison comes to the door, but Mrs. Holt shoves her back inside and shuts the door.

"Poor Chuck," says Magpie. "Poor Chuck."

"Poor, ——!" howls Chuck. "I'm goin' to kill somebody for this."

"Gettin' violent, Scenery," says Magpie. "Don't take a chance."

"I'll handle him, Magpie. Point for the jail, you scalp-dancin' idjit."

Chuck took one look at us, and then headed for the jail, with Scenery trottin' along after him.

We all went back to the saloon. Pretty soon Scenery comes from the jail, and he's got a beautiful black eye, where Chuck walloped him. Scenery is peeved. Old Judge Steele shows up, kinda ponderous-like, and Scenery explains the whole thing as far as he knows.

"*Loco parenthesis*," says the judge. "Reverted to sex. I always knowed there was aboriginal corpuscles in his arterial system. He is *non compos mentis*."

"*Lignum vitæ*," nods Magpie.

"Exactly," says the judge. "You stated the case, Magpie. Who is the lady in the case?"

"Name's Incognito," says Telescope. "Incognity, *alias* Harrison."

"Hah!" says the judge, serious-like. "This will need *finesse*. I shall go over to the hotel and have speech with the maid."

I RECKON he got in in the name of the law, too, but anyway he got in. Me and Muley went out and sat on the sidewalk, when here comes Mrs. Steele and Mrs. Wick Smith.

"Have you seen anything of the judge?" asks Mrs. Steele.

"Yeah," nods Muley. "He went over to Holt's to see a lady."

"Oh!" says Mrs. Steele, looking at Mrs. Smith.

"Men," says Mrs. Smith, "men are considerable alike, and a judge ain't no different than the rest."

"That old cormorant?" explodes Mrs. Steele. "The only difference is—he's worse."

"We've got to unite," says Mrs. Smith. "A united front must be showed. Let's go and talk to Mrs. Tilton before Testament falls from grace."

They toddles up the street, headed for Tilton's place. But Old Testament wasn't home. I reckon he was kinda snooping around, 'cause he comes out from behind Pete Gonyer's blacksmith shop and walks up to us.

"What was them womin talkin' about, Brother Ike?" he asks.

"They've gone up to hold a war-talk with your wife, Testament. Appears that there's a united conspiracy against the lady what come yesterday. They've gone to warn your wife, I reckon."

"Love's labor's lost," says Testament, sad-like. "She don't need warnin'. Where is said lady?"

"Her and Judge Steele are holdin' a conference over in Holt's place. Yuh might go over and add your spiritual presence, Testament," says Muley.

"I might," nods Testament. "I'm sure ready and willin' to pass spiritual advice. A man of spiritual knowledge is always needed."

Testament's last words were kinda faint, as he was hittin' the trail to Holt's front door.

"Paw," says Muley, sad-like, "Paw wanted me to study for the ministry. Seems like a minister can git into places where a cowpuncher can't."

Mrs. Holt met him at the door and let him in. Pretty soon we sees Mrs. Steele, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Gonyer, Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Tilton. They comes down the sidewalk toward us. Me and Muley starts to go into the saloon, but Mrs. Tilton yelps at us—

"Henry Peck, do you know where my husband is?"

"He—he's givin' spiritual advice to a lady," says Muley.

"I suppose Pete Gonyer is measurin' her for a pair of horseshoes," says Mrs. Gonyer, mean-like.

"And maybe Wick is tryin' to sell her a bill of groceries," says Mrs. Smith.

"I seen Art curryin' his horses," states Mrs. Wheeler. "He ain't curried one of 'em since he owned them four horses—and he greased his boots this mornin'."

"Here comes Mrs. Holt," says Mrs. Steele. "Mebbe she brings news."

Mrs. Holt was all out of breath, and them women didn't seem inclined to let her get any of it back. Magpie and Telescope comes out of the saloon and moves in close.

"I hopes to die!" gasps Mrs. Holt. "I hopes to die!"

"You're got a cinch," says Telescope. "We all have to."

Them females gives Telescope one gosh-awful look, and then surrounds Mrs. Holt, who gasps out her story.

"She—she's dancin' for Testament and the judge—barefooted!"

"No!" declares five female voices at once.

"Yes! Her and the judge has a long talk and I heard 'em. She tells him that Piperock don't appreciate art."

"My Art?" asks Mrs. Wheeler.

"I don't know. Lemme talk, will you? The judge said he longed for the day when

Piperock would become the greatest place on earth, and he said she had a good start right now. This here female opines that we're fifty years behind the times. She asks him why folks don't wake up around here. The judge says they're just waitin' for the right person to come along and set the alarm. She says she's the greatest dancer in the world.

"She wants to show off, but the judge says that all Piperock ain't as intelligent as he is and mebbe they'd not see things in the right light.

"Then Testament Tilton comes in. The judge introduces them two, and explains about her bein' the greatest dancer on earth. Testament Tilton says he's originally from Missouri. Then he laughed like a danged hy-e-ner. I don't like to say that about a preacher, but——"

"Speak your mind, sister," says Mrs. Tilton. "I like your description."

"Well," continues Mrs. Holt, "I had to go away for a few minutes, but when I got my eye to the crack of that door again I hears the judge sayin'—

" 'Testament, I reckon the rest of the country will kinda set up when we lets 'em know that Piperock is going to exhibit the greatest dancer in the whole danged world, eh?'

"Then Testament says:

" 'Brother Steele, you've said a lot in them few lines. Your idea of givin' this under the auspices of my church is goin' to make a hit with the womin folks. That takes the curse off.'

"Just then this here female shows up—barefooted."

Mrs. Holt stops for breath.

"Can she dance?" asks Mrs. Smith, wheezin' quite a lot.

"Well—" Mrs. Holt looks around at us, and swallers real hard—"well—Mrs. Smith, I reckon we better go over to your house to tell the rest of it."

They went across the street like they was afraid they'd get wet.

"I'll never eat another meal in Sam Holt's place again," declares Muley. "I'll get even with her by boycottin' her husband."

"I'm goin' home," says I. "The peace and quiet of Piperock is about null and void, and I need solitary communion with my pet hunch. Somethin' tells me that all is not well. In fact somethin' tells me that all is not only not well, but in danged delicate health."

Nobody can read Piperock's mind, but I've seen disaster come and go, and my personal prognostications are about on a par with a weather man prophesyin' fair and warm in Death Valley.

I'M COOKIN' supper when Magpie shows up, and the blasted idiot is grinning from ear to ear. He pours coffee over his potatoes and puts sugar on his bacon and then begins to talk.

"The rhythm," says he, "the rhythm of nature is a wonderful thing, Ike."

"Yes," says I. "It must be."

"The breeze of Spring; the waving of the branches of a tree. True poetry, Ike. The human form divine is the only thing capable of expressin' these here e-motions."

I takes out my gun and puts it beside my plate.

"Magpie, there's a curse on you, and you might as well spill it all now. I'm not interested a danged bit, but any old time you starts out bobbin' from flower to flower I knows what's comin'. Spread your hand."

Magpie smiles at me and then shoves back from the table.

"Ike, here's where we jump fifty years ahead of Paradise and Curlew. We has hung to the old order of things too long. We has become moth-eaten and stale. Don't yuh know we have?"

"Anything would—hung up for fifty years, Magpie."

"We still dance quadrilles and waltzes, the same of which went out of style with flint-lock muskets. Now, we sheds the scales off our eyes and comes out of our shells into the dawn of a brighter day. Piperock entereth a reign of classical dancing, Ike.

"Miss Harrison is goin' to elevate us, but we have to give her our able assistance. There seems to be a female sentiment against her here; but that's plumb natural, bein' as we're in a rut and don't know no better. Judge Steele and Testament Tilton has seen her dance. Them two are real progressive, Ike, and they sees the possibilities.

"Testament Tilton says it's got anythin' beat he ever seen, and he's had his eyes open for sixty-six years. Miss Harrison says she'll teach Piperock the rhythm of

motion and then give a show for the benefit of the church. She's gotta have a class of five to start with, and after them five has learned all about it they can each take a class of five. See how it's done?"

"Has she picked her class?"

"I picked 'em for her, Ike. She kinda leans on me."

"Might better 'a' picked a fish-pole. Who'd you pick?"

"Me and Pete and Wick Smith and Art Wheeler and you."

"I ain't ripe," says I. "You better put me back on the tree."

"She wanted you, Ike. Mentioned you right off the reel. Said she wanted a representative group. Well, I got 'em, didn't I? Everybody wanted to help, but five was all we could use."

"Is Chuck still in jail?"

"Nope, Chuck's mad. Yuh see, he told Mrs. Holt that him and Miss Harrison was goin' to get married, and he wanted Mrs. Holt to take care of her and see that none of the men came near her. Chuck was showin' her some Injun dances, and it was a good chance to get even with him for lyin' all the time. Mrs. Holt was willin' to take her in, bein' as she was to marry Chuck.

"Testament has talked Mrs. Holt into keepin' her until this here church benefit is over. It's goin' to be a e-leet affair, I'll tell a man. Nothin' like it has ever been thought about before, Ike. This is one time when Piperock shines as a social center and abolishes her rough career."

When it comes to dancing I sure have always shook a wicked hoof, but this kinda stuff had me hoppled. You take two or three little running steps ahead, stop and wave your arms in the air, and kick out behind like a mule. Then you duck to one side, whirl around, lift up your arms again and go hippety-hopping around the place, kinda singing—

"Tra-la-la-, tra-la-la, la, la."

That represents a little zephyr of Spring, you understand. There was five little zephyrs in our Spring. We zephyred around and around. Miss Harrison said we was getting the idea. Then she had us zephyr alone, while the other four little breezes set down and made smart remarks. There was considerable feeling aroused during this lesson.

Five little zephyrs took her back to the hotel, and then one little zephyr went home and packed up his burro. That one little zephyr had a vision of a big blow coming and wanted to get out of the road.

Magpie tried to plead with us, but me and the mule remained firm. Magpie's voice was full of tears, but I shook my head, packed my jassack and went to live a while with "Dirty Shirt" Jones, who lives several miles away from the center of disturbance.

DIRTY SHIRT ain't neither sane nor sanitary, but he appreciates me a heap. Dirty is cock-eyed, but he believes in handing you bokays while you are yet in the land of the living and not waiting until you are ready for your weight of sand.

Dirty squints at me and says:

"I know you'd show up, Ike. It's about time for Piperock to make a fool of itself again. What's itchin' the old town this time?"

"Interpretive dancing."

"Oh yeah. I don't know what in —— that is, Ike; but it sounds like Piperock might adopt it. Magpie's the ring-leader, ain't he? Sure."

Dirty knows Piperock as well as I do. For a week I helped him on a copper prospect, and not a word of Piperock's doings percolated into our happy home.

Then Dirty got dry. When Dirty Shirt gets dry there ain't nothing short of sudden death will stop him this side of Buck Masterson's place.

Therefore we packs our burros and pilgrims to the city of Baal, as Testament calls it every Sunday. Testament has just got two sermons. One is on temperance and the other is on the evils of strong drink.

We has to pass Mighty Jones' place on our way in, and we finds Mighty settin' on his wood-pile, playing with a coyote pup. He squints at us.

"Goin' to Piperock?"

I admits our ultimate destination.

"Better go home. Testament Tilton says that Piperock is goin' to run a dead heat with Sodom and Gomorrah, whatever pair of horses them two is."

"What's the matter with Piperock?" asks Dirty.

Mighty hitches up his pants and spits very expressive-like.

"High-toned. Yessir, Piperock is gettin' uppity—part of 'em, and the rest are packin'

two guns per each. Tonight means trouble in that town, y'betcha."

"Tonight? Why tonight, Mighty?"

"Social affair tonight, that's why. Two dollars per ticket, and not a gun allowed into the hall. I've got a ticket, which I'll sell yuh."

"Goin' to save my money for ca'tridges," grunts Dirty, and we pilgrims on.

We went right down the street of Piperock, looking neither to the right nor left, and heads straight for Magpie's cabin. Looking into the open door we sees Magpie bending over the cook-stove, frying meat.

"*Klahowya,*" says Dirty.

Magpie drops the pan on the floor and whirls with a gun in each hand.

"Dancing makes you jumpy?" I asks.

Magpie shoves his guns back inside the waistband of his pants, kicks the hunk of meat into the skillet and turns back to the stove.

"How's Miss Harrison?" I asks.

Magpie turns and squints at me.

"She's gone, Ike."

"De-mised?"

"De-parted."

"Kinda busts up the show, don't it, Magpie?"

"Like —— it does!"

"How comes she to de-part thataway?" asks Dirty.

Magpie flops the meat and sets it on the back of the stove. Then he sets down on a bunk and combs his mustache.

"YOU ain't heard, have yuh, Ike? No. Well, here's the how of it all. You left hereabout the time that all the married womin are faunchin' around, organizin' a vigilance commi'tee to hang their own husbands, didn't yuh? Well, Wick and Pete and Old Testament and Art Wheeler and Judge Steele decides that Piperock and posterity needs 'em more than jealous wives do, so they up and orates that for th' interests of the furtherance of Piperock they're goin' to stick to their original idea of learning the latest thing in dances.

"Them womin combines against such proceedings, and locks their doors against said husbands, with the result that we puts up bunks in the Mint Hall for all them errant husbands. Miss Harrison hangs on to her room at the hotel and Mrs. Holt enlists with the belligerent wives and hives up at Judge Steele's.

"Inside of three days them husbands are plumb anxious to go to their wives, but wifie has nailed the front door shut. Them there dancin'-lessons has improved us wonderful, Ike. I gets old Sam Holt to dance in your place.

"Then we finds out somethin'.

"Judge Steele goes sneakin' around home late at night after our lessons, and he peeks under the curtains in his house, and he sees Miss Harrison teachin' them womin to dance, and the judge swears that they ain't got enough clothes on to flag a hand-car.

"The judge so forgets himself that he raps on the window, and he gets a lot of bird-shot sprayed into the seat of his pants.

"Miss Harrison has double-crossed us, and the next night we chides her about it. She gets kinda woolly and informs us that the ladies invited her to teach them so they could do their part in the performance. She was teachin' 'em the 'Dance of the Raindrops.'

" 'My ——!' grunts Wick. 'My wife ain't no raindrop.'

" 'I ain't goin' to permit Mrs. Tilton to appear in no mosquito nettin' and bare feet—not in public,' declares Testament.

"Things got kinda deadlocked, Ike. The tickets are all sold for the performance, and the church realizes over two hundred dollars. Me and the judge goes as a committee to confer with Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Tilton, and they refuses to arbitrate. They opines that what's good enough for their husbands is good enough for them. Mrs. Tilton says:

" 'If Testament can wear a gee-string and imitate a willer-tree, why can't I wear a porous-knit undershirt and imitate a drop of rain?'

"What could we do? We went back and held a council of war. Pete said he'd be —— if his wife was goin' to be a spectacle. They all declared that they wasn't goin' to let the world at large gaze upon their property in the rough. Miss Harrison declares that it must go through. There yuh are, Ike.

"Miss Harrison was taken to Paradise this morning and was put aboard the train. Art Wheeler drove the stage, and Pete Gonyer, Judge Steele and Testament Tilton acted as shotgun guards. Our premier dancer has went."

"Which busts up the show, eh?" says Dirty.

"Not while Magpie Simpkins roams the

plains, it don't. Piperock is goin' to get a look at interpretive dancin', y'betcha. How much civic pride has you two snake-hunters got?"

Me and Dirty don't say a word, being as we don't *sabe* his wau-wau. Then he hauls out a jug of pain-killer and we sets down to do homage.

AFTER all danger from drought is a long time past, Magpie points out the duty of a real honest-to-grandma citizen. He orates openly that the future of a city is only as broad as the inhabitants will allow. He asks Dirty Shirt if his views are narrow.

"Wide as the ocean, and beggin' to expand," says Dirty.

"I'm the widest human bein' yuh ever seen, Magpie. Dog-gone me if I ain't wider than anythin' anybody ever seen. How about you, Ike?"

"I've got you skinned about four ways from the jack," says I, and somehow I believed it.

Magpie got in between us and took Dirty's gun away from him.

"Killin' ain't expansion," explains Magpie. "Piperock has entertained too many times in the interests of the undertaker. Piperock is so far behind the times that the seventeenth generation of Montana's human race has started and finished and we're still runnin' the wrong way of the track."

"Are we that far behind the rest of the world?" asks Dirty, tearful-like.

"Further," assures Magpie.

"Then let's be up and doin'," urges Dirty. "My——, I never realized that we was runnin' in the dust. How does we start in to speed up the old buggy?"

"I," says Magpie, "I am the little jigger who is goin' to lead Piperock to th' promised land. I am the pelican which is goin' to make Piperock a place of honor and glory and a social center. I has been throwed down by the best citizens, you know it? Puttin' their personal feelin's ahead of the best interests of the city, they has laid down upon their labors, willin' to let poor old Piperock slumber and waller in the dust of decay; but the womin can see what it means to the city, and they're firm as rocks. I have got one of the best dances yuh ever seen, gents.

"The ordinary poetry of motion is the weavin's of a drunken Siwash with a sprained ankle beside this here dance of mine. Miss Harrison said it had anythin' beat she ever seen."

"Do yuh have music for this kind of dancin'?" asks Dirty.

"Well, kinda," assures Magpie. "Frenchy Deschamps' jew's-harp and Bill Thatcher on his wind-pipe. Bill bought it a short time ago. Said that ever time he got a bull-fiddle busted it cost him ten dollars for a new one; so he buys him a wind-pipe. If anybody shoots holes in that thing he can patch it up."

"That's a new instrument on me," says Dirty.

"That's it," says Magpie. "We're so far behind the times, Dirty, that we don't recognize things that the rest of the world has been usin' for years."

"My——!" wails Dirty. "This is awful, Magpie. I'm grateful to yuh for callin' my attention to same. Ain't you grateful, Ike?"

"Remains to be seen, as the feller said when he dug into a Injun grave."

"Ike's grateful," says Magpie. "Ike's the gratefulest human bein' on earth."

"That ain't no ways true," objects Dirty. "I'm the most gratefulest."

I gets between Magpie and Dirty and makes 'em put up their guns. Then we all took a last look at the inside bottom of the jug of pain-killer.

Piperock appreciates art, there ain't no question about that. There's fellers in town for this social event that ain't been outside their dug-outs since the big blow. Plain and fancy horse-thieves, unsuccessful rustlers, hairy old shepherds that says "Ya-a-a-ss" and "No-o-o-o," just like a sheep, and others too numerous and or'nary to mention.

Scenery Sims is setting in front of the Mint Hall with a sawed-off shotgun on his lap, but he lets us in.

"How does she look, Scenery?" asks Magpie.

"Well," squeaks Scenery, "everythin' is all right so far, but them ex-dancers is all back from Paradise. The women is all up there in the hall now. Bill Thatcher is drunker'n seven hundred dollars, and somebody has hit Frenchy in the mouth and kinda crippled his part of the orchestra. Shouldn't be s'prized if there'd be buzzards circlin' Piperock in the mornin'."

WE WENT up into the hall, which is all fixed up for the social doings. They've got the stage all curtained off and the room is full of chairs. Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Tilton, Mrs. Gonyer, Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Steele are there. Magpie leads me and Dirty up to the stage and in behind the curtain.

"My——!" gasps Dirty. Sheep!"

"There's four sheep tied up back there—all rams.

"Sheep—yes," agrees Magpie. "Them is what Miss Harrison calls 'atmosphere.'"

"At— Oh, my!" gasps Dirty. "What's she mean, Magpie?"

"Accessories to my dance," explains Magpie. "I'm the star performer in 'The Shepherd's Awakening.'"

"What do we do?" asks Dirty.

"You fellers are fauns."

"I'm the old buck deer—me," declares Dirty. "You're more cockeyed than me, Magpie if you can see me with four spindle legs and a spotted hide."

"A faun," says Magpie, "a faun is a thing that looks like a human bein', but ain't. It wears skin pants, but from there on up it's plumb nude. On its head is little horns, and it's got a tail like a goat. It plays a tune on a wooden whistle."

Me and Dirty looks at each other, kinda foolish-like.

"I think it's lovely of you two gentlemen to step in the breach," says Mrs. Tilton.

"Step in the—oh—!" croaks Dirty, wild-eyed. "This is terrible!"

"It will be a big thing for Piperock," says Mrs. Gonyer; "and it will teach the male sex that the women are the real progressives. Don't you think so, Mr. Harper?"

"There's goin' to be a lesson taught," says I. "Experience is a great teacher, but I ain't never learned much. I thought I was wise, but I finds that— Well, I ain't never wore a tail like a goat and blowed on a wooden whistle yet."

"I hope that Testament's skin pants will fit Mr. Harper," says Mrs. Tilton. "Mr. Harper is a little wider across than the Reverend."

"Mr. Jones will be a little snug in Sam's," opines Mrs. Holt, "but he don't have to do only one little dance."

Dirty's bad eye rolls a complete circle and then stops with a dead center on the tip of his nose. He grabs me by the arm and flops down in a chair.

"Ike," he gasps, "Ike, shoot me while there is yet time."

"Shoot yourself—you've got a gun," says I.

"I know it, bub—but I'm so nervous I'd miss."

Dirty just sits there and sweats.

"Them sheep—has they been trained?" I asks.

"They've been here two days," says Magpie. "They ought to be used to the stage."

SUDDEN-LIKE we hears a crash down-stairs, the sound of loud voices raised in anger, and then up the stairs comes Judge Steele, Wick Smith, Pete Gonyer, Art Wheeler and Sam Holt. They've got Scenery Sims in their clutches, and he's squeaking like a rusty gate. They files into the door, and Magpie greets 'em with a gun in each hand.

"Come ye in anger?" asks Magpie.

"Kinda," admits Pete. "This whang-doodle tried to stop us."

"Put your hands up!" snaps Magpie, and the whole gang reach upward. "Take their guns away, Scenery."

"Now," says Magpie, "what's eatin' you backsliders?"

"Ma-a-a," wails Testament. "You ain't aimin' to carry out your threat, are ye?"

"I'm goin' to dance—if that's what you mean," says Mrs. Tilton, mean-like.

"Arabellie, does you mean that you womin—" begins Wick.

"Wick Smith, you started this," says Mrs. Smith. "You told me I was narrer. You said I was fifty years behind the times, didn't you?"

"That —— Magpie Simpkins put them words in my mouth, Arabellie."

"I won't stand for it!" yelps Pete. "No woman of mine can——"

"Pete, you shut your face!" whoops Mrs. Gonyer. "If you don't want to see me imitate a raindrop—vamoose. I sure am goin' to rattle on the roof."

"I'll git out a injunction," says Judge Steele. "By mighty, I'll declare it a public nuisance! I'll stop this here——"

"You'll set down and keep your face shut," says Magpie. "You five pelicans are goin' to set right down and look and listen. Has you all got tickets?"

None of 'em has bought a ticket, and they opines they won't.

"Scenery," says Magpie, "take two dollars from each of 'em."

Them five arose up an yelped like a pack of wolves, but Scenery got ten dollars out of the bunch, and then we made 'em take front seats.

We hears some goshawful sounds coming up the stairs, and into the door comes Bill Thatcher. He's got one of them Scotch wind-pipe instruments and it's wailing like a lost soul. Behind him comes Frenchy Deschamps. Neither of 'em are in any shape to make music for anything except a dog-fight, but they flops down in their chairs at the front of the stage and acts like they meant business.

Scenery recovers his sawed-off shotgun and sets down on the corner of the stage, where he can watch them disgrunted husbands.

Me and Dirty follows Magpie to a place he's got partitioned off for a dressing-room. Through the curtain we can hear Yaller Rock County beginning to come in. Me and Dirty are just sober enough to kinda be indifferent to death or taxation.

Magpie gives us our costumes, which consists of cowhide pants with a tail tied on, and a jigger made like a cap, with yearlin'-calf horns sticking out the side. He also gives us each a little whistle made of a willer.

"Where's the shirt?" asks Dirty.

"Fauns don't wear shirts."

"What do you wear, Magpie?"

Magpie holds up a mountain-lion skin and a breech-clout. Dirty looks things over and then says to Magpie:

"If you escape, Magpie, will yuh do me a favor? In my cabin—in a old trunk, is a suit of clothes. I paid sixteen dollars for it the year Bryan run for free silver, but I never wore it. Will yuh see that they lays me out in it? Lawd knows I don't want to be buried in a outfit like this."

From outside we hears "Fog-horn" Foster's voice—

"We-e-e-ll, come on, you mockin'-birds!"

"The house must be full," opines Magpie, fastening his lionskin.

"Full of hootch and ——" sighs Dirty, sliding into his cow skins. "I'm goin' to die like a —— cow, I know that."

"My gosh!" grunts Magpie. "I've plumb forgot we ain't got no announcer since the judge quit. Ike, will you do the announcin'?"

"Then I won't have to dance?"

"Sure you'll have to dance, but—all you've got to do, Ike, is to tell 'em what is comin' next. The first thing on the program is a solo dance, which is knowed as 'The Gatherin' Storm,' by Mrs. Smith; and then she gets assisted by the five 'Raindrops,' consistin' of Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Tilton, Mrs. Steele, Mrs. Gonyer and Mrs. Wheeler. Mrs. Smith is doin' the solo in place of the departed champeen dancer of the world. Will yuh do this for me, Ike?"

"Do it for Magpie," urges Dirty. "Do anythin' to get it over."

I WENT on to the stage, and I got the shock of my life. Them females are out there, and I'm a danged liar if they ain't undressed about as much as possible. I takes one look and staggers for the curtain. I hears one of them women bust out in a "haw! haw!" as I went past, but I never stopped to think that I wasn't wearing any more than the law allows.

I steps out through the curtain and looks around. Never did the old hall hold as many folks. Fog-horn Foster and Half-Mile Smith are settin' in the front row, across the aisle from each other. They stares at me for a moment; then both gets up like they was walking in their sleep, steps for the aisle and bumps together.

Fog-horn hit Half-Mile and Half-Mile hit the floor, after which Fog-Horn went right on up the aisle. Half-Mile got up, looks at me again, and follers Fog-Horn, but he ain't tryin' to catch Fog-Horn—he's tryin' to go past him.

"My ——" gasps "Cinch" Culler, lookin' wild-like around. "Won't somebody please hold me? I won't be responsible——"

"Ladies and gents," says I. "I'm out here to let yuh know what's comin' off."

"Wait a minute," says Abe Mudgett, standing up. "I've got my two sisters here with me, and if anything more's comin' off——"

"Set down!" squeaks Scenery, waving his shot-gun at Abe, and Abe sets down.

"Now," says I, "I'm out here to announce that the first thing on the program is Mrs. Smith. She's goin' to imitate a storm comin' up, and then Mrs. Holt, Mrs. Tilton, Mrs. Wheeler, Mrs. Steele and Mrs. Gonyer are goin' to show yuh what raindrops look like. This here——"

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roars Pete Gonyer, but his laugh don't show that he's tickled so awful much.

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Mrs. Smith is goin' to imitate— Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"Haw! Haw!" howls Wick. "My wife looks as much like a storm as yours does like a raindrop, Pete."

"My wife," states the judge, standing up, "my wife ain't goin' to do no —— fool thing of the kind. I'll show her——"

"Set down!" yelps Scenery. "Set down, you old Blackstone blatter! This is once when you don't hand down no decisions."

"Git off the stage and let 'er rain!" howls Telescope Tolliver. "I'll see it through if I have to wear a slicker."

"Ready for us to play?" asks Bill Thatcher, kicking Frenchy to wake him up.

"Use your own judgment, Bill," says I, "I've done all I can, and now I'm goin' to let nature take her course."

I starts to step back through the curtain, when "Polecat" Perkins yells—

"Ike, I was wrong—you're only half-cow."

I gets back inside. Them women are all scared plumb stiff, but Mrs. Smith wheezes—

"Ladies, we've made our bluff—let 'er go!"

Just then Bill Thatcher's instrument begins to wail and wail, shutting off all chances for Frenchy Deschamps to be heard.

"Sweet Marie!" howls Mrs. Smith. "Gee cripes, don't he never learn a new tune?"

I ducks out of sight and the curtain slides back.

IF MRS. SMITH knew anything about dancing she forgot every step. She trots out on the stage and starts something like Kid Carson used to call "shadow-boxing." Then she turns around about three times, stubs her toe and falls down. Standing in a line across the stage is the rest of them females, with their hands up in the air like they was being held up by somebody with a gun.

"A-arabellie!" wails Wick. "My ——, woman, git out of sight!"

Mrs. Smith gets to her feet and yelps back at Wick:

"Git out of sight yourself—if you don't like it! I'll teach you to flirt with a dancer. Start the music over again, Bill."

"Em-m-m-i-lee!" shrieks Sam Holt. "Ain'tcha got no modesty? Go put on your shoes and socks!"

Bill Thatcher starts squealing on his instrument again, and Mrs. Smith starts doing some fancy steps.

Wow! Here comes Judge Steele, Art Wheeler, Pete Gonyer, Testament Tilton, Wick Smith and Sam Holt, climbing right over the top of folks.

"Git ba-a-a-ck!" squeaks Scenery, waving his shot-gun. "Stop it! Whoa, Blaze!"

"Look at the wild man!" howls somebody, and here comes Magpie across the stage hopping high and handsome.

"Stop 'em, Scenery!" whoops Magpie. "Dog-gone 'em, they can't bust up my show!"

Man, I'll tell all my grandchildren this tale. Them outraged husbands came up on that stage, while Yaller Rock County yelled itself hoarse and made bets on whether it would be an odd or even number of deaths. Magpie hit Pete in the neck and Pete lit with one leg on each side of Bill Thatcher's head. Wick Smith got hold of his wife and them two started a tug of war.

Me and old Sam Holt got to waltzing around and around, which wasn't a-tall pleasant, being as I'm barefooted and Sam ain't. I seen Mrs. Wheeler and Art locked in mortal combat, and just then I hears Dirty Shirt Jones yelp—

"Heavy, heavy hangs over your head—"

I whirls just in time to see what's coming, but I can't escape. Dirty Shirt has turned the atmosphere loose. Them four he-sheep—four ungentlemanly woollies, with corkscrew horns, are buck-jumping across that stage, seeking what they may hit. I swung around to meet the attack, and I reckon the leading sheep hit him a dead center, 'cause I felt the shock plumb to me.

Maybe it hit Sam a little low, because it knocked all four of our feet off the floor, and the next in line picked us in the air and stood us on our heads.

I seen Wick Smith, braced against the edge of the stage, trying to pull his wife over the edge, the same of which is a invitation to a sheep, and the old ram accepted right on the spot. Mrs. Smith grunted audibly and shot into Wick's arms. Scenery Sims starts to skip across the stage, but a ram outsmarted him, and I seen Scenery turn over gracefully in the air and shoot, regardless, with both barrels of that sawed-off shotgun.

Them load of shot hived up in the chandelier, the same of which cut off our visible supply of light.

I heard the crashing of glass, and I figures that the hallway is too crowded for

some of the audience. I lays still, being wise, until the noise subsides, and the crowd has escaped. Then I moves slowly to my hands and knees. I feels a hand feeling of my legs, and then a hand taps gently on my horned cap.

"I—I thought," whispers old Sam's voice kinda quavering-like, "I—I thought they was all old ones, but a sheep's a sheep to me."

Bam! Something landed on my head, and I seen more bright lights than there is in a million dollars worth of skyrockets. Then things kinda clear up, and I hears old Sam saying to himself:

"Well, I killed one of the —— things. If I go carefully——"

I can dimly see old Sam sneaking for the front of the stage. I'm mad. I got up and sneaked right after him. No man can mistake me for a sheep and get away with it. I jumps for old Sam's back, and just then he seems to kinda drop away from me. I reckon he forgot about the five-feet drop from the stage, and I know danged well I did. I reckon I sort of lit on my head and shoulders on top of somebody. There comes a squeak from Bill Thatcher's instrument, and then all is quiet.

I WRIGGLED loose and starts to get up, but a strong hand grabs me by the ankle, yanks me off my feet, and I hit my head on a chair. I kinda remember being dragged down them stairs, and then I feels my carcass being dragged over rough ground. It was a long, hard trip, and I reckon I lost about all the skin on the upper half of my body. Finally I bumps over a step, gets yanked inside on to a carpet, and then I hears a voice very dimly—

"Sweetheart, I brought thee home."

Then a light is lit, and I sees Mrs. Smith putting the chimney on a lamp. Without turning she says—

"I reckon you'll confine your love to me after this, eh?"

Then she turns and looks at me, setting there on the floor with my back propped up against a chair. I looks around. Just inside the door, sitting on the floor, is Wick. Mrs. Smith looks at me and then at him. Then she wipes her lips and stares at Wick.

"Sweetheart, eh?" grunts Wick, getting to his feet. "Arabellie, ain't you got no shame? Dancin' up there without nothing on to speak of, and then you has the gall to bring your sweetheart home with yuh."

"Did—did—didn't I—bring you home, Wicksie?"

"You — know — danged — well — you — didn't. I always knowed you was kinda sweet on Ike Harper."

"On that!" She actually yelped, and pointed her finger at me. "Sweet on him?"

I gets to my feet, but my legs ain't very strong. I says:

"Lemme a-alone. I don't want no man's wife's love—especially one what hauls me home by the ankle. When I git married I want a clingin' vine—not a pile driver."

I never did have much sense. A feller in my condition ought to keep his mouth shut and sneak away soft-like. I turns my head toward the door, and just then the weight of the world hit me from behind, and it was a lucky thing for that house that the door was open.

I landed on my hands and knees in the yard, with all the wind knocked out of my system. Wick has got some rose-bushes in his yard. Like a animal wounded unto death, I reckon I tried to crawl around on my hands and knees to find a spot to die in.

All to once I sees one of them —— sheep. It's only a short distance from me. I know if I move it's going to hit me sure as —— so I remains still. I'll bet that me and the sheep never moved a muscle for fifteen minutes.

Then all at once the sheep spoke.

"For——'s sake, if you're goin' to butt—butt and have it over with!"

I got to my feet.

"Get up, Dirty Shirt Jones," says I. "What kind of a way is that to act?"

Dirty weaves to his feet and stumbles over to me.

"Ike, thank the Lord, we're alive!"

"Don't presume too much. Medical science says that a man can live after losin' a certain amount of skin, but I'm bettin' I've passed that certain limit. Let's sneak home and save what life we've got left."

We sneaked around the Mint Hall and Wick's store, and at the corner we stumbles into somebody.

"Who goes there?" asks Dirty.

"Go—!" wails Magpie Simpkins. "Help me, will yuh? I wrastled all the way down here with one of them —— sheep and now I'm afraid to let loose."

"You and your —— atmosphere!" groans Dirty.

"I'm settin' on it," wails Magpie, "I've got a kink in my neck. Will yuh hold it down until I can get up?"

Just then a voice from under him starts singing very soft and low—

"There's a la-a-a-nd that is fairer than this——"

Magpie gets to his feet and takes a deep breath.

"Testament," says he, "what made yuh blat like a sheep?"

But Testament's mind is not dwelling on sheep—not the kind of sheep that Magpie meant.

Then the three of us starts limping toward home.

"Mebbe," says Magpie, kinda painful-like, "mebbe we progressed too fast. Piperock don't appreciate it, gents, but this night the old town jumped ahead at least fifty years."

"Jumpin'," says Dirty, reflective-like, "jumpin' don't hurt nobody, but, holy henhawks, it sure does hurt to jump that far and light so hard."

We pilgrims along, everybody trying hard to make their legs track. Finally Magpie says—

"Personally, I think that interpretive dancin' has anythin' skinned I ever seen."

"Me too," says I, "and parts I never have seen."

Kos the Witch-Doctor

by

Santie Sabalala

Author of "In Kaffir Kraals," "The Crocodile's Bride," etc.

KOS was a very old-looking man. His age, to look at him, was two hundred years or more; though, in point of fact, he was not so old as to be decrepit. And he was almost as agile as any *umfan* (boy) in the tribe-clan that he was part of. His eyes were constantly puckered up, and they peered at everything through years of dirt that had accumulated around both eyes and nose.

His hands were indescribably dirty; the débris under his finger-nails would have made good manure for a miniature garden. But the lines of his hands were smooth, and the fingers themselves were strong and supple. The third fingers of both hands were nearly as long as the second fingers and actually longer than the first or index fingers.

Kos liked to, and did, live alone. There was a small boy who had been given to him—as was the native custom—by a sister because he (the boy) was the first-born. The boy just now was looking after Kos' large herd of sheep, goats and cattle.

Kos, in the days that were now gone by, had been quite a power in the community. As a mixer of herbs no one could surpass him. In witchcraft he was a wizard in every sense of the word. His sense of prophecy was uncanny at times. But now a younger witch-doctor had his position, and was the power behind the throne.

Kos sat over a small fire in the shallow cave that he made his home. As he gazed into the glowing embers there came a shout from the outside in the far distance:

"Wheeyee! *Wheeyee!*

Kos stretched out his arm, got hold of a

brand from the fire and flung it out of the rude door. This was a signal to the shouter that he might come down.

In a short while a young boy entered the rude door with something slung over his right shoulder and some wood under his left arm. He let the wood fall with a loud clatter to the ground, but laid the bundle off his right shoulder with a little more care. The reason was very apparent; for he had four or five wild pigeons, several hares and a young suckling boar.

Kos pointed to the suckling boar; the boy passed it over with a confident smile. Kos turned it over two or three times, and then from somewhere on his person he brought out his knife and proceeded to skin the young suckling boar.

The boy watched him for a second or two and then put some of the fresh wood that he had brought on the fire. He built it up until a good draft would be made and blew on it until the fresh wood brought a flame which lit up the cave.

Kos had a half-smile on his lips, and the anticipatory saliva was dribbling out of the corners of his mouth unknown to him. The boy's face was seen for the first time. The striking thing about him was his large eyes.

The "whites" were white, and the cornea was a beautiful light-black tea color. They were magnetic eyes and doubly so when he smiled, which was constantly.

When the fire was briskly blazing the boy picked up one of the dead pigeons, put a sharp finger-nail at the point where the ribs form a "V," pulled downward sharply and took out the entrails, saving the kidneys, liver and heart. He repeated the same thing over with a second bird, raked out two deep holes on two sides of the fire and put one bird in one and the other in the second—feathers and all—covered them with the hot ashes, built up the fire and sat back toasting his shins waiting till the pigeons were done.

Having skinned and taken out the entrails of the young boar, Kos cut it in two and put the soft, tender hams on the fire to roast, saving the ribs and head to be roasted later. The hams sizzled and hissed as the oozy fat fell into the fire. Now and then a gob of it would catch fire and light up the cave with a bright, white light. With many a sputter and a hiss the gob of fat would be burned to a black cinder, leaving only the very appetizing smell of young, sweet, tender wild pig.

Kos showed a wonderful self-control as he turned the meat over this way and that way so that the back and every portion would be well done. After a while it was done to his satisfaction, and he proceeded then and there to satisfy the inner man.

The boy raked away the hot embers from the top of the two birds; and when he took them out the feathers were all gone, having been burned away when they were buried under and in the hot coals. The boy bit into the flesh of the first bird, and the meat came away as if it had not been part of the bird at all.

Kos had already begun to roast the last portions of the young boar for future use. When it was done he put it aside, wiped his mouth with his forearm, grunted and pointed to some calabashes for the boy to bring to him. The boy brought one and then the second one, for they were too large and too heavy to carry together even for a short distance.

Kos opened the first one. The stopper, made out of a corncob, came off with a bing. Kos' eyes twinkled as he lifted the calabash to his lips, for he was going to drink some of his own home brew. He takes a long, long pull, his throat muscles working regularly until he stops and puts down the calabash.

He takes a deep breath and expels it slowly, patting his stomach all the while. He rises to his feet with the agility of an *umfan*, goes over to where his sleeping-mat is leaning against the wall, takes it up and unrolls it, puts it on the floor and lays himself down and in a moment is in a trance.

About a half-hour later Kos came to and sat up slowly and looked at the boy, who was gazing into the fire, his chin resting on his knees.

"*U cinga ntoni?*" (What are you thinking about?) questioned Kos.

"*Nge nkos*," (Of the king) replied the boy.

Kos gave him a hard look; then—

"*Ngo ba?*" (Why?)

"*Ndi bone inkomo zake.*" (I saw some of the royal cattle.)

Kos thought this over. Suddenly there came a long shout from outside. It seemed more like a wail.

"*Wena, Kos! Wena, Kos.*" (You, Kos! You, Kos!)

But Kos paid no heed as he leaned forward pointing his finger at the boy.

"*U cinga nge nkosi? Ndi ya hezma. Nkosi*

i yafa. Num xelele ndi yeza. Amanzi a lungile." (You think about the king? Hear the messenger. The king is ill. Tell him I am coming tonight. The water is sweet.)

And with that Kos sprang up and darted through the door. The boy stared into the fire while a slow smile spread over his face. The sound of the wail outside in the distance reminded him of Kos' instructions. He got to his feet; went out of the cave. Night had fallen, and the night-prowling beasts were making themselves heard.

The boy followed a short path that would bring him out quite a distance behind the messenger. A tall, dark figure loomed out of the night as the boy came up behind him. The messenger was a stalwart young warrior who was still shouting. The boy waited until the messenger stopped for breath, then in a thundering young voice he spoke—

"*Ewe.*" (Yes.)

The warrior jumped nervously, turned round and started to deliver his message. The boy cut him short with—

"*Ndi ya yazi inkosi i yafa a yeza li yeza.*" (I know the king is ill; the medicine is coming.)

The messenger started as the portent of his message seemed to have been delivered even before he had arrived. His feelings were hurt, as he was accounted and rated as being the most fleet of foot of all the *Nkosi's impis*. However, the boy's imperious "*Hamba!*" (go!) brought him to his immediate duty, and without another word the messenger vanished into the night at a smashing pace; but had hardly gone three hundred yards when he came to a dead stop, his hair rising and almost standing on end.

For the glorious, full tropic moon is rising to the top of the many hills with the reflections of its light thrown up against the vast spaces of the night, when from out of the shadows a form of darker impress detaches itself from the shadows and lounges away from the wall of darkness into an open space. A glimpse of it as it trundles past here, and an imagery of a mythological being is brought to mind. Listen! A groaning, rhythmical chant comes from this being of the night. Another glimpse, longer this time—what is this?

A beast—a being that goes on all fours. His head is thrust forward near the ground as he toils up the hillside, with a long shaggy beard on his chin. The other part of him faces back, with the head of a man, shoulders hunched up as if in meditation on all the evils of the night. For an instant the whole form is silhouetted against the rim of the rising moon. The beast gives a short barking cough and then sinks out of sight on the other side of the hill. But there comes floating back the chant that blends with the night and the hour, with the promise of the dreaded unknown in it, and on the soft clear air the last words are heard as the chant dies away:

Ya ndi tata apa
U ndi mheke paya.
Ndo suka paya—
Ndi ze njeya.
Nxama! Nxama!
Hamba! Hamba!

(You take me here
And put me there.
I go away from here—
In this way.
Hurry! Hurry!
Go! Go!)

The terrified messenger stood rooted to the spot, his body steaming with sweat. He turned back toward the path leading to the witch-doctor's cave, and in running blindly in the dark collided with the boy, who had been watching the apparition as it showed up against the background made by the moon. Both went sprawling to the ground at the sudden impact. The messenger scrambled to his feet and without waiting to see what he had run against vanished into the night. Stones rattled and pinged as he flew over the ground.

There was a sudden and terrible roar of a lion landing on the back of its prey. A man's scream, then short, wheezy sobs as of a breathing through punctured lungs. The grinding of strong teeth, and bones crackling and breaking in the dark. A sound of soft padding of feet and something dragging swiftly along the ground and then this died away. The messenger never returned to the village; but his head was found near the witch-doctor's pathway a few days later by some *intombis* (girls) as they came back from fetching wood.

No sooner had the messenger scrambled to his feet than the boy also scrambled to his feet and fled toward the cave, though he knew that it was Kos whom he had seen silhouetted against the moon, riding a baboon going on all fours with Kos chanting the sweet-water gathering-chant and riding backward. But the tone was so weird and the night so lent itself to the haunting

feeling, that the boy arrived at the cave with his teeth chattering.

KOS reached the *donga*, filled his calabash with the sweet water, got on his baboon's back and slapped the simian steed hard on its flank. The brute gave a cough-bark—*gwoof, gwoof!*—and shot away into the night toward the king's kraal at a fast side gallop with Kos hanging on tight to its stump of a tail, his feet locked under its stomach.

The outline of the thorn surrounding the kraal had hardly loomed up in the darkness for Kos to see when several women's voices broke out in a wail that made him almost pull out the baboon's stump of a tail. The ape leaped forward with a baying growl and shot into the gate like an animated ball. Kos called out, "*Hi ma!*" and the baboon came to a dead stop.

The natives who were about, seeing the witch-doctor riding a baboon, retreated into the first hut handy. Children yelled in fright, whilst strong, stalwart warriors told them to be quiet in voices that seemed unnecessarily loud.

A shrill wailing of women's voices came from a certain hut. Kos was off the ape's back in a second and walked rapidly to the hut where the wailing came from. At the door he met a whole band of warriors who were crowding against each other. One of their number caught a glimpse of Kos' face and immediately exclaimed—

"*I qira!*" (The witch-doctor!)

The crowd of *abafan* gave way instantly.

Kos walked into the low door of the hut. The fire in the middle of the floor was burning brightly. On the right-hand side a powerfully built man lay; his head was in an old woman's lap.

She should not have been there. An *umfazi* (woman) is not allowed on the men's side; but this was the king's hut, and she the king's first wife. She stroked the man's chin in a soothing manner, tears streaming down her face. The man's eyes seemed to be starting out of his head; but the life-luster was gone from them even as the woman at his head and two others on the left side of the fire wailed:

"*Inkosi i file! Inkosi i file!*" (The great king is dead! The great king is dead!)

Kos bent down and looked closely at those wide-open, staring eyes and then noticed that the dead man had one of his hands over his stomach. Kos shook his head slowly, straightened up and said—

"*Inkosi yetu a yi seko.*" (Our king is no more.)

There was a commotion at the door, and six men trooped in. The one in the lead looked and resembled the dead man and was the son of him that was dead and also of the woman who held the dead man's head in her lap. Four others were his brothers by his father's later five wives.

The sixth man was tall and spare, whose very being gave an impression of strength. This was Kos' rival, another and younger witch-doctor. They both eyed each other intently for a long second, and then the new-comer questioned Kos—

"*U file?*" (Finished?)

"*U file,*" Kos answered.

The younger witch-doctor pointed to the king's son and asked—

"*U yi nkosi?*" (Is he the king?)

Kos nodded his head in assent. The young witch-doctor turned toward the door and in a ringing voice spoke to the warriors crowded there—

"*Inkosi i file, U Songela yi nkos mbetan ama gubu.*" (The great king is dead; the Songela is now the king; let the world know; let the drums speak.)

There was a scamper of feet, and a moment later the war-drums boomed and throbbed out their message, which was taken up by other drums until the hills and valleys resounded with drum-beats. The king of beasts roared out his greeting to the new man-king, and the other denizens of the forests paid their tribute to Songela, the new king.

Songela, the new king, spoke a few words and informed every one in the hut that when the dead king had been buried on the morrow there would be a "smelling out" as to who had bewitched his parent, for he had been up and about at sundown, but had died suddenly just after dark. With that he strode out with a newer dignity than when he had come in. His brothers followed him.

The young witch-doctor looked at Kos for a long minute with a faint smile on his face and then remarked, "The king is dead, and Kos is dead too," and stalked out into the midst of the warriors around the door. The deceased king was highly thought of as his rule had been a just and kindly one, and with a certain statesman-like ability

he had kept peace with the near-by tribes and had prospered with his own tribe at the same time. Greatness knows no limitations; and in this instance a really great man had passed away, and in a dim way the warriors were conscious of this.

II

IN THE early dawn of the next day the dead king's body was removed from his kraal and the torch applied to the hut, as is the custom, in order that his spirit should not bother the people around. His immediate household, wives, sons and daughters, sat around in a great circle rocking to and fro and chanting in a droning and moaning tone, *"U sisza U file."*

SOMEWHERE NEAR THE SMALL CIRCLE IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA IS THE KRAAL OF KOS THE WITCH-DOCTOR

(The king is dead) over and over again until the sun was mid-morning high, when a great funeral procession was formed. The king's body was bundled up like a sack of potatoes and was carried away by half a dozen stalwart princes who had journeyed overnight from different parts of the country when the message of the drums had been received.

The *sango* was choked with people and warriors who had come from afar to pay homage to the dead king. The surrounding country was dotted everywhere with small bands of mourners as they made their way to the kraal. The silence was stupendous, and made one feel as if a great calamity had overtaken the whole world.

As the stalwart warrior-princes swung through the gate voices of lamentation were heard—

"Naku ya naku ya ah! Ametuna nkosi yetu!" (There it goes, there it goes! Oh, pity our king, our king!)

The king's large family followed behind the pall-bearers, and then the chamberlains, princes of the blood, councilors, *mapakati, indunas* and a whole throng of warriors; and so up by a hillside by some rocks. There, where a hole deep but not too deep had been dug, the king was laid to rest in a squatting position facing the east. His pipe and spears, sticks and shield, were put in with him and earth rubble was thrown over him.

His first wife could hardly contain herself and had to be carried away by the other wives on the order of the new king, who as soon as the earth had covered his father made his formal address at the side of the freshly covered grave:

Ndi yi nkos ngo ku. Ihlanga letu liza. Ku kula kunye." (I am the king now. Our tribe from now on will be great. All together—Songela!)

"But," continued Songela, the new king, "first it must be found out who bewitched the king, your father. The witch-doctors are here; let them by their magic smell out the witch who killed my father and yours, right now."

The princes, councilors, *mapakati, indunas* and others looked at each other with admiration in their eyes, nodded their heads and said the *umfan* (boy) was like his father, "wise; yes, very wise."

There were hundreds of witch-doctors present, but only two who were masters of their craft. These lesser ones immediately threw their stones on the ground and picked them up and examined them. The thousands of natives gathered there paid them perfunctory attention. Kos meanwhile had been gathering wood and had laid out about eight piles of it in a form like this:

* *
* * * *
* *

Then from his fur bag that he had brought along with him he brought out a round stone with a shallow hole in its center, put

some fluff-like stuff in the hole, brought out a short stick not unlike a drumstick and set one point of it on the fluff in the hole and put his two palms together with the stick between them and briskly twirled it.

In a little while the fluff began to smoke and then glow. He stopped rubbing the stick and picked up the fluff and blew on it until it burst into flame. He took the burning fluff over to the first pile of wood, and by blowing and working the wood that pile caught fire.

When it was burning well he went to the next until that caught and became aflame and so forth until the last and all were burning brightly. He brought some more wood and piled it on each separate fire until they were cooking-size fires instead of morning hand-warming ones.

At last he seemed satisfied, for he lay down on his back by the extended fire on the right of the diagram; and, humming and mumbling to himself, he went into a complete trance. The sun had long since passed its meridian and was now half-way into the noontide with a trace of the long shadows that greet the night. The other hundreds of witch-doctors who had begun so blithely to try to unravel the mystery of the king's death had long since stopped their performances from lack of attention and were sitting about with sullen and indifferent looks on their face. The silence was an expectant silence which grew tense as the hours passed with Kos lying there in his trance.

The sun's rim dipped, the stars rushed out and at one stride came the dark, dark night. The fires had burned down to ash, and the red-hot coals glowed blood-red behind their coating of white ash. A fire collapsed and the crowd shivered.

Kos came to with a long sigh, and the crowd of people sighed with him. He looked at the first fire intently and got up excitedly and ran from fire to fire, peering at each one keenly.

He reached the first one again. Here he shut his eyes and rubbed his fingers over them. The crowd leaned forward and held its breath. He peered down at the fire and again shut his eyes and rubbed them as if not believing what he saw there.

Once again he gazed into the heart of the dying fire and then straightened up and spoke to the people. The turkey-gobbler voice was gone for the time being. He was the arch priest of his calling as in days gone by:

"The fires of today and tonight have burned brightly, and like a man who lives they too must die but leave a story of what has been done and what they have seen. A fire is brother to a fire and a man; for when a man is going to do anything he sits by the fire and talks to it.

"The fire knows you. Do you know the fire? Kos is brother to the fire. It will tell him things, but it will not tell you who killed our father, the king.

"What does the fire say? An *umfazi* (woman) an *indoda?*) (man). An *umfan* (boy)? Our father was killed by three people."

The crowd stirred with interest and anger.

"One is," continued Kos, "a tall man, the other is an *intombi* (girl) and the last is the man who is very strong and——"

"*Uya Xoxa!*" (You lie!) a masterful voice rang out.

Every one turned in the direction from which the voice came, and there over the spot where the king was buried stood a form with folded arms. Under the starlit night large horns could be seen on its head. For a space of seventy-two heart-beats the silence was crushing. A woman wailed suddenly and every one got up in a panic.

"*Hlani pantsi!*" (sit on the ground) the form commanded.

The crowd shuffled uneasily.

"*Hlalan!*" (Sit down!) the form thundered; and the crowd sat down, uneasily swallowing many swallows and looking into each others' faces questioningly with hands over their mouths. And then the form strode forward, and, kicking one of the fires and scattering sparks in every direction, spoke in a grand and patronizing voice:

"Are you afraid? Be not afraid; I am your brother. Have you ever heard a fire speak?"

The crowd mumbled dissent.

"Has the fire got hands?"

And the crowd snickered.

"To all the witch-doctors here say I, 'Let the fires be built up.'"

And they fell over each other in order to obey his command.

The fires blazed up very quickly after they had been replenished. The tall man walked around the fires, looking very awe-inspiring with the horns on his head and his bold cast of face.

He stopped suddenly, took away from an *umfan* (boy) a knobkerrie and called to

several of the visiting doctors to come over where he stood. They responded in fear and trembling without any hesitation whatsoever.

He hit each one over the head in turn, stunning them. They collapsed to the ground like logs. Those of the crowd in the distance who could not see, got to their feet and craned their necks. This caused a ripple of excitement to run through the crowd.

The man with horns threw aside the knobbed stick, and, spreading his arms wide with palms toward the ground, he slowly brought them together until they met over the body of one of the unconscious doctors. He bent down close, his palms extended over the first man's head and with a pulling motion straightened himself. Five times he did this until the people, nearly spellbound, were thinking in the terms of "pull." Their bodies duplicated every motion of his.

Slowly the unconscious form of the doctor followed the two palms over its face and rose first diagonally, then straight up, and at last he with the horns gave it a terrible look and it stood still. The people looked on in their fright. The tops of their heads felt cold; they tried to swallow but their throats ached because of the suspended emotions.

The man with the horns went over to the second form. As he did so he seemed unreal and seemed endowed with powers beyond that of mortal man. The fires had ceased to blaze; some were merely aglow; several were smoking brands which made the man with the horns seem more mysterious as the smoke veiled him somewhat. He repeated his motions with the second man, but could hardly get the form to stand still until he went up to it and glared at it for a terrific half-minute; then it stood still.

He went over to the third man. Though he made motion after motion a dozen times the unconscious form would not move. It was not until he lifted his eyes and looked over toward a certain direction, in the shadows as it were, that he saw Kos sitting there, looking straight at the unconscious man's head.

The man with the horns straightened up and strode over to where Kos was squatting. When he was about five feet away from Kos, Kos spat straight at the man's feet. The saliva instantly turned into a brown muddy ball.

The man with the horns tried to advance, but some invincible force seemed to hold him back. He turned to the right for several feet and then swung round quickly. As his foot, the left one, was in the air, Kos spat straight at it, missed it, but the man with the horns tripped and stumbled backward.

He got up in a fury and walked around Kos in a circle. Every time he tried to walk up to Kos, Kos would spit over his shoulder, whether it be the right or the left, depending just where his rival was at that moment. The horde of people present murmured in encouraging tones:

"Wena, Kos! Wena, Kos! Wena, Kos! (You, Kos! You, Kos! You, Kos!)

Kos held up his right hand, and the people became silent. He then stood up and said—

"I know who killed the *nkosi.*"

Thousands of voices shouted:

"Ngu bani? Ngu bani? Ngu bani?" (Who was it? Who was it? Who was it?)

"Ngu lom fo!" (There is the man!) replied Kos, pointing to the man with the horns.

The people were astounded beyond their understanding. An *induna* sprang up and gave an order for the man to be seized by some of the *impis* and his hands bound. In an instant the people swarmed around him, shouting and yelling—

"Mba ka bulawe!" (Let him be put to death.)

"No," Kos thundered; "the *nkosi* has to decide that—he and his *mba pakati.*" (Council.)

Then Songela came into the circle of the light with a strange look in his eyes.

"Hum seni ekaya, noke ni lale," he ordered. (Take that man back to the kraal, and all of you take a rest.)

The *impis* closed around the man with the horns and marched him toward the kraal. The man with the horns was very defiant in his bearing as he was being marched toward the kraal and constantly remarked over and over again, *"Ndi naku bulawa"* (They can not kill me) which made his guard very nervous.

Some of the people followed the prisoner and his guard to the kraal, but the majority stayed just where they were. And one by one little fires appeared until the whole of the open space surrounding the Songela's kraal was dotted everywhere with the lights of many fires.

The king made his way to the kraal followed by his retinue of princes, councilors and others. Kos the witch-doctor looked about with a satisfied smile on his dirty and withered old face, and then in a grunting voice said: *"Ooyi! Ooyi! Ooyi!"* calling to his baboon. The ape came on a side gallop out of the dark and stopped by Kos' side. Kos got on his broad back, facing toward the tail, locked his feet under its belly and got hold of the stumpy tail, gave it a slight thrust and as they went at a rocking-horse gallop down the hill he chanted the riding song:

Ma ndoy, ma ndoy.
U Pala Kuhle
I ndorun ye hla
Skaff se mini ngum vungulo
Skaff se bu suku si mandi
Ma ndoy ma ndoy
U Pala Kuhle u Pala Kuhle.

(You gallop softly,
I will go down.
The bread of the morning—its only a crum.
The bread of the night is the best
Ma ndoy, ma ndoy,
You gallop so well.)

And the sound died away in the night.

III

KOS rode the baboon right into his cave home. He got off the ape's back and gave it a push. The ape lumbered over to a certain corner where there was a native-made basket. It put its paw into it and brought a ripe yellow prickly pear, a commodity that baboons are very fond of in their wild state, making a *tembu* or "home brew" out of the prickly pears with a celerity and strange humanness.

The simian peeled the prickly pear in the same way that the natives do, holding the pear with the left hand and running the right thumb or plowing it all the way up to the top or crown, thus breaking the skin. The meat was exposed; the ape inserted both thumbs under the core, at the same time skinning the jacket of the pear; and, raising the whole thing to its mouth, bit it off with its large, horse-like teeth and instead of swallowing the fruit it slid it with its tongue to its right pouch in its cheek. The left pouch was treated in the same way with the following pear, and other pears went to fill up both pouches until the basket was empty, after which the ape growled a little while looking for something else to store away, and, not finding anything more, lay down and went to sleep.

Kos meanwhile had raked the fire until the live coals were exposed, and then, putting his feet and knees together, folded his arms around them and rested his chin on the top of his knees and gazed into the fire. The morning light struggled through the cracks in the rude door; the boy stirred and finally awoke, coaxed the fire to a small crackling blaze and from somewhere in the cave brought some ears of corn. These he roasted; Kos came to with his eyes wide open.

The boy pushed a half-roasted cob toward him. Kos shook his head and remarked—

"Andi funi nto" (I don't want anything).

With that he got up, got his sleeping-mat, unrolled it and laid it on the floor, got his *bayi* (covering), laid himself on the mat, and, covering himself even to his head, was instantly asleep.

When the sun was about half-way toward midday Kos awoke, rubbed his eyes briskly, and, chewing the sleeping feeling out of his mouth, looked around until he got his mind adjusted. The boy had long since left to look after the cattle; the baboon was still asleep and snoring thunderously. Kos picked up a stick and drew a rude drawing of a hawk, that being the name that he had adopted when he became a witch-doctor.

IT WILL not be amiss here to give a brief biography of Kos and how he came to be a witch-doctor. An outline of Kos' life will in general give an idea as to how most witch-doctors come to follow the craft that they do.

Kos experienced the same hardships and trails that fall to the lot of a native boy. His abnormality—most witch-doctors are abnormal in the civilized sense—began to show itself when he was about six or seven years of age. For when looking after the krall's large herd of cattle he would, as soon as he was out of sight of the kraal, unearth a hunting-dagger and wear it amongst the other boys. This was a terrible breach of the rules that are made for *Ama Nkwnkwe* (young boys); but because of his strong personality the other boys never dared to tell on him.

Furthermore, when it came to his turn to go and water the herd he generally took such a long time in doing it that his

companions, out of curiosity, went out to see what the matter was and were very much amused to find him strutting up and down before the herd, chest puffed up and arms waving, urging and pleading with them in a very oratorical manner, whilst his bovine audience chewed its cud placidly and lowed for water.

He passed from the small-boy rank to the big-boy rank by sheer virility. He was never known to fight with sticks, but always hit every one with his closed fist, with the thumb showing between his first and second finger.

Every few days he would kill several snakes, and, cutting their heads off, would skilfully take out their poison sacs and swallow them one after the other—being careful that they did not touch his teeth and break—after which he claimed if he hit any one a big *ngo ngona* would rise up, which in English means a bump; and in most cases his predictions were painfully fulfilled, as the appearance of his victims fully attested and proved. Later he took to mixing herbs which were very potent and very effective.

There was the mystery of the dry cows in the morning. Night after night a watch was kept, but the midnight milker was never seen or caught until Kos was called into consultation. After the consultation Kos went out to where the herd was grazing and asked to be shown which of the cattle had been robbed of their milk. These were pointed out to him. He requested that they be driven out for his inspection, and it was done so. He walked around each and every one of them; they numbered about thirty.

After this inspection he went away and was not seen for several days. When he came back to the kraal he ordered that a dozen lots of fires be built ready to be set alight, some inside the kraal and others outside; also between each fire he ordered that a stake be driven into the ground. The community laughed; but the firewood was brought up and fashioned ready for the torch and the stakes were driven into the ground even as he ordered.

Kos took with him half a dozen stalwart *abafan* (boys); and at sundown he and the *abafan* returned, each carrying a *sontete* or secretary-bird. The community tittered when they saw the birds. Kos took no notice, but had two of the birds tied with a thong rope by a leg to a stake inside the kraal. The other four were treated in the same way outside the kraal between the unlit fires.

Kos dismissed the *abafan* and laid a trail of fat very thickly from one lot of wood to the other, making an invisible chain that joined them all. He went inside the kraal and into the *abafans'* hut and had his meal whilst his comrades asked him was he going to fly that night. Kos' only answer was silence as he ate on. The usual arguments and discussion went on among the *abafan* until they became tired and went to sleep.

At midnight the kraal woke up suddenly to the sounds of cracking and burning wood. The immediate vicinity was a blazing red inferno. Outside of the kraal a streak of flame ran a short distance, stopped, then shot out again and ran and stopped and ran on again until it circled the whole kraal It was Kos' trail of fat joining fire-lot to fire-lot. Each fire caught aflame and grew ablaze until the whole kraal was lighted by a wall of fire which lit up the whole space around like daylight.

The cattle in the *si bayi* (cattle corral) were restive. Kos dashed in the gate from lighting the trail of the fires outside and ran like a mad thing to the first secretary-bird, which seemed very excited. He untied it. The bird stalked majestically toward the stockade that enclosed the cattle.

Kos straightened up, and in a voice that was heard above the furnace like roars of the fires he spoke:

"You dogs who laughed at me, you know nothing. Look there at the bottom of the stockade. There are the things that have been stealing the milk from your children so you could not make *amsi*. Look, I say."

Those on that side looked and saw oozing out of the foundation and between the palings three huge pythons with their hard cold eyes shining, their forked tongues darting in and out of their mouths. The snakes saw their enemy, the secretary-bird, towering above them. With accelerated speed they pulled out their thick, rope-like bodies faster from between the palings.

*The *sontete* leaped into the air and landed hard on one of the reptiles' heads, tearing out an eye and splitting the head in twain. There was a shout from the other side as a dozen or more reptiles oozed through the palings.

*Vouched for by author.

Kos had already untied the second *sontete* that was inside the kraal. This one hardly touched the ground before it joyously joined its companion in slaughtering the three pythons.

Kos raced like mad to the gate and out to untie the other birds. They were almost pulling their legs off as he untied each one; for above the roars of the fires and the shouts of the excited natives they could distinguish the crawl of the master-snake, and they lived only to exterminate the whole tribe of belly-crawling reptiles.

As the dozen or so reptiles oozed through the kraal fence they were met with loud squawks overhead which they recognized as those of their relentless enemies, the *sontete*, and with the speed of the American blue racer snake these reptiles sought to escape from the winged death. The birds jumped on the backs of four, broke them and with more squawks turned and took the air in seventy-five of those long, lazy strides, skimmed it for a while and crashed on the heads of other luckless reptiles. They danced up and down on them until the heads were in shreds.

The other pythons were in a panic. One in sheer blind fright shot headlong into one of the roaring bonfires. Next instant it came out, its blue scales in shreds, with white meat showing in patches. Its eyes were burned white, and it was blind. It rolled about for a little while and then lay still, the after-part of its body lashing madly from side to side. A *sontete* came up, picked it up with its beak and tried to run with it, but could only move it. It dropped the body but danced on the whole length of the reptile until it lashed about no more.

Stalking about, the birds came upon the pythons with the broken backs. Desperately these reptiles sought to frighten the birds away by opening their mouths and hissing out of their throats. Their lower jaws were broken in two as those sharp clawed feet crashed on them; the birds bit and clawed at them until three were dead. The fourth one would not give up so easily, so three or four of the birds picked it up in their beaks, ran a score of feet or so, and took the air with the python twisting this way and that way in their beaks. They flew above the blazing fires, out of range of the heat. A few seconds later a crushing sound and a shower of sparks from one of the fires, and that was the end of that milking python.

The fires sank lower and lower, and when morning came they were mere heaps of white-hot ash with badly mangled snakes beside and around them. Kos was hailed as a great witch-doctor, and his fame spread not only in his own tribe but to many others; and so it was not very long before he was in communication with other powerful witch-doctors, and at the occasional secret meetings that this craft had he was able to learn quite a few new tricks, some of which he improved upon.

As to his power of prophecy, he became master of this because he cultivated the company of the half-dozen or so men who were the tribe's historic encyclopedias. He asked them such questions as: What kind of weather did they have before a certain event? How did the people feel and seem after a great battle had been fought and won by their own *impis?* Did it help a man to be married? From their varied answers he came to his own conclusions, one of them being to remain single.

As to the python incident just related, the explanation might be made that Kos, after having seen the cows that had been milked dry every night before morning, had observed that the hair forward from the rump for a distance of ten inches was flat with tufts standing up in an almost mathematical circle, going all the way round the cows very much like a thread on a machine nut. The same thing occurred with the cattle's legs.

Next were the holes in the cattle stockade palings and in the thorn fence surrounding the kraal. The last may have been made by the flock of native chickens taking a dust bath; but anyway the palings were worn smooth in between and inside the stockade had that sickly, oily smell that comes from the snake that feeds on milk. The withes were worn smooth, and at the top where the cattle's horns never reached at any time there were a dozen or more places where the lumber was worn smooth and even crotched where the pythons had turned their tails in that vise-like grip that gives power to their bodies; for be it known that a python is almost—please note, almost—powerless on the ground and is really powerful only when hanging to something by that twenty-three inch end of his tail.

And that is how Kos came to the

conclusions that he did that the milkers were reptiles instead of human beings.

IV

KOS finished drawing the rough diagram of a hawk and then gazed at it intently. His eyes glazed over as he concentrated on the task in hand. The sun outside mounted higher and higher until it reached its meridian.

At that time the craft of witch-doctors all over the country opened their minds to receive the impressions of what had occurred within the recent hours. Jumbled thoughts first flashed across the blanked spaces of their minds. There were councils of tribes sitting, deciding what policy to pursue in the matter of tribal warfare. A battle at its height, a bird in the air, but above all a council in session, was the impression that persisted until the face commanding the whole council became distinct in a faint way.

Kos was calling his fellow-craftsmen by concentrating his mind on his own identifying mark, the hawk, which would be caught up in the minds of other witch-doctors who were at that hour taking in impressions of the happenings of the last twelve hours. The Kos sign persisted especially in the minds of the witch-doctors of the Amazulu, Basutu and Maponda, so these three set out for Kos' country right way. The sun was hardly past its meridian when these witch-doctors prepared themselves for the journey—one issuing from his cave in the mountainside, another from his hut in the heart of the forest, the third from his hole home in the hollow of a tree. They traveled in different ways, one on a big Kaffir goat, another on an Umsutu pony, the third on a *qegu* (ox).

Early next morning they arrived at the path leading to Kos' kraal. Kos appeared among them suddenly.

"*Indaba yako?*" (Your story?) they chorused.

Kos related to them the smelling-out scene of the night and how he had accused the other *qira* (witch-doctor). He explained to them that he wanted them to tell him which would be the best death for a man who had killed the king. Different tortures were suggested, but Kaseko of the Amazulu suggested the one that met with the whole company's approval. This suggestion was that a thong be tied to the horns of an *inkuzi* (bull), one of the man's wrists being tied to the other end of the thong. After a number of small pebbles had been put into the bull's ears the animal was to be turned loose.

Kos invited them all into his cave, where he gave them some of his home brew, a mixture of wild sweet honey and *mazimba* (Kaffir corn) that had been boiled and then allowed to steep in water until it became sour. Another lot of *mazimba* had been cooked like a porridge, the top taken off and put into a calabash for several days; then the honey, the first *mazimba* and the cooked lot had been put into a vessel, water added and let simmer and then boil, taken off and let cool, after which it was poured into a large calabash and let stand overnight. During that time it acquired a kick like an ostrich male at the breeding-season, and every day and night that it stood it acquired added strength. When Kos' conferees arrived the home brew had been standing for about four moons, and Kos had three large calabashes full.

After each *qira* (witch-doctor) had had three good swigs the *qira* of the Amazulu suggested trying out his idea on one of their number then and there. Kos reminded them that the sun was climbing higher and higher. The other *qiras* bade him *hlala kahle* (stay in peace) and went out of the cave door not quite so steadily as when they came in.

Kos left immediately for the kraal but by a different path from the one his recent friends had gone by. He walked swiftly to the kraal, and in a short while arrived at the gate and then turned into the *kohla* (council) hut, where the *nkosi* (chief) and his *mapakatis* (counselors) were still arguing and counter-arguing as to what kind of death the witch-doctor should die. Songela was new to power and had not yet realized that his word was law.

As Kos entered, Songela had just finished talking about a doctor younger than Kos, also remarking no test of guilt had been tried out on the accused *qira*. Kos overheard the last remarks and then and there unfolded the trial to be given.

No sooner was it heard than a band of *abafan* was dispatched in haste to bring back a strong ox from the main herd. They left the kraal on the run, and in a comparatively short time came back leading a bull with a large span-width of horns.

A thong was tied to its horns. The accused *qira* was brought out, and Kos took on himself the pleasure of tying the *qira's* right wrist.

He then gave an order for the pebbles to be dropped in the beast's right ear. Twelve *abafan* held it while a thirteenth one dropped four small stones into the bull's ears. No sooner were the stones in than the thirteenth man yelled—

"*Yeka!*" (Let him go!)

The twelve *abafan* let go and sprang wide of the bull. The bull merely shook his head in a puzzled manner. Kos slyly picked up a handful of sand and poured it into the other ear. Whilst he was doing that the *qira* shortened the distance between himself and the bull. The brute jogged his head from side to side quickly. The sand poured out every time he leaned his head over on the left side.

Then suddenly the torture took effect. With a sudden bound and an agonized moan the pain-crazed beast crashed through the thorn fence, knocking down scores of spectators and killing several. The *qira* was jerked off his feet, swung through the air and landed on top of a fat spectator. He scrambled to his feet just as the bull set off at a dead gallop for an ant-hill five hundred yards away.

The hundreds of people in his direct path opened a way even as the furrow opens to the plow. Vainly the *qira* tugged and pulled as he raced behind the maddened beast, trying to get it to stop just an instant so that he might leap on its back and untie the thong around his horns and thereby save his life. But the beast kept on full tilt, bent for the ant-hill. He smashed into the hill at a terrific speed, knocking the breath completely out of himself and throwing the *qira* half-way around the ant-hill. The result of this impact was a gaping hole whence the enraged ants swarmed and ran hither and thither. They discovered the beast's forelegs with blood running from the flesh-wounds that he had received in crashing through the thorn fence. They fastened themselves there, maddening the beast with tortures beyond description. The pain-maddened brute screamed and tore away instinctively for the forest.

It was impossible for the *qira* to keep pace with this maddened thing; besides the breath was absolutely knocked out of him. Seeking to brush off the tormentors from his legs, the maddened bull plunged into a small clump of trees. When he emerged on the other side the bull was going strong; but no weight hampered him, just merely a muscular bronze arm tied to the wrist that bounded and bounded as the bull went tearing along the bush. Once he stopped and dashed his head repeatedly against the trunk of a tree. He was seeking to rid himself of the pain—the pain caused by the pebbles and sand. When he went on again he had knocked off his right horn. But the pain was still there.

Friends of the *qira* who had followed the crazy trail of the tortured bull found him beside the trees in the small bush with a large hole where his arm had been wrenched off by the mighty force of the pain-crazed bull. The *qira* was still alive and conscious, but blood gushed out of the gaping hole every time he breathed.

Kos came on the scene. He looked at the *qira* and sneered—

"The king is dead, and Kos is dead, too, eh?"

There was a sound of a great wind just then. To Kos' old ear it meant just one thing, especially as there was no air stirring.

It was even as he thought. For thousands upon thousands of snakes were on a stampede. The voice like a wind was made by their bodies as they slid over the grass and twigs and stones.

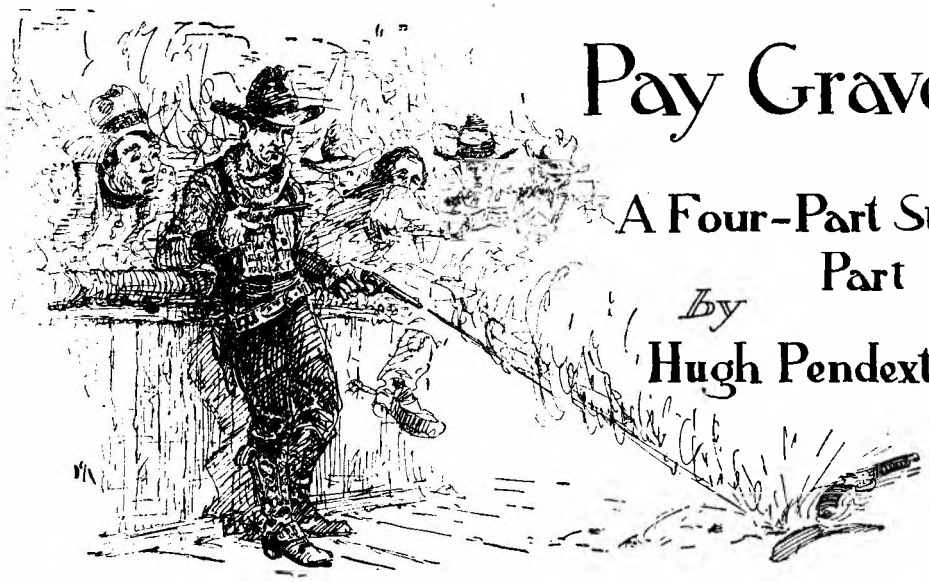
On top of that and above it there was the thudding and throbbing of many hoofs, some light and others heavy; and on the far horizon, as wide as the eye could see, coming like mad with a cloud of dust as high as the heavens behind, were the birds, beasts and reptiles of the jungle, the air and the *veld*. As the stampede drew near and swept by, a moving-picture camera-man would have gone delirious over the sight; for there were thousands of heads of springbok, waterbok, kuder, reed bok, zebras, nigmy, hundreds of elephants, baboons, monkeys with baby monks on their backs, the king of beasts carrying his tail between his legs and ears flattened back, every now and then looking behind to see whether the dreaded thing was still pursuing him.

The spectators who had been sitting or standing around simply melted at the first sight of the stampede. Kos lost his head completely by trying to outrun the head of the stampede. He was overtaken and trampled underfoot by many hoofs; and

three days later when this wild and magnificent parade was over all that was found of him was his grinning skull. The other *qira* died on the second night; but the Songela still lived.

What had caused the stampede? No one knows. Maybe a line of the terrible soldier ants on the march. Maybe the antics of the tortured *inkuzi*. . .

Silhouetted against the setting sun was the shadow of a bull minus a right horn. He stood out in bold relief for a long instant and then sank out of sight.



Pay Gravel

A Four-Part Story
Part II

By

Hugh Pendexter

Author of "A Woman Veteran," "The Torch-Bearers," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN AUGUST of 1876, when the gold-rush to the Black Hills of Nebraska was at its height, Peter Dinsdale with some companions from the East started out over the long trail which led to Deadwood City, the boom town of the moment.

The Cheyenne and the Sioux were on the war-path, and Dinsdale's companions, alarmed by the stories of atrocities, decided to turn back. Dinsdale continued on alone. Half-way out he met "San Juan" Joe, a gambler, returning to Deadwood City, and they joined forces. San Juan warned Dinsdale that if they could win their way through the "Gate of Hell," a cañon where the Indians lay in ambush, they would be comparatively safe.

They started through the cañon at dawn. Before they had gone far they heard screams ahead of them. Spurring their horses forward, they met a girl, running and stumbling, her hands outstretched. Ahead the Indians were dancing about the victims of their latest massacre—the seventh since May.

Dinsdale caught the girl up on his saddle and they dashed forward. Surprized by the white men, the Indians put up a poor defense, finally withdrawing, leaving five of their number dead.

Still shaken with terror, the girl—she was only seventeen—told Dinsdale that her name was Lottie Carl, and that the party she had been with were friends of hers, but that she had no relatives.

Going forward again, they passed through several camps, abandoned for the richer diggings at Deadwood. The streets of Deadwood were filled with a mob of men and women, who called out asking for news of the troops. The Indians were getting bolder, and the miners hardly dared leave the protection of the town.

"Let's take Lottie to Kitty the Schemer," suggested San Juan. "She'll take care of her."

Dinsdale did not like Kitty's house. The rich furniture and Kitty herself, exquisitely dressed and beautiful, suggested the character of the place she ran.

"I've decided that Lottie can't stay here," he said abruptly. "We'll take her to the Widow Colt's up the street. That's decent."

Kitty was furious.

"Kill him, San Juan," she begged. "If you loved me you would!"

But San Juan had too much respect for Dinsdale as a man and a fighter, and he realized that Dinsdale would never become a rival for Kitty.

"I wish it hadn't happened," he said gravely as they left. "You've made a dangerous enemy in Kitty."

Dinsdale's entrance to the life of Deadwood City seemed destined to be stormy. Later in the day he intervened in a barroom brawl to save a man called

"Scissors" from bully Allen. Scissors, a harmless fellow who was considered weak-minded since his escape from the Indians, amused the crowd and made a living by cutting clever silhouettes out of paper.

As Dinsdale forced the bully toward the door at the point of his six-gun he knew that he had made another and more dangerous enemy.

"I'll go around to San Juan Joe's and gamble a bit," he decided a moment later. "I have certainly busted into Deadwood society with a bang."

CHAPTER IV

HUNTING FOR ACTION

FOR two days Dinsdale walked and rode up and down Deadwood Gulch and made several short trips to outlying placers. Most of these diggings were abandoned because of the Indian scare, and the few being worked were under a heavy guard. He received two offers of five dollars a day and his keep to act as guard, his belt guns advertising him as a man of some mettle.

Several times he passed San Juan Joe's big tent, in front of which stood an Indian medicine-pole, but saw nothing of the proprietor. Once he met Kitty the Schemer. It was on the road to Crook City. He was returning to Deadwood, and she was riding north in the company of several men. Their dress proclaimed them to be fresh from the East. She flashed him a smile and bowed graciously. He asked himself:

"What is the little cat planning now? Sharp claws."

Another encounter, and one that left him in poor spirits, was with Mrs. Colt.

"How's Lottie getting along?" he asked, genuinely pleased to meet her. "I was thinking of calling next Sunday."

She eyed him with frank disapproval.

"We'll say you've had your visit here and now," she told him. "Don't call at the house to see Lottie Carl till I say so. If I hear much more talk about you it'll be a long time before I speak the word. You and your two guns!"

"Surely other men wear two guns in Deadwood," he defended.

"Scoundrels do, and men who have an honest right to wear them. Are you a guard on a treasure-coach? Guarding any diggings? Going to fight Injuns? As far as I can make out you ain't even a gambler. You ride around, but don't seem keen to be earning a honest living. You've come pretty nigh to be in several rows already."

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"A boarding-house is a master place for catching town talk. You don't deny it, do you?"

"There's nothing to deny. If I don't want to work, that's my business. If I do want to work, and can afford to wait till I strike something to suit, that also is my business. I won't bother you, Mrs. Colt. So long as you're good to Lottie Carl nothing else matters."

"You talk pert. You've told me to keep my nose out of your business. But I ain't going to git fired up over that. You're new here. Your way of coming made you known to the whole town. What you do is noticed. I'll try to think I'll have a chance to change my opinion about you, but you do strike me as being or'nary and no-account up to date.

"Lottie Carl is too green to look after herself. I fired a prompt-paying boarder yesterday, fired him neck and baggage, for winking at her. She ain't in any danger in my house, but if you ain't the proper sort I'd have my doubts. The little fool seems to think she belongs to you along of what you done. So we'll wait a bit, young man."

Dinsdale removed his hat and bowed low on leaving her. She sniffed disdainfully, yet she was secretly pleased; and he walked on, moodily wondering why he cared because the Colt place was closed to him. Finally he decided:

"It won't do. I must have some sort of work. If I won't be a merchant or miner I can be a gambler. Gamblers seem to be thought of highly here."

It was late afternoon of the day he had met Mrs. Colt when he passed through the entrance of San Juan Joe's tent. Once inside he halted and swept his gaze over the groups about the various tables in the large enclosure.

Although it was not the rush hour a considerable number of men were trying their luck at faro, roulette and monte. Other patrons were priming for the evening at the long bar at one side of the tent. That arguments occasionally were dangerous for onlookers was suggested by the two-foot pine logs forming the front of the bar and making an excellent breastwork for the bartenders in stressful moments.

For several minutes Dinsdale sought to locate the proprietor but was unsuccessful.

Satisfied he was not in the tent, Dinsdale wandered to the faro layout and placed a few bets, staking green backs to the envy of the other players. He quit the game a hundred dollars winner and without any enthusiasm passed on to a roulette wheel and quickly dropped the gold he had won at faro. He smiled as if pleased when a man exclaimed—

"There goes the greenback man!"

He was slowly making for the exit when a shrill voice halted him. He turned to face the grinning Scissors. The fellow had his paper and scissors in hand, but what made Dinsdale's eyes widen was the great horned owl perched on Scissors's shoulder. A Sioux warrior would have paid high to have the owl's feather for dress ornamentation.

"I want you to meet Sitting Bull," said Scissors, reaching up a hand to tickle the owl's head.

"Howdy-do, Sitting Bull," gravely greeted Dinsdale.

"Chief, this is the young man I was telling you about. Friend of mine."

The owl blinked his yellow eyes and turned his head to avoid the glare of the sun now pouring through the entrance. There was a grotesque similarity between the solemnity of the owl and the round eyes of its master.

"Ain't many folks that can tame an owl and have him like Sitting Bull," Scissors proudly informed Dinsdale.

"I should say that is true. No more trouble with that bow-legged cuss, eh?"

Scissors chuckled and idly snipped out the profile of a swarthy Mexican, big hat and all, and replied:

"Allen wouldn't dare bother me in here. I have too many friends among the customers. Joe lets me circulate around and pick up a living. He wouldn't take kindly to any man trying games on me or Sitting Bull.

"Winners often buy my paper pictures to keep their good luck strong. Losers buy them to drive away bad luck."

He held the silhouette before the Mexican and raised four fingers. The Mexican gazed with much pleasure at the likeness. The big hat intrigued him, and he handed over four bits and tucked the paper in his shirt. Scissors turned back to the amused Dinsdale and confided:

"That's the way it goes. If Joe knew how much I take in he'd probably ask for a rake-off. Took in most an ounce today. The night ought to bring it up to two ounces, maybe more. "

"You don't say!" exclaimed Dinsdale. "And what do you do with all your gold?"

Scissors's amiable grin gave place to an expression of fear.

"That's telling," he muttered. "Sitting Bull knows, and I know. That's enough to know. And no one else has time to think about me. They're whispering on the street today that some new men are in town, some that have robbed a railroad train. I don't want those fellows to hear about my savings. They'd like nothing better than to hold up Scissors, the paper-picture man. Still I hope they are here. They throw their dust around mighty free-like."

"How do you know that unless you know them by sight?" quickly asked Dinsdale.

"Why, road-agents always do. Very liberal. I can always tell when any of them are in here. I can't pick out this man or that and say he's a robber, but when my earnings for a night take a high jump I know some of them have been in here.

"They throw away lots of money at Kitty the Schemer's place, too. Why, after the treasure-coach was robbed of twenty-five thousand I got fifteen ounces of dust in one afternoon and night. Think of it! Every time a big haul's made I'm sure of extra good profits within two nights after it's happened. I just say to Sitting Bull:

" 'Sidney coach held up two nights ago. Agents made a good haul. We'll get something fat tonight.'

"And it never fails to happen."

"But if these gentlemen of the road knew you talked like this they might not like it. They might give you some lead instead of gold," warned Dinsdale, and he extended his hand to scratch the owl's head and yanked it back just in time to escape the clashing beak.

Scissors's fatuous face showed much alarm.

"Don't you tell them that I've talked," he begged. "I'll keep my mouth shut after this. If any of them hear I've talked and speak to you, you just say it isn't so."

Dinsdale smiled curiously.

"So you're taking me for one of them," he murmured.

Scissors became flurried and backed away

from Dinsdale as if suddenly afraid of him; but he repeated:

"Just tell them it isn't so. Now I must make a picture of 'Horseshoe' Webb over at the monte table. You probably know that he's from Texas."

A pause and a sharp glance at Dinsdale's expressionless face.

"He's very ugly or very good-natured in his drinks. Just now he's good-natured."

With a hasty duck of his head, which the big owl seemed to imitate, he sidled his way to the monte table to where Horseshoe Webb was twisting his huge black mustaches and smiling amiably. Webb wore a gaily embroidered buckskin coat and carried an ivory-handled revolver at the front of his belt. From below the skirts of the coat protruded the decorated sheath of a long knife.

Dinsdale shifted his position so that he might study Webb more closely. Deadwood gossips could have told him that the man had been a bull-whacker up to the Summer of Seventy-five, when he eschewed labor, even placer mining, and took to lounging about the various gaming places in Custer City, and later made Deadwood City his headquarters.

He was large and gaunt of frame, and yet was very vain. He covered his uncouth figure with the softest of buckskins and received his name from a horseshoe of brilliants worn in his neck scarf. And he was inordinately proud of his long black mustache.

Dinsdale surveyed him for a minute and would have departed had not a flap at the rear been raised to admit a man. Before the canvas fell back in place Dinsdale glimpsed a door, and for the first time realized there was a wooden annex to the tent. Second glance told him the newcomer was Iron Pyrites, the peripatetic prospector. Pyrites was gazing absent-mindedly at the busy scene and did not sense Dinsdale's approach until the latter's hand touched his shoulder. He started nervously, but it was several seconds after he faced about before the dull eyes lighted with recognition.

"Back in town to outfit for *the* trip, eh?" greeted Dinsdale.

"Joey's friend!" exclaimed Pyrites, thrusting out a hand. "Joey's shooting friend! Yes, siree! The big trip is what's coming next. One big strike and I'm going back East. Joey's all right. He's my friend and partner, but he don't have enough *sabe*, not enough faith. Just been talking to him. He shows no more interest than if I was talking about buying and selling eggs. Of course he'll grub-stake me. He thinks it fetches him good luck in this business. But he ain't got any heart for it. No git-up-and-hurrah-boys in him.

"Why, man, I know several big prospects that oughter make him give this outfit away and hoot for joy; and he don't give a hang. There's gold back near where I met you fellows on the road. Heaps of it! No five and ten cents to a pan, but dollars to a pan! Sounds big? It is big. Then there's silver indications near Bear Butte, right under our noses. There's oceans of silver there. I *know* it. I've been through the Owyhee district in Idaho, and it ain't any richer. Why, man alive! Just me and my burro have traced out five miles of silver ledge. Hit on it by accident. Hunting gold and found a nugget that was almost pure silver. Washed down from some vein up in the hills.

"That was enough for old Iron Pyrites. Me and that burro got busy. He's just as keen for it as I be, and he'd rather go after silver then gold. We stayed out till we nearly starved. Even then the little cuss didn't want to come in. When I've developed the tunnels and drifts I'll take out ore that'll run two hundred ounces to the ton! Two hundred dollars to the ton! A small mill, at the least, will reduce twenty-five tons a day. Five thousand dollars! And Joey'd rather keep at his trifling business! A small custom-smelter will turn out—well, we'll say a thousand-ounce brick a day. Good Lord! And I can't git Joey haired up about it!"

"Then you'll go after silver next?" prompted Dinsdale.

Pyrites scratched his nose and wrinkled his brows.

"I'm a gold miner," he finally decided. "The burro's all for silver. Silver's good. I always like to feel I've got a good silver ledge back of me for a rainy day. Mebbe I'll take one more whack at the gold before getting that silver. It's safe. No one else will find it."

"And Injuns don't trouble you?"

"I'm not partial to them. But one man, if he's careful, don't run much risk in prospecting. Especially if he knows the

country and works the hardest just before or after a thunder-storm. When the lightning begins to sing I can count on the gulches being clear of the red devils. Going in to see Joey?"

"I dropped in to see him, but he's busy——"

"He's running the private games in there and sitting in a big one. Uses the house for the private games. Perhaps you'd better wait if you ain't hunting for a big game. His good nature just now is like a gash-vein, wide on the surface and tapering away to nothing underneath. Every time he gets back from a trip he's crazy for a killing. If he'd only give this place away and work half as hard panning pay gravel. But by tomorrow afternoon he'll be ready to powwow with you."

"Maybe I'm feeling hungry for a big game," said Dinsdale.

Pyrites darted a quick glance and wrinkled his weathered face in a grin.

"Young blood! Always the same. Excitement even if they have to play against their own money. Rather rake in five dollars on a pair of jacks then to locate a bonanza mine. I'm estimating you'll assay out just like him in lots of ways. Well, if you're keen to be skinned all you got to do is to pass through the door and tell the hall-boy to hand your name and business. I was in there about a minute when Joey ordered me out. I never touch cards. I don't like taking risks."

"There wouldn't be any Deadwood City if it wasn't for a man's love of risks," lightly responded Dinsdale.

He passed under the canvas flap and through the narrow door. There was a long hall with several doors on each side. The place was very quiet except for the faint click of chips and the clink of glasses. No voices were to be heard—gold-dust was doing all the talking. As Dinsdale stood irresolute a Chinaman emerged from a door at the end of the hall, carrying a tray of glasses. On discovering Dinsdale he glided forward, his stolid face demanding the intruder's business. Dinsdale found pencil and paper in his pocket and wrote—

"I'm hankering for action."

Signing it he directed the servant to give it to San Juan. The Chinaman entered a room on the left and closed the door behind him. Fully a minute passed—ten to Dinsdale, whose face grew hard as he stood there and waited—then the servant reappeared and beckoned for Dinsdale to approach.

SAN JUAN JOE and three men were seated at a table. On a small stand at one side was a pair of scales for weighing dust. A glance told Dinsdale two things: it was a case of tiger eat tiger, for each of the strangers wore the facial brand of the professional gambler; San Juan at the card table was much different than the San Juan of the trail and cañon fight. He, like his companions, was an excellent type of the card-man, who hurried to the hills from Omaha, Cheyenne, and Denver, once the gold rush was on. San Juan rose and shook hands coldly. He was no longer the philosophical traveling companion, but an opponent. The hurried pencil scrawl was to him a challenge to a duel. He greeted Dinsdale with a few laconic words, and added—

"Your message says you're gunning for action."

"Feel sort of hungry for it," confessed Dinsdale.

"We'll try to accommodate you. This is 'French Curly,' this is Blitz, this is 'Big George.' Gentlemen, this is Pete Dinsdale. You know what he's after," San Juan introduced. Then to Dinsdale—

"We're playing a bit stiff"; and he pulled up a chair for Dinsdale.

"It's the only way," agreed Dinsdale as he seated himself and briefly studied the impassive faces of the strangers. French Curly held his gaze the longest. The man was dying of consumption and had death written in his sunken cheeks. He was notorious for his malignance and would go to his death and a nameless grave venomous to his last breath: He lived only for the night and the table. Deprived of cards and his day was done. He sensed the end to be near and was impatient over the delay caused by the introduction.

"What are we playing for?" he asked, his voice scarcely audible; and to show he was in proper form he dropped a heavy bag on the table.

Dinsdale drew a thick package of greenbacks from an inside pocket, as fresh looking as if direct from the Government press, and placed it before him. The quartette flashed their hawk gaze over the unaccustomed sight of paper money, and French

Curly's bloodless lips drew back like a famished animal's.

"We've been playing five ante and a hundred limit, both doubled for a round if threes or better are played," San Juan explained to Dinsdale.

"That suits. There's three thousand in that heap. Call it table stakes and make it brief," said Dinsdale.

The four nodded their approval and reinforced their table cash. No further talk was indulged in, pantomime and chips sufficing. Dinsdale played a winner at the first, then began to meet with reverses. French Curly's lips became fixed in a snarl of triumph as the greenbacks began their travels, and his breath became choked and disagreeable to hear. At midnight the last of his table stakes were swept away by Curly.

"That lets me out for the evening," said Dinsdale, rising. "Enjoyed myself very much. Suppose I can have my revenge?"

"That's what we're here for," said San Juan Joe, beginning to discard the cold deportment of the table.

He called the hall-boy and after refreshments had been served told Dinsdale:

"I'd like to have a word with you in private. You gentlemen will excuse me."

Passing down the hall he led Dinsdale into a room next to the kitchen. This seemed to be office and sleeping apartment combined and was exceedingly well furnished.

Pushing forward a chair he genially said:

"I'm mighty glad you dropped in, Dinsdale. I'm glad entirely aside from our little game. I've been expecting you for two days. If you hadn't shown up tonight I should have sent you a message." He paused as if undecided just how he would proceed.

"Play," prompted Dinsdale.

"It would be awkward to say it if we hadn't rode through the cañon together. Do you know there's talk being made about you since I saw you last?"

"Gulch seems to be filled with talk," was the careless rejoinder.

"This is more than gossip. I'm afraid, Pete, that Kitty is getting in her work. She isn't called the 'Schemer' for nothing. There's more cussedness and shrewd politics in that bunch of petticoats than you'll find in the average army contractor."

"You're breaking bad news, eh?"

"Let's hope it hasn't reached the point where we must call it 'bad.' But it might be much better. That little —— has started talk about you, and others are passing it on. You came here without even a pack-animal. You're connected with no outfit. You don't seem keen to get into business, or do any prospecting. Despite tonight's game you don't even look the gambling man. You're well-heeled with guns and money. And you arrive in a way that makes you a marked man. Rescuing the girl has made you known to everybody."

"The hour is late for me, Joe," yawned Dinsdale. "Get down to cases."

"You tipped me off to tell the crowd about the Ogalala hold-up, and the crowd knew you passed the word. First they had heard of it. Then the Sidney stage driver arrives and inside an hour is bleating about the robbery to the men at the I. X. L. He tells them that the robbers got a large amount of new greenbacks." He ceased speaking and watched Dinsdale's face.

Dinsdale blew a ring of smoke and quietly remarked:

"And on top of tipping you about the hold-up I gave some greenbacks to Lottie Carl. I understand, Joe, as well as if you talked a month. Folks are wondering. Greenbacks did it. Well, what comes next? You wouldn't tell me this unless you had something to add."

"French Curly will try for another game tonight and, failing, he'll blow some of his winnings at Kitty's place. Before morning the town will be telling how you lost an enormous amount of money—in new paper money. Trust Curly to put it strong to make a hit with the ladies."

"All right. Go ahead."

"You're making me lead all the time, Pete. Well, here is the true word. Get an outfit and go prospecting at once. Make believe you're a miner. With so many strangers floating in and out a week's absence may see the loose talk forgotten. By that time Kitty will be busy with new plans."

"Thought she was your woman," Dinsdale observed.

San Juan laughed without mirth.

"I'd give everything if she was, but I'm only a handy friend, the fellow to drive off folks who get bothersome. She wants me to pull up and go to South Africa with her. I probably shall. Yet I know she'll toss

me into the discard the minute she takes the notion. To get back to your case. Old Pyrites starts in a day or so on one of his fool trips. Why not go along with him. I'll pretend I'm tired of grub-staking him and you can take my place and let on you believe all his yarns."

"Thanks. That might be good medicine. Will he agree?"

"He'd take a grub-stake from the devil and old Satan for a pard if no other way was open to him. Where are you stopping?'

"Bed Rock. Chicken fixings and flour doings."

The gambler smiled whimsically and applauded:

"Good nerve. Need any money?"

"You didn't clean me, Joe." And Dinsdale tapped his breast-pocket. "The man Curly did something I didn't like in picking a chip from the floor. I felt I was your guest, so I quit before going to a showdown with him. Then again the fellow is three-fourths dead already."

"By ——! Dinsdale, I like you. Curly seldom is awkward. But you're after my own style. So you don't need money. Breast-pocket. Must be more greenbacks."

"Easier to pack around than dust."

San Juan's black eyes sparkled in keen appreciation of the other's bearing. He opened his lips, then thought better of it and clamped them together. He knew Dinsdale could not be inveigled into imparting confidence. He finally said:

"Words aren't necessary between us, Pete. If it wasn't for that woman! It's in the cards that I'll make a fool of myself. I'll have a talk with Mayor Farnum. Accidental-like. I'll find out if Kitty has passed a bad word to him, or the city council. Wild Bill's death makes the situation ticklish."

"But folks are saying the gamblers planned that. I'm done out of three thousand my first game in town. Can't brand me as much of a gambler."

"I drop," surrendered San Juan. "But I feel that you and I ought to have another talk—one that might lead to you getting some work—highly paid work."

"The only kind that would interest me, Joe. I'll think over the prospecting proposition. Perhaps I've made a mistake in being too free with greenbacks and in not going to work. But work hates me."

"You'll make no mistake in listening to my next talk. It's work that'll suit you fine."

This ended their conversation. Each had refused to speak plainly, yet each was working toward the point where he could talk plainly. San Juan returned to the card-room and Dinsdale passed out into the the big tent.

With the exception of a long narrow lane behind the patrons at the bar the place was crowded. Keeping close to the canvas wall Dinsdale avoided the congestion around the different games and gained the open space. He glanced over the assemblage and finally focused his gaze on the bar. Then he advanced to the side of Horseshoe Webb and invited—

"Have another little touch of trouble?"

"Who the —— are you?" viciously growled Webb. It was plain he had entered the dangerous stage in his drinks.

"I'm the galoot that's just been done for three thousand in greenbacks, and yet has something left for the bottle," Dinsdale murmured.

Webb's drunken malevolence slowly died out and he stared thoughtfully at Dinsdale. "Huh. I'll drink with you," he mumbled.

After bolting his drink Webb slyly remarked—

"You tote a likely lot of paper money round with you, I reckon."

"Always like to be well heeled—with money and guns."

Webb tugged at his mustache and furtively studied Dinsdale's profile.

"Have another," he grunted.

"Thanks. But not tonight. We'll make it on demand. I must be going."

As he strode to the exit he could feel Webb's gaze boring into his back. As he stepped into the darkness of the street a hand touched his arm and caused his own hand to close on a gun. Two round yellow eyes were blazing at him. The voice of Scissors addressed him, and he knew the eyes belonged to the big owl.

"Got my two ounces," exultingly whispered Scissors. "That satisfies me some of the Ogalala gang is in the tent tonight. Either them or some of the road-agents."

"You'd better keep that talk to yourself," shortly warned Dinsdale. "And keep away from that man Webb. He's feeling ugly."

"Oh, I know when to catch him. He gave me a dollar first card out of the box. Scissors knows when to get them. He's *wakan witshasha*. Old Sitting Bull here knows more'n most humans. I can tell by

his eyes whether to go ahead or draw back."

"He's telling you now to shut off that talk about train robbers being in town," Dinsdale sternly warned him. "That talk is poor medicine."

As he walked away he could hear Scissors chuckling and mumbling. Once he thought the fellow was following him and looked back. He fancied he could see the fiery eyes of the owl. There was a never-ending variety in Deadwood in the Summer of Seventy-six.

CHAPTER V

A BAD BREAK FOR DINSDALE

IN A dark room at the back of a Chinese wash-house several men sat in silence, waiting. Ten minutes had passed since the last man entered the room from the dark hall and, beyond an exchange of one or two words between each newcomer and the man who seemed to have the mysterious conference in charge, none had spoken. Then the Mongolian stationed outside the door raised a sing-song voice and was answered briefly in Chinese. The group in the room straightened to attention. Three sharp raps, then two, then one, sounded on the door and the outside bolt was drawn. Some one crossed the room and drew the inside bolt. The door opened, but even had there been a light the inmates of the room would have beheld a figure so heavily muffled as to defy recognition. As it was no man could see his neighbor.

"Who comes?" softly demanded the man who had admitted the other men.

"The one who always comes last. Number One."

"We are ready for your talk," announced the first speaker, returning to his chair.

"How are you known?" asked Number One.

"The one who always comes first to the meeting place. Number Two."

"Whom have you admitted?"

"Three, Four and Six."

"Five?"

"Unreliable tonight. Drink."

"Unreliable this night from drink, he will be unreliable on other and more important nights," said Number One. "He should be dropped from the rolls even as we have threatened to drop him twice before this. He might send us all to the noose. How do you vote?"

There was a slight pause, then in sequence the different voices called out:

"Two."

"Three."

"Four."

"Six."

"One. It is unanimous. How shall it be best done? He must have no chance to talk."

"If it can be left for me, Number Two, to arrange."

"It is left for you to arrange within forty-eight hours," ruled Number One. "Now let us finish quickly. None of us are satisfied with the results. Only fifteen thousand taken from the stages within the last six weeks. Passengers have been warned at Cheyenne and Sidney to bring but little money in on their persons. The horse-ranch, even, is better paying. There is but one job in the hills that is worth while —one of the treasure coaches. One coach captured means at least two hundred thousand dollars, perhaps two hundred and fifty thousand. And the time soon comes when it will be useless to try for such a prize."

"Then let's get the next one to go out. It's been held over and will carry a full load," eagerly said Number Two.

"First we've got to have more men," croaked a harsh voice. "We ain't strong enough to handle twelve guards and get away with the bullion."

"Number Three, you speak only a half truth," corrected the leader. "We have enough men. It's too late to take in new hands. But we can't handle a dozen until we plan to place our men to the best advantage. Then it will be simple. We must have at least two of our men among the guards, thus cutting their number down to ten. In the past we have planned to work from the outside. Now we will work from the inside.

"Two of the regular guards will get through just before the coach makes the trip. Two of our men must at once ask for jobs as guards. When the vacancies occur—and they shall occur—the time will be too short for the management to hesitate. Number Three will be one of the men. Number Four shall be the other man. In brief the plan is this:

"The day and spot being known, Number Three must ride ahead with the advance

guard. Number Four must be one of the eight riding beside the coach. When Number Three gets opposite our ambush he should be out of sight of the coach as the ambush will be beyond a bend in the road. He will strike his man down. We in ambush will pull the fellow out of the road and take care of his horse. Number Three will ride back a bit and signal for one of the coach-guards to join him. If more than one rides up, all the better. This guard, or guards, must be disposed of quietly as was the first. We in ambush will help, using the noose if possible. Their horses must not be frightened and must be secured in the woods. At the very least we will have cut down the number of guards to eight, with but seven by the coach, one of these being Number Four. Number Three will wait opposite the ambush until the coach comes up. He and Number Four will take the six guards by surprize, covering them with four six-guns. We in ambush will instantly take a hand and secure the six. Three and Four will then gallop back to meet the two rear guards and take them by surprize. It is very simple and there should not be any need for bloodshed."

"But blood can't stop us," hoarsely broke in Number Three.

"Nothing shall stop us as it will be our last big stake here. I already have a safe cache for the bullion. This is the plan in outline. Any suggestions or questions?"

"The only drawback is that Three and Four will be marked men," spoke up Number Two.

"Bad for us on the inside 'less we settle the hash of the ten," grumbled Number Three.

"That would be going it too strong," protested Number Four, with a shiver in his voice.

Number One sharply said:

"Both Three and Four are already wanted for murder. One in Idaho; the other in Nevada. Yet they live here in Deadwood City and move about openly. However, I have not been forgetting them. There are three courses for them to choose from: hide with the gold and guard it till we can meet and divide; take their shares and ride for it; or ride for it and trust us to see they receive their shares in Denver, San Francisco or wherever we may decide. The last, I believe, is the best because it is the safest. If they are caught and held on suspicion either after following the first plan, or the second, the gold on them would condemn them. Once we get the treasure we will scatter. The hills game is nearly played out. Let others stay and pick up the crumbs and a rope."

"Seems as if I was getting the hot end of the poker," growled Number Three.

"Might as well sentence me to death and be done with it," bitterly complained Number Four.

"Rewards are offered for both of you and you haven't done a scaffold-dance yet," grimly replied the leader. "A swift horse, a change of stamping-grounds, a new name, and with forty or fifty thousand dollars to blow you'd be fools to be caught. But if either of you refuse to play the part I pick for you, say so now."

There was an uneasy shuffling of feet, but the threat concealed but poorly in the leader's words was fully understood.

"I'm game," muttered Number Four.

"I never squealed yet," snarled Number Three.

"Then that's settled, and wo to the man who tries to back down," said the leader. "Anything else?"

"I have a suggestion to make," spoke up Number Two. "Let Three and Four draw lots to see who shall take the inside job and leave the second place vacant until I can try to secure another man for the second guard. It doesn't much matter what happens to him after the job is finished. He will know nothing about the rest of you and, if, by any chance, he is captured there will be nothing he can tell."

"Who's t'other man?" demanded Number Three.

"That will be told the chief if I find the plan is likely to work. He will tell you when he sees fit."

Both Three and Four were eager to accept any scheme which would give one of them a chance to dodge the dangerous position of coach-guard. Both proclaimed their satisfaction and wished the lot-drawing to be conducted on the spot.

Number One said:

"No lights to be shown at our little meetings. We must remember the rules. Lots may be drawn within a few days if we decide to adopt Number Two's plan. I rely on his judgment. I will talk with him about this new plan of his. If his choice of guard is all right it will be an advantage

to use him, as he knows nothing about us and can be turned adrift among the stars, or simply be left to look out for himself. But until I have decided the first order stands and there will be no drawing of lots. You will now wait the usual time before leaving the room."

The leader stole to the door and unbolted it and knocked gently. The outside fastening was removed, and but three men were left in the room. After two minutes had elapsed Number Two spoke, and Number Four glided into the black hall.

"I know the man you mean. He's a good one to tie to. Waste of good timber to leave him to play a lone hand. He might cut in ahead of us at that! Just like his nerve. It would be a crazy move to shut off his wind if he does join us," grumbled Number Three.

"Everything will be done for the best of the gang. And you're breaking the rule by talking after the chief has gone," replied Number Two.

"I'm shut," muttered Number Three. "I don't want to be 'vited to take a walk with him like Rodney was."

"You —— fool! You'll take a walk yet if you don't watch that clumsy tongue of yours!" hissed Number Two. "Go!"

Number Three was awkward in gaining the door and overturned a chair. Number Two cursed under his breath and drew a gun. The man was not meditating treachery, however, for he hurriedly rapped on the door and was eager to gain the hall.

WHILE this secret conference was being held—and the hour was yet early for Deadwood's night life—Dinsdale was forgetting San Juan Joe's warning of the night before and was busily making local history. He began in "Keno" Frank's place. This was smaller than San Juan's dive but consisted entirely of a wooden structure that formed one big room with a cubby-hole partitioned off in a corner for the proprietor's bunk. Legend had it that Keno Frank never slept. He was on duty all night and usually was to be found on the street during the daylight hours, when he visited among the gambling fraternity, or dropped in at Kitty the Schemer's place. He must have snatched his rest an hour or two at a time, but the impression was that he remained awake throughout the full twenty-four hours.

The moment Dinsdale entered the hall he drew the attention of all. Even those placing their bets took time to glance at the "Greenback man." The story of his game at San Juan's place was commonly known, thanks much to French Curly's advertising; only his losses were said to have been twenty thousand. A man who could lose so royally and yet have plenty left to scatter recklessly was bound to become the focal point of interest in the town's topsy-turvy world. Daughters of Aspasia flocked about him whenever he stepped inside a dance-hall, much to the envy of French Curly and others of his type. Curly was at the faro table, losing his poker winnings, when Dinsdale entered and bruskly walked to the bar and invited the house to join him.

Because of his losses Curly was more venomous than usual, if that be possible. He fingered his few remaining chips and stared at Dinsdale, convinced it was a personal misfortune that the newcomer should throw away money which might so easily be taken from him at cards. The gambler placed his chips and lost and then turned about and with smoldering eyes continued to watch the buoyant Dinsdale. The "Greenback man" had forgotten his losses at San Juan's place, or else they were immaterial to him, and now was in a rare humor. With his slouch hat pushed back he was indulging in an exchange of wits with a dozen men busily drinking at his expense. Carelessly throwing more money on the bar he directed that drinks be served again to all who might care to partake. The acceptance was general.

"Easy come, easy go," whispered a merchant, whose profits ran several hundred per cent.

His neighbor smiled and murmured—

"A fool and his money, you know." And their glasses clinked.

"But when it's gone I calculate he knows where to get more—if he's lucky," whispered the storekeeper.

French Curly could endure the spectacle no longer. The faro bank had all his winnings and he was supposed to have a few thousands in reserve. He rose and sauntered to the bar and took a position beside Dinsdale, his cadaverous face attempting to assume a genial expression. Dinsdale smiled genially and invited—

"Name it."

"No, thanks," declined Curly, his eyes

eagerly watching the hand dipping into the breast pocket for more paper money. "But what say to a little game in Frank's room?"

"This is my drinking night. I never mix cards with liquor," laughed Dinsdale.

"I thought you was keen to have your revenge," murmured French Curly, leaning his back against the bar and staring into Dinsdale's flushed face.

"Probably I am, but I usually pick my time," affably replied Dinsdale.

"A man of spirit finds one time as good as another."

"So he does; and tomorrow is as good as today. But if you're hankering for action I'll cut the deck for a thousand a cut; any one of the men here to shuffle the cards for us," lightly countered Dinsdale. "Cutting the deck doesn't call for much brain work, and luck's with me tonight."

French Curly began to loose his evil temper. Heads were twisting, necks were craning, as Dinsdale's reckless offer was made; and the gambler—willing to stake his soul on a game of chance—had no thousand dollars to risk, nor any respectable portion of that sum. Had the invitation to the small room been accepted he had planned to borrow money from Keno Frank. Each curious face turned toward him increased his rage. With a sneer on his pallid face he said:

"You'll need lots of luck. You'll do well to stick to luck."

"Especially after I find a game is crooked," loudly retorted Dinsdale. "What was you doing at that side table when you pretended to be using the gold scales?"

Those who had emptied their glasses gently replaced them on the bar. Those about to drink postponed the ceremony, and there was a general withdrawal to the opposite side of the room. The two had the floor to themselves. French Curly wet his pale lips and quietly said:

"You'll explain those words if you can. If you can't you'll eat them."

Dinsdale tossed off his drink and laughed vacuously and retorted:

"Then I prefer explaining. Something happened in the game last night I didn't like. I let it pass as I didn't want to raise a row in Joe's place the first time I was there. It was when you stooped and picked up a chip and placed it on the table beside the little gold scales."

"Meaning I worked something crooked?" hissed French Curly.

"Derned if you haven't hit it dead center! Have a drink."

"Swallow it!" curtly commanded the gambler, pulling a large bore derringer from his side coat pocket.

With a movement so quick that none could follow it Dinsdale knocked the derringer to the floor. French Curly dived to recover it, but snarled in fear and threw himself backward as a bullet struck the floor under the weapon and jumped it to the center of the room.

Then with both guns working alternately Dinsdale caused the derringer to spin and hop toward the door, the shots coming almost together and each furthering the flight of the weapon.

"Look out!" some one howled.

He wheeled in time to behold French Curly half over the bar and reaching for the bartender's gun.

"Quit it," calmly commanded Dinsdale, walking toward him. "You didn't count right. I have a shot left."

The gambler dropped back to the floor and Dinsdale put up his weapons.

Keno Frank, drawn from his private room by the firing, now ran forward and behind the bar against which Dinsdale was leaning. With a scowl on his heavy face he stared from Curly's furious countenance to that of the nonchalant Dinsdale, then at the floor and the battered target.

"Seems to me, stranger, you've taken some liberty with my new floor," he began.

"A matter of doing that, or killing a snake. But you must admit it was pretty gun-play. Ask any of the men."

Keno Frank's hand was resting beneath the bar, fumbling for the gun Curly had failed to secure. He stared into the smiling face thoughtfully. The scowl faded and the hand was withdrawn, empty.

"It was pretty gun-play, stranger. Have a drink?"

Dinsdale shook his head and reloaded his guns.

"Just walking around a bit. I'll be going."

He passed to the door, his hands at his side. French Curly wished he carried a second derringer, as did San Juan Joe, but in his heart he knew he would not risk a shot had he had the extra gun. For a man so very close to death he held life to be most precious.

This episode, more spectacular than tragic, added to the reputation that Dinsdale was acquiring. From resort to resort the story was carried that night, and by morning the "Greenback man" was the principal topic of conversation among all classes. It was generally believed he must have very large resources to carry on so extravagantly. The story of his prodigality trebled his losses and gifts in the telling until it was inevitably concluded that the source of his wealth, at the least, was mysterious.

The morning also found something new added to the widely flung gossip and was based on his encounter with Bandy Allen in the I. X. L. hotel. With the usual exaggeration it was loudly bruited about that the two men had parted with the understanding they should begin shooting on sight when next they met. Some declared that Allen was the only one to make threats. For several days Allen had been drinking heavily. He was a type that loses nothing of deadliness because of liquor. The more he drank the more quiet he grew. There was no doubt as to his making threats against Dinsdale a few hours after the scene in Keno Frank's place. But the two did not meet and now it was morning and the entire town was expecting them to settle their feud before sundown.

Near noon Dinsdale appeared on the street, apparently as fresh as if he had been in bed all night instead of three hours of sleep during the forenoon. He visited several dives without tarrying in any. Now that the habitués of the resorts understood his willingness to throw money right and left he acquired a transient popularity. As he was leaving a gambling tent a disheveled creature followed him and warned:

"Watch out for that Bandy Allen. He 'lows to pot you, mister."

"Thanks. Run away."

And the fellow stumbled off to stare ecstatically at the greenback in his grimy paw.

And there were those who were strong for law and order who would gladly have sold him opportunities for mining speculations. He laughed away all invitations to "double" his money and continued his aimless, shameless, squandering mode of living. He kept away from San Juan's place, however, and seemed to prefer haunts which were new to him. One other place of note which he did not visit was Kitty the Schemer's big tent. The town gradually decided that unlike the average run of spendthrifts and ne'er-do-wells he found no lure in women.

In the afternoon following the lively night at Keno Frank's he was accosted in front of the Grand Central Hotel by a grave-faced man, who rapidly said:

"Your name is Peter Dinsdale. I am mayor of this town. Mayor Farnum. I must talk plainly to you as you are a young man. I hope you're more foolish than dangerous."

"Shoot, mayor. I'm both young and dangerous, but never dangerous to Mayor Farnum."

The mayor frowned at the flippant tone and boastful words and advised him:

"This town is not a good place for you. Back in Cheyenne or Denver, say."

Dinsdale's smile vanished.

"Is that an order for me to get out?" he sharply asked.

"No; not an order. Simply some good advice. Affairs have been run rather loosely here ever since the big rush commenced, but conditions will soon change. When they do men of your type won't be wanted. Already there are enough serious men and women here to work the change. Deadwood has been more foolish and weak than wicked. New times are coming. You won't fit into them."

"Any penalty if I stay on here?"

"That depends on you entirely. I hear talk about you and Bandy Allen planning to fight a street duel. I warn you that if there is any bloodshed it won't be a second Jack McCall affair."

"There's nothing to that Allen talk. He won't bring any fight to me. I certainly don't plan to bother with him. Why, he's a yaller dog."

"I hope it's only talk. But Allen has certainly made the talk."

"If he says we two have challenged each other to a street fight he's a cheap liar. If I run across him I'll take him by the nape of the neck and bring him up to see you and let you hear him eat his words," promised Dinsdale.

"There you go again with more lawless threats," rebuked the exasperated mayor. "Can't you understand that gun-play and all-night carousing are simply spasms—

that they never last, that no mining town stands for such business very long?"

"Easily. But so long as you allow almost every other business site to be occupied by dance-hall, bawdy house, or gambling-hell you must expect a certain per cent. of your citizens will patronize them. But don't you worry about me, mayor. I'm planning to be gone before you begin cleaning house."

"If Bandy Allen and you start any fight——"

"We shall not!" warmly broke in Dinsdale. "If he comes across my path I'll take his guns away from him and send them to you. Don't you fret any about that bow-legged cuss working up enough sand to run up against me."

"I'm afraid you're hopeless," sighed the mayor. "I've taken it on myself to warn you. You'll do as you will, of course."

"But I haven't killed any one yet," protested Dinsdale. "I've lost money at poker. Surely that doesn't brand me as card-sharp. I've bought several million drinks, but your citizens drank them."

"I've heard about your throwing money away. The gulch is full of stories about you. They call you the 'Greenback man,'" coldly retorted the mayor.

"No crime for a man to be open-handed, even with greenbacks," lightly defended Dinsdale. "I notice every one seems keen to get some of those greenbacks. Some of your leading business men have been after me."

"I've finished," said the mayor, and bowing he passed on.

Dinsdale's happy-go-lucky mien changed to an expression of thoughtfulness as he slowly walked in the opposite direction. He was aroused from his meditation by a claw of a hand clutching his arm. He twisted clear easily and glared down into the pinched-up face of a camp bummer.

"Say, boss, Bandy Allen's down ahead, laying for you," croaked the unwashed.

Dinsdale eyed him in grim amusement. The steady stare caused the creature to back away in much perturbation of spirit. Dinsdale snapped him a coin and ferociously warned him—

"You tell any of your friends I gave you that and I'll hunt you down and cut off your ears. I never forget a face, even a dirty one. Scoot!"

With ludicrous haste the fellow raced up the street, the coin clutched in his hand, with a great fear clutching at his heart. With a dry chuckle Dinsdale continued his walk, and half aloud said:

"They're getting organized. Society for Warning Pete Dinsdale Against the Evil Plans of Bandy Allen. First chap babbled about his luck, now they'll ambush me in relays."

He had scarcely come to this whimsical decision when another man glided from the doorway of a store and began—

"Mr. Dinsdale, I want to warn you——"

Dinsdale caught him by the collar of his ragged shirt and shot him back into the store.

"Still trying to build up a name as a fighting man by ill-using bummers," spoke up a rasping voice.

Red of face Dinsdale turned and encountered the scornful gaze of Mrs. Colt. Beside her and ducking her head in timorous welcome was Lottie Carl, trig and trim in new dress and serviceable shoes.

"The man annoyed me, Mrs. Colt," gravely answered Dinsdale.

Lottie Carl advanced to greet him, but the widow swung her back from contamination. Dinsdale sorrowfully returned her troubled gaze, lifted his hat to Mrs. Colt and hurried on. For an hour thereafter it would have been hazardous for any one to have intruded upon his affairs. He had treated all his experiences as jokes, but the meeting with the widow and Lottie Carl cut him deeper than he cared to admit to himself. Consequently he was in a bad humor as he walked back to the Bed Rock and all but ran into Kitty the Schemer. He touched his hat and stepped aside, but she blocked his path and complained—

"Isn't any of your wealth to come to poor me, Mr. Bad-Man?"

"I'm taking them alphabetically and haven't reached the S's yet," he gravely explained.

"Joe says you play poor cards," she sweetly informed him.

"Joe ought to know. He was in the game when I was trimmed."

"If I tell him that he won't like your saying it."

He smiled cynically and assured her:

"You can't make bad blood between Joe and me. So long as I don't fall in love with you Joe won't sniff any battle smoke."

"Don't be too sure of that," she warned. "If you're not in love, Joe is."

"Meaning you'll sic-him-Tiger on to me. Well, we have to take what comes. Good day."

"I'm afraid Allen will get you first," she jeered. He halted his steps and contemplated her curiously and mused:

"So you're the one who set the yarn going about me fighting that rabbit."

"You're as poor at guessing as you are at cards."

"It doesn't matter. You're only the twentieth person to speak of Allen to me today. Some one has been very busy."

"I'm not subtle when I move. I go direct. You'll know when I become busy."

"Work fast, little woman, as I shall be leaving the gulch soon."

Her pink and white face hardened and the blue eyes squinted up with malice.

"When you feel the rope that McCall dodged remember me, my bad-man."

"I shall remember you for a long time; but I'm not your bad-man," he softly reminded her as he passed on.

Kitty the Schemer bit her red lips and watched him swing up the street. The experience of having young men ignore her undoubted charms was both new and intensely disagreeable. She sauntered on, her nimble wits devising ways for bringing the careless stranger very low. He interested her to the exclusion of all other men for the moment; and she was sure she hated him. If only he could be brought as low as he carried his head high and could discover she was the only one who could save him! Would she interfere in his behalf? She was unable to decide; and the very doubt angered her against him and herself.

THE night began for him as had the others. From tent to tent and from dance-hall to saloon he traveled, lavishly acting as host to crowds of men who already were whispering their belief he was one of the Ogalala train-robbers. In the Big Ace, devoted entirely to faro and largely patronized by professionals who had made killings at poker, he added to his unsavory reputation by winning two thousand dollars in gold and then promising to shoot his way clear of the joint when the proprietor became over insistent on his remaining and tempting fortune further.

As he left the place he was thrown into a sudden spell of anger by a poor creature creeping to his side and attempting to tell the same old story about Bandy Allen.

"You scum!" he growled, reaching for the fellow's neck.

"—— sakes! Don't!" spluttered the fellow. "You give me a bill this morning. I wanted to do you a good turn. I tell you Allen's going to try for you."

"Excuse me, neighbor," sighed Dinsdale. "I've been trailed pretty strong by your friends today."

"I ain't after no more money. I owed you a few words, I thought. No funny business to it. I heard French Curly as much as tell Big George you was having your last night—'less you seen Bandy Allen first. Them was his exact words, almost. Believe, or forgit it." And he ducked away up the street.

Dinsdale rubbed his chin and mused:

"I'm inclined to believe it. But what the —— is behind it all? That poor fool isn't acting 'less some one's pushing him forward. French Curly knows so much about the inside of it I reckon Curly may be in on the ground floor of the enterprise. If anything happens I'll have to look Curly up. But I can't do anything to a man already three-fourths dead with lung-trouble."

Only hilarity filled his shapely head when an hour after midnight he entered the Grand Central and immediately became a central figure. His voice was reckless, yet that of a braggart as he poised in the office. He invaded the bar with a mob at his heels and made it free to all. While he dumped some of his golden faro winnings on the bar the word was carried to the street that the "Greenback man" was throwing everything wide open and without limit, and homeless men flocked in and jammed the place. Those holding preferred positions passed an endless procession of drinks over their shoulders to those behind. Never had the derelicts of a mining-camp such a host before.

Constantly Dinsdale's laughing voice was calling to the perspiring bartenders:

"More gentlemen back here with a thirst. Make it quick, Aprons!"

It was while the last of the mob was being satiated that Scissors squirmed through the press and thrust a note into Dinsdale's hand. Opening it Dinsdale read—

Most important you see me *now*—Joe.

"Is Joe wearing any guns besides his derringers?" whispered Dinsdale in Scissors' ear. For he was wondering if Kitty the Schemer had succeeded in compelling her lover to prove his love by gunplay.

"Oh, no! Don't even know he's got his derringers. I've been hunting for you quite a while. He got tired and came with me. He's outside here, stewing and fretting. Wish you'd come; he'll blame me if you don't."

Throwing a bag of dust on the bar to clean up the score Dinsdale followed Scissors to the street. The two found the jam so great that it was several minutes before they could force a passage. Once clear of the crowd the eccentric crossed the street to the corner of the theater and called for Dinsdale to follow. San Juan Joe was standing by the side of the building.

"What's the trouble? You've broken up my party," saluted Dinsdale.

"I'm trying to do you a good turn," growled the gambler.

"Hold on! Don't tell me you've come to warn me against Bandy Allen!"

"Allen? Are you crazy or drunk? I've got something that's more important than fool talk. We must go where we can be alone."

"There's my room at the Bed Rock."

"With every word above a whisper rattling all over the place. No, my place is the best. We'll enter by the back door."

"Can't it wait?" asked Dinsdale, gazing across at the hotel.

"I didn't think so when I quit my tables and a big private game," was the grim reply. "Hear my talk and then do as you please. It's your game, not mine."

They walked up the street in silence and circled the big tent to the kitchen entrance of the house and gained San Juan's room unseen except by some of the kitchen help and the hall-boy. San Juan pushed forward the cigars and sinking into a chair peevishly complained—

"Why in —— did you have to have another run-in with Kitty?"

"I haven't. I ran away. She held me up. She's mad because I won't fall in love with her so she can break my young heart. Say, Joe, you haven't called me away from my fun to listen to any Kitty stories?"

"No, no. Only she's red-hot against you. I've just come from there. She swears you'll swing. When a woman talks that way the man usually gets hurt, or finds the woman is in love with him and decides he's in love with her. In your case it's a matter of losing either way; for I'll do my best to kill the man who makes up to Kitty and wins."

"Don't oil any guns for me. Deal me out. She doesn't interest me. She annoys me," wearily said Dinsdale. "I thought you brought me here to hear a big talk."

"I have. Kitty and her ravings happened to be on my mind. And I'm reckoning you'll need a heap of friends. I've just received by night-stage a line from an old friend in Cheyenne City. Been trailing you ever since I got it. Heard you and Kitty were on the street together. Went to her place. Asked for you, and then she began shooting! I sent Scissors out to find you, and the fool stopped to sell his pictures in every place he entered. Then I had to go along with him to see he did his errand. Look at that."

And he passed over a piece of paper containing one line in writing. With elevated brows Dinsdale read—

Jim Omaha making your way—Cheyenne.

For once San Juan had the satisfaction of seeing Dinsdale wince. It was a facial betrayal and lasted only a second. As he carefully smoothed the paper and refolded it and handed it back his features were expressionless. He simply said—

"I'm glad you sent for me."

"Omaha's never been up here. He works only on railroad cases," whispered San Juan. "It may be the Ogalala affair."

With a twist of the thin lips which was meant for a smile Dinsdale said: "It easily could be that—if he's still working for the railroad. Who's Cheyenne?"

"Just a friend. He signs his messages that way. He knows I meet some pretty good boys in my business who may have slipped and who may be wanted. Sometimes he tips me off. If a friend is in for a bad spell I pass the word to him. That's all. Does Omaha know you by sight?"

"I don't think so." And Dinsdale drummed the table gently, his eyes filled with a far-away look. "I know I never saw him to know him. What's he look like? What's his real name?"

"Like yourself I never saw him to my

knowledge," replied the gambler regretfully. "I never heard him called anything but 'Jim Omaha.' Union Pacific bloodhound. As to his name, names don't count. He'd be just as deadly if he went by a number. He'd never come up here except on big business. Railroad business."

"Then it's the Ogalala affair, all right," tersely declared Dinsdale. "Wonder if he's struck the gulch yet?"

"Small chance. I know pretty well who comes in on the stage." Then thoughtfully: "But if he has sneaked in he's got a fine line on you. Why the —— have you kept away from me? The town's boiling over with fool talk about your doings.

"Even Cheyenne City must have heard by this time that you're called the 'Greenback man.' "

"I've been a fool," morosely admitted Dinsdale. "I ought to have come here. Maybe I was afraid you'd preach against my fun if I called."

"And lots of good it would have done. You've got Kitty against you, also Keno Frank, French Curly, and no knowing how many others."

"Mayor Farnum doesn't feel just like a brother to me. And don't forget Bandy Allen."

"I wish you wouldn't try to be funny when things may be very serious," protested the gambler.

"But I'm not joking. Why, I've received a dozen warnings today against Bandy Allen."

"Bah! French Curly trying to be cunning. I'll dress him for that."

"Then there's the mayor; tried to order me out of town this morning," added Dinsdale.

"Well, you have made a mess of it. Take the mayor's advice and get out for a few days anyway."

"Fine to say. Just ride my horse up over a hill and into the woods," mocked Dinsdale.

San Juan pondered a moment, then urged:

"Make that prospecting trip with Iron Pyrites. Start in the morning. Be in Rapid City this day week, or send Pyrites in. I'll have a talk waiting for you at Calvin's eating-house."

"I don't fancy running away just because this Omaha is said to be coming here."

"Prospecting, not running. You know better than I whether it means a running should he recognize you."

"When it comes to gun-play——" boldly began Dinsdale.

"Discard! Discard!" snapped San Juan. "I ain't gunning for your confidence. But I met Pyrites right after getting the message, and I told him I wouldn't stake him and that you probably would. If you say the word he'll call for you early in the morning. He'll have your outfit all ready. All you'll have to do is to take your guns and stay out till you get my word at Rapid City a week from today."

But Dinsdale grew more defiant, and sullenly insisted:

"I ain't afraid of Jim Omaha. He either doesn't know me, or else he does. If I'm a stranger to him there's no hurry in taking cover. If he does know me—well, he isn't called the 'bloodhound' for nothing; and I might as well have it out here as to have him chasing me over into Montana."

"I was looking farther ahead than that," said the gambler. "If he comes and goes, and the coast remains clear, you can return and sit into a game that'll make your everlasting pile. It'll make the Ogalala job look like a two-bit limit game. It'll be as quick as it is big."

"I don't know anything about the Ogalala job," said Dinsdale stolidly.

"Of course you don't; and you may not fancy the game I'm proposing. But I know you well enough to believe you won't spoil a game just because you decide not to sit in on it."

With scowling brows Dinsdale declared:

"I don't know anything about the Ogalala job. Let Omaha come and try to nail it on me. He'll have his hands full to make it stick. Nothing at all to hook me up to that business."

San Juan Joe smiled cynically and softly reminded him:

"Nothing at all except the talk about you being the 'Greenback man.' But undoubtedly you could explain when and where you got hold of so much paper money—— new money at that."

Dinsdale's face lengthened; then grew ugly, as he muttered:

"It'll be up to him and the Union Pacific to show down, not me. Maybe I won it at gambling."

San Juan chuckled heartily and agreed.

"I think you did, but I'll swear you never

won it from French Curly. From a poorer player of course. And no disgrace to have Curly win—sometimes he gets me—when I'm off guard and quit watching him for a second."

Then very seriously:

"All right, Dinsdale. I've done my best for you, but a man must play his own hand. I saw trouble where no trouble exists, undoubtedly. And I was selfish; I confess it. But I did want you to join me in a little matter, little work and big results. A bit of business where you couldn't lose if you had nerve. And I'll gamble you've got mountains of nerve."

Dinsdale chewed his under lip reflectively, and in a milder tone said:

"I've got nerve, all right. Ain't boasting for me to say that. About all I have got," and he laughed shortly. "But look at it my way: I want a squint at Jim Omaha. If he's on my trail I want to know him by sight. A man doesn't have to scoot from these hills just because some one is after him. There's always a chance of something happening to Omaha. Lots of men are killed by Injuns up here and buried by the first stranger who happens along."

San Juan gazed at the determined face admiringly and declared:

"Yes, Dinsdale, you're outfitted with nerve. I'm no tenderfoot, but when it comes to Jim Omaha and he has reason to think he wants me—excuse me! And I never saw him.

"But better men than I have run away from him, or tried to, and they've told me about him—some of them have. Others have just dropped out of sight and they didn't go into hiding. When Omaha reports back to the Union Pacific that he's ready for the next job you can gamble he's handsomely finished the one he was working on. Then this prospecting trip with Pyrites is off, eh?"

"I won't say it's off," was the slow response. "Maybe after this cuss blows in and I have had a chance to size him up, so I can know him on sight the next time we meet, I'll go away with Pyrites for a bit. Maybe then I'd be keen to come back and dip into the big game you're raving about."

"I'm afraid Pyrites won't wait. He's crazy on the one subject—prospecting. If you don't stake him, and I don't, he'll get some one else to. If he can't get a stake he'll go without one. He starts tomorrow morning, stake or no stake. Then again, there wouldn't be any point in your going with him except as you did so to dodge Omaha."

"Don't agree with that last," stubbornly retorted Dinsdale. "All I want is one peek at Omaha. Just a look so I'll know him and not be thinking that every stranger may be him. I sort of feel I ought to stick along here till I can size the 'bloodhound' up. Just sort of feel that way."

"So long as he can't be after you for the railroad job there's no reason why you shouldn't stay here as long as you wish," the gambler carelessly replied.

"Oh, he may think he has reason to want me," mumbled Dinsdale. "Anyway, I'm much obliged to you for the trouble you've taken."

"Not a bit. I was selfish. I wanted you in with me on the big thing. Perhaps it'll work around to that."

THEY shook hands, and Dinsdale slipped out into the night. He took the middle of the road and kept a hand on a gun; for hungry men sometimes grow desperate, and while the law was not badly overridden in the town itself there were occasions when footpads tried their luck.

As he reached the lighted stretch before the Centennial Hotel he relaxed his vigilance. Some one in front of the hotel called out sharply and men appeared at the windows and ran from the door. Those who left the building scurried around the corners. Curious to see what was about to happen Dinsdale halted and sought the cause of the disturbance.

"Run! Greenback! Run, you fool!" shouted a man crouching at the corner of the hotel.

"He's after you most proper!" howled another voice.

Dinsdale began to realize that his appearance was the cause for the excitement. He remained motionless, wondering what it all was about. That he was not a favorite with the strangely acting spectators was proved by a deep voice bawling—

"Now git him, Bandy!"

Dinsdale growled under his breath and glared suspiciously about, expecting an attack from every patch of shadow. He had not placed any credence in the threats of Bandy Allen so persistently repeated to

him during the day. He did not believe the fellow would have the courage to attack him openly. He sincerely hoped it was a false alarm, and he would have hurried on if not for the fear that Allen was in ambush ahead. There was Mayor Farnum's warning, concise and positive, against any street fighting. The town would not be safe for any one who indulged in the pastime. And Dinsdale wished to remain until he had glimpsed Jim Omaha. From the medley of voices, calling warnings for him to run, jeeringly denouncing him, and urging Allen to "settle his hash," it was plain Allen had been making his boast at the hotel and the street in front of the building had been picked for the assault.

"Where is he?" loudly yelled Dinsdale, not knowing whether to retreat or advance.

"Here he comes! Run!" some one shouted.

But coming from which direction? Dinsdale knew he must leave town on the jump if any fighting resulted. He turned to retreat up the street, changed his mind as he saw a dark figure dodging behind a tree, and started down the street. With hand on his gun and his head swinging from side to side, he advanced a few rods when a head popped from behind a dry-goods box. Dinsdale whipped out his gun but refrained from firing when a voice shouted:

"The hotel! He's coming out!"

The light was sufficient for Dinsdale to recognize the speaker to be Scissors, and he swung about on his heel just as Bandy Allen ran into the road from the hotel, a long gun clasped in his two hands. Up went the gun to his shoulder and down dropped Dinsdale, and two loads of slugs tore with a scream over his head. Had he remained erect he would have caught the charge full in the chest. He rolled to one side and came up on one knee as Allen dropped the shotgun and began firing with his hand-guns, the lead kicking the dirt into his face.

"Go back!" he roared, throwing himself flat and rolling toward the box which sheltered Scissors.

Perhaps Allen believed his quarry was seriously wounded and unable to gain his feet; perhaps the influence impelling him to commit the murder outweighed all sense of discretion. Whatever was driving him to make his kill he did not falter, but with a loud yell of triumph began running toward the writhing figure. With the resilience of a steel spring Dinsdale came to his feet. Allen came to a halt and fired with his left hand and was throwing down his right-hand gun when Dinsdale's lead caught him in the forehead.

As Allen went down on his face some one grabbed Dinsdale's arm; and Scissors was wailing:

"Now you've gone and done it! Drinking, gambling, scaring folks, sassing the city fathers, and now a killing! Come away! Come away!" And he urged Dinsdale down the street.

"Shut up! Think you're telling me something new?" growled Dinsdale. "Keep along with me till I can write a few words to San Juan. Give me some of your paper!"

He halted in the light of a gambling-hall window and placing the pad against Scissors' back he found a pencil and hurriedly wrote:

Allen laid for me. I did for him. Am riding South. Start Pyrites early in A.M. I'll meet him on the stage road ten miles from town. Have him bring outfit, a .44 Winchester rifle and plenty of ammunition. Allen was drunk or crazy. Use your influence with city council. Kill off any mob talk. Sending this by Scissors. Warn him to keep his mouth shut. I'll look for a message at Rapid City week from today—P. D.

"Take this to San Juan Joe in a rush, Scissors. If he's in a game break in so he can read it at once. Don't talk."

Then he hurried down the street, running swiftly when he came to dark stretches. Behind him sounded the individual yelping of men running to fill the street. These discordant cries gradually merged into a sullen roar, the hunting-call of the mob. He was well ahead of his pursuers, however, for he gained Clarke's livery stable and procured his horse from the sleepy hostler and cantered down the stage road without any one questioning his going.

CHAPTER VI

PROSPECTING

PYRITES was garrulously grateful to Dinsdale for providing the stake, and for two days of their hurried journey toward the divide between Rapid and Spring Creeks he wearied his silent companion with his voluble thanks. Dinsdale was for reaching the divide with the least possible delay. He did not say he feared

pursuit by a posse from Deadwood, but the prospector assumed this to be the cause of his haste and at times endeavored to assure him that none of the miners would leave the gulch and run the risk of having their scalps dried on Sioux poles.

After passing through the three miles of the Elk's narrow and twisted cañon they emerged from the slates to strike southwest to the Box Elder, swiftly flowing over bare bed rock. Pyrites would have paused at the Elder and satisfied himself concerning some specimens of jasper he had picked up. But Dinsdale appeared to be but little interested in finding pay gravel and most of the time smoked his pipe in sullen abstraction and rode his horse several rods ahead of Pyrites and the two burros.

They followed the Box Elder to where it headed at the base of Custer's Peak. Near sundown Pyrites began unpacking the burros and called after Dinsdale:

"Don't you know it's almost night? We'll camp here."

Dinsdale, ahead, reined in and stared at the sunset lights streaming across the heavens. Dismounting he slowly led his horse back to the camping-place and removed the saddle and placed it in the small tent Pyrites was deftly setting up.

"I feel sort of blue, partner. Suppose you do the squaw work while I wander around a bit," he suggested. "I'm afraid I'm a poor traveling companion."

"You're all right!" heartily assured Pyrites. "As for the squaw work, whoever heard of the man that furnishes the grub-stake bothering with any cooking? Walk the bile out of your system. You can't git lost so long as you keep near the old feller," and he jerked his head toward the peak. "Better make it a short trip, as it'll be darker 'n the inside of a burro pretty soon."

"I'll find my way back, never fear," said Dinsdale.

And taking his rifle he struck off to the foot of the peak. In the south the country was much more broken, and was thickly set with serrated peaks and had bulky Harney's Peak for a background. It impressed Dinsdale as being desolate and forbidding. Originally the country had been heavily timbered, but now there were large areas of dead pines, and their scraggly tops were unlovely and suggested a land that had been dead many ages.

Dinsdale stared gloomily at the melancholy vista for some minutes, then breasted the flank of the mountain and rapidly began climbing it. With tireless energy he worked his way up the slope until a more gracious prospect of rolling hills, with a scattering of small peaks, came into view. And yet his gaze ever reverted to the endless procession of saw-tooth heights in the south. Sun on the heights and darkness in the gorges, and he suddenly realized it was time for him to be making camp.

When he wearily broke through into the firelight he found Pyrites asleep in the tent. Bacon and beans were on a flat rock by the fire and the coffee-pot, freshly stocked, was ready to be boiled. Pyrites awoke and rolled from the tent and apologized:

"Tried to keep things hot for you. Must have dropped off. You sit down and get your boots off and wash your feet and I'll have the coffee hot in a minute. Must 'a' taken quite a travel."

"Climbed the mountain for a bit. God-forsaken stretch south of us."

"If we're hunting scenery, maybe. North of Custer you'd 'a' seen high rolling hills covered with prime timber and with plenty of grass and water in all the openings. But for dust we must go where the country looks like the devil had broken his comb. Country round Harney is the roughest in the hills, I reckon."

"The night is just beginning back in Deadwood," mused Dinsdale, as he pulled off his boots and stuck his feet into a tiny streamlet. "Up here it's time folks were abed."

"Queer about that, too. In town I stay up all hours. Up here I feel sleepy minute it gets dark. Bet they're having a hot talk about Bandy Allen about this time."

"Their talk won't bother either Allen or me. Neither of us can hear it."

"Judas! But you're a cool one! That Allen was never any account."

"I had no wish to kill the fool, even to hurt him," morosely replied Dinsdale. "He came at me shooting, shot-gun and two hand-guns. I yelled for him to quit and go back, but he was after blood. Funny, too. Where did he get his nerve? He wasn't drunk; just a cold killer. All day men had been warning me against him. I thought it was a joke, their way of having fun with me. And derned if he didn't try to get me!"

"Must 'a' been drunk," insisted Pyrites as he dished out some beans and bacon and poured a dipper of strong coffee. "After the way you cuffed French Curly's gun around any man might 'a' known you was poor medicine to go against."

"His mind may have been drunk, but his nerves were steady," sighed Dinsdale. "He shot mighty straight and nifty— No satisfaction in killing him. Felt all the time as if he was going through with something he simply had to do."

Pyrites lowered the coffee-pot slowly and stared in amazement at his companion.

"Partner," he solicitously inquired, "you feel all right?"

Dinsdale laughed and dried his feet on the short grass.

"Top high, Pyrites. My conscience doesn't trouble me a bit. Bandy Allen was a bad one. Better off dead. If he had been an Injun I'd say he'd made a vow to his medicine and had to tackle me. Being low down scum I can't get rid of the feeling he was doing something he wouldn't have tried unless he felt obliged to try it."

Pyrites stared at him sympathetically, and declared:

"Your talk doesn't assay out even one teeny color. Not even a trace. Of course it's barely possible French Curly and some of his pals might have it against you for what happened in Keno Frank's place; yet it don't have the right indications. Those fellers would want you to live till they could get you down at a table again, you'd think."

"Curly! Never thought of him," exclaimed Dinsdale. "Well, I'm through mulling it over. From now on I'm going to be a wolf at prospecting."

"That's the kind of talk that makes me feel good," approved Pyrites. "Now you pitch into that grub, have a short smoke and turn in. We want to hit one of the heads of Rapid in good season tomorrow and take a squint at the placers before passing on to the divide. And don't let Bandy Allen bother your dreams any. San Juan has stopped all talk against you by this time. Ain't no doubt in my mind but what Bandy was one of the hoss-thieves that have been doing as regular a business in these hills as the miners have. Made it richer than lots of miners, too. Miners stay in Deadwood gulch. Hoss-thieves ramble around and pick up nags from ranches and freight-trains.

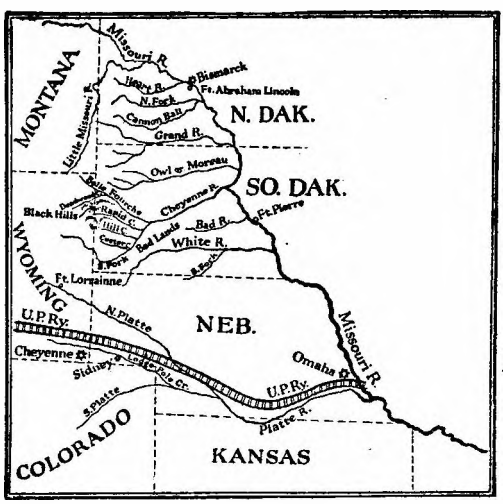
"If a man could have as much nerve in being honest as he'll show when he goes crooked no amount of Injuns could keep these gulches empty of prospectors."

With this bit of wisdom he crawled into the tent to escape the heavy dews and rolled in his blankets. Dinsdale smoked a pipe and then followed his friend's example.

THE Thunder Birds were flapping their wings and the hills were filled with deep rumblings. The southern peaks were shut off by a wall of slate, through which flashed white zigzags as the birds opened and closed their terrible eyes. Pyrites, crawling from his blankets to prepare the breakfast, studied the heavens for a minute and then went about his work.

"We'll run into it if we break camp," dubiously remarked Dinsdale from the tent.

"It's lambasting sin out of the pines down there," grunted Pyrites. "It's moving southeast. We won't get any of it. Thunder-storms don't depend on the east wind when they want to act cussed. Thoroughly local, with the wind shifting to every quarter inside of thirty minutes. When it comes from the north it'll turn the rain in winnows



of hail and make your blood almost freeze. Then before you know it the sun will begin poking through the clouds and the wind will be from the southeast and balmy. We'll eat and poke along."

Dinsdale took the hint and turned out. The breakfast was soon eaten and the burros packed. Their course was southerly

and as they advanced the cloud battle raging over Harney's Peak and the surrounding hills receded toward the plains. Dinsdale proposed riding ahead and spying out the land. Pyrites, afoot and leading the burros, warned him not to go too far.

"It's easy to get lost in this broken country," he added. "But there can't be any Injun danger as the reds haven't any heart for scalps when the lightning begins to sing."

Dinsdale went ahead, usually in sight of his companion every few minutes as he surmounted a ridge. For two miles he rode and then reined in and stared thoughtfully at something ahead. Swinging his head about to scan the cover suspiciously he would have been thrown into something of a panic had he not remembered the Indians' fear of thunder-storms. Slipping to the ground and shifting his rifle to his left hand while he drew a hand-gun he approached the object which had caused him to dismount. It was a long feathered arrow, with "lightning marks," or grooves on the short shaft characterizing it as belonging to a Sioux quiver. The head was triangular in shape, made for war. The shaft was of juneberry, tough and flexible, so as not to break did the quarry, whether man or buffalo, fall upon it.

The arrow satisfied Dinsdale that some savage had been stalking their camp and had planned to use the silent shaft in making his kill. The loss of the arrow in what was comparatively open ground suggested panic and flight because of the thunder-storm. Dinsdale waited until Pyrites came up. The prospector examined the arrow and muttered:

"See how that head's fixed on sort of wobbly. Once it's stuck into a man it can't be pulled out. Well, he'll lie low for a spell along of Mr. Lightning. Only one of him, or they'd laid for us with their guns."

Acting on Pyrites's advice Dinsdale continued afoot, walking beside his horse, his revolver ready to resent an ambush. A few miles brought them to the Rapid, which they crossed just below the forks. They shifted their course a bit southeast so as to pass near Elk Buttes and by noon were midway between Rapid and Spring Creeks and on a tiny stream that made south to flow into the latter creek. Pyrites's lust for testing the gravel could not be denied longer, and as their next march would take them up on to the divide, due east, Dinsdale was willing to call it a day's travel.

They unpacked the burros and pitched their tent, and Pyrites fished out his pan, about a foot and a half in diameter, and shoveled some thirty pounds of dirt into it, and hurried to the rivulet. Dinsdale stood and watched him but did not offer to pan any gravel. In truth, his thoughts were back in Deadwood, and Bandy Allen once more was rushing at him with a double-barrel shot-gun. Pyrites exclaimed something under his breath.

"How does it pan out?" asked Dinsdale, with a flicker of interest.

Pyrites stabbed a finger at several minute specks and announced—

"About four or five colors."

"What's that in money?"

Pyrites scratched his head and unwillingly admitted—

"About a fifth of a cent."

"Great Scott! If that's prospecting I'm through. Why, it costs me fifteen cents to fire one of my guns *once!*" cried Dinsdale in high disgust.

Pyrites instantly regained his optimism. "The value of that pan simply proves there's gold everywhere in these hills. This ain't where we was aiming for anyway. I want to work close to the divide and locate a vein."

"That will be more like it," mumbled Dinsdale. "I won't bother to get my pan working till we strike something more promising. If you'll cook a bite to eat I'll look around for a deer or Injun signs."

"Too impatient. You expect too much," growled Pyrites. "Ain't even keen to pan your own dirt. You miss the fun of looking for it. Cards ain't nothing to the gamble of washing out twenty-five pounds of dirt. Every time I fetch gravel to water I'm a millionaire till the pan shows me to be a liar. That's what keeps men at it. *Next* time may make me a millionaire. Greatest game in life to draw cards in. I've found four or five colors. Next pan may show four or five dollars. Take a walk and I'll peg away a few times more. Don't either of us know if you'll find a man of millions, or a three-dollar-a-day man when you come back."

"I wish you luck," said Dinsdale; and tucking his rifle under his arm he walked down the rivulet and was soon out of sight of the camp.

The stream trickled along at the foot of a ridge, the flank of which testified to the deadly work of the lightning. In an area of less than two acres Dinsdale counted a dozen pines split or smashed flat by the bolts. The stream led him into a thicket of hazel, birch and alders, and suddenly discouraged further exploration by diving down into a narrow gorge. Walking in the water he descended a short distance into the gloomy tangle, then turned to go back.

A hornbeam branch clutched his coat sleeve, and as he paused to free himself his attention was attracted to a bit of feather caught on a twig. He secured it and examined it curiously and decided it came from the feather of a golden eagle. But that lover of heights and solitudes would never become enmeshed in a lowly ravine thicket. This conviction was followed by the recollection that the Sioux love dearly to wear such feathers in their hair.

He crouched low in the cover and pulled a belt-gun and darted his glance at the screen now surrounding him. Finally satisfied he was not marked for immediate death he devoted his attention to the moist borders of the stream. Not more than a yard ahead of him and pointing to the left-hand bank was the faint mark of a moccasin. The wearer had been careful to step on a rock but the moccasin had been wet and the moist outline had not had time to dry. An Indian would not enter the thicket and work down into the gorge unless driven by some urgent cause. Did he wish to drink he would have done so on the open bank above the mouth of the gorge. There was no point in a savage penetrating into this secret place unless he had feared discovery and had had no other choice of a hiding-place.

"He worked down in here to get out of my sight," Dindsale told himself. "He worked clear of it and is now up on the flank of the ridge. If he had had a chance to pot me I'd be dead now, but the bushes were too thick for him to throw lead or shoot an arrow. Of course he's waiting for me."

Instead of retracing his steps up-stream he followed the course indicated by the single track, and with an entire absence of his former carelessness his progress became a model of cunning woodcraft. Keeping close to the ground he passed under many of the obstructions, and when vine or creeper caught at his arm or leg he was very patient in releasing himself. On coming to the bank of the gorge he found he must climb some fifteen feet. He waited a minute, seeking to catch some telltale sound. Yet reason told him the Indian would not expect him to find the sign of the moccasin and take this course, and, therefore, would not be waiting to shoot or stab him as he climbed over the top of the bank.

Working carefully, and with a revolver thrust in advance, he reached the top of the bank and again waited. Crawling under the growth for a few yards he reached a point where he could survey the somber desolation of the fire and wind swept slope. He could discover no further signs of the red tracker; and trailing his rifle and with his Colt cocked he glided swiftly to a pine.

He could not tell if the Indian was above or below him, but he feared the former. If the savage realized the excellence of his opportunity he would be maneuvering to catch Pyrites unawares while the prospector was alone and engrossed with his pan. Dinsdale formed his plans rapidly and ascended the slope still farther before turning to move parallel to the stream.

He purposed to make a point considerably above the camp and then descend to it and take the savage from behind were he lurking there. In his anxiety for Pyrites's safety he covered the distance rapidly, and at last could look down on the smoke and catch the motion of Pyrites's figure as he industriously washed the bank gravel.

Dinsdale kneeled behind a tree and sharply scrutinized the bits of cover between him and the tent. The trees were too scattered for even a Sioux to hide among if he would steal close to the camp and not reveal himself to sharp eyes up the ridge. Concluding that the wearer of the golden eagle feathers was not between him and his partner Dinsdale took time to examine the slope above him.

He did not expect to find the Indian in that advantageous position, else he would have had an arrow or a bullet in his back before this. He moved down to another tree and switched his attention toward the stream below the camp. Then he saw him, or rather detected something moving along the base of the ridge and making toward the smoke. It was like a shadow appearing and disappearing, and all so quickly as to leave the fact in doubt.

Dinsdale only made sure when he glimpsed two nodding feathers as the warrior's vanity betrayed him. Dinsdale waited for an opportunity to shoot. The Indian passed so rapidly from tree to tree that more than once the rifle was sighted. Suddenly afraid that Pyrites would come to harm if he delayed longer Dinsdale began descending.

Now the savage vanished for a few moments, then suddenly reappeared several rods up the slope. Dinsdale threw up his rifle and the Indian dived between two prostrate trees, whose dead branches effectually concealed him. Dinsdale was taken by surprize at the celerity of the fellow's evasion. Either the motion of the rifle barrel, or the sunlight glinting on it, gave the warning, for Dinsdale was well concealed by the bole of the tree.

Even now Dinsdale hesitated to give any alarm, for fear the prospector would blunder up the ridge and into a bullet. He peered cautiously from behind the tree and the Indian fired, the heavy bullet smashing the bark three feet too high. Dinsdale returned the fire. Pyrites began calling in a loud voice. Dinsdale tried to warn him to keep away. Their words were merely noises because of the distance. Pyrites slowly made for the slope to investigate, crying out repeatedly.

Dinsdale could spare him only occasional glances as the man in the deadwood demanded all his attention. The Indian, in turn, must have feared he was caught in a trap and was about to be attacked on both sides. That he was desperate and ready to force the issue was believed by Dinsdale when two eagle feathers showed in an opening between the dead branches. Dinsdale aimed six inches below the feathers and all but pulled the trigger. He straightened his finger and darted his gaze back along the covert, for the feathers were strangely stationary.

Pyrites's voice was now pouring forth articulated speech. He was demanding, with nervous profanity, to know what it all meant. Again and again he called Dinsdale by name, to make sure it was he who was hiding up the ridge. And all the time he was breasting the slope and drawing closer to the hidden Indian. Dinsdale detected a slight motion at the farthest end of the ragged barrier and fired. There was a crackling of the dead branches and the threshing about of a wounded man's body. Fearing a trick, Dinsdale fell back to another tree and, as no shot greeted this maneuver, he repeated it and came to a dry gulley. The depression was barely sufficient to conceal him, although he bent double. Down he slid and crawled until he could break cover abreast of Pyrites, who stood bewildered.

"Keep back, Pyrites! I think I've got him, but we'll take no chances."

But now Pyrites seemed to comprehend the situation and began working more rapidly up the ridge.

"Come back! Wait!" yelled Dinsdale as he made after him.

"No redskin scum can bother my camp," bawled back Pyrites. "I've located where he's hid up. We'll dig him out." And he resumed his upward climb.

Dinsdale ran after him and because of superior nimbleness managed to catch up with him when within a hundred feet of the natural breastwork. Pyrites was armed with his old cap and ball revolver and seemed indifferent to the danger of routing out the savage. Keeping to shelter when possible Dinsdale angrily berated his companion for foolishly exposing himself.

"When you're panning for color and find there's rough work to do first then hump yourself and get it over with as quick as possible," stoutly retorted Pyrites. "This red —— is costing me so many pans of dirt, and time is money."

And he boldly advanced to the very edge of the fallen timber. Before Dinsdale could take the lead in investigating, Pyrites had parted the branches and was triumphantly shouting, "You got him fine!"

Dinsdale bent forward and stared in between the two trees. He had expected to find the savage dead, but the man was alive. He was lying on his back, his beady eyes glittering with hate. He was shot through the body and had a piece of wood clutched between his teeth to keep down any betrayal of the pain he must be suffering.

"You made a pretty good shot, seeing you didn't have much to shoot at," said Pyrites admiringly.

"It's horrible!" muttered Dinsdale. "Why couldn't I have done a clean job!"

"That's soon mended," quietly comforted Pyrites; and shoving forward his revolver he shot the wounded buck through the head.

"——! That seems brutal!" gasped Dinsdale, wiping his perspiring face.

"Reckon it would seem more merciful if we left him here to die by inches with the timber wolves dropping in to keep him company," was the sarcastic rejoinder. "When you have something disagreeable to do, go through with it quick."

As he said the last he climbed over the dead tree and picked up the Indian's gun and examined it.

"See! This is why the cuss couldn't give us another shot. Got a cartridge jammed."

"Ugh! Let's get away from here. All right in fighting, but when a man's helpless, even a Sioux——"

"And when a white man's helpless they'll skin him alive. Know how Raw Hide Creek got its name? Injuns caught a poor white —— and skinned him alive," crisply broke in Pyrites. "If I was red and treated a prisoner like I did this scum they'd kick me out of the tribe for having crick water in my veins instead of blood."

"Oh, I know it was the most decent thing to do, Pyrites, and that it couldn't be toned down by any amount of ceremony. But my tummy revolts. Come on."

"Wait a minute. Let's prospect a trifle—Ah!" And he found something under the débris and dangled it before Dinsdale's eyes. "This makes you feel any better?"

It was a non-commissioned officer's blouse with "7 C" on the collar. A hole through the front of the blouse showed the savage was wearing it when shot and had pulled it off to get at the wound. There were other rents in the garment which had been made when the original owner was wearing it. Dinsdale's face hardened.

"I don't feel squirmish any more," he gritted. "He helped wipe out Custer on the Little Big Horn. The owner of that blouse was in the Seventh Cavalry. Bring it along, Pyrites."

"I want to take his hair back to town. The boys do make a lot of fuss over Sioux or Cheyenne hair," said Pyrites.

Dinsdale turned back down the slope. Pyrites overtook him with the scalp fastened to a short stick.

"It'll fetch us good luck," he declared. "When I have time I'll cut a medicine pole and hitch this to it. San Juan will admire to have it in front of his tent."

"It's getting along. There may be others about. This fellow didn't have any bow and arrow, and there was the arrow we found. Let's eat and move on."

"Suits me. Farther we go the nearer we get to a fortune. I've found color ever since you went wandering, but nothing better than day wages. But don't worry about that Injun. If he'd had any friends we'd have heard from him before this. It's my notion he was the same cuss who was prowling around our camp at the peak. When he come gunning for us this afternoon he put aside his bow and arrers. I reckon he was an ambitious young buck who's already counted two or three coups and wanted to get some scalps and win a new war name. I'd have fetched his rifle along, but he never cleaned it. Awful foul—I don't know whether I'll give this hair to San Juan or Keno Frank. San Juan didn't treat me very good when he backed down on the grub-stake. I don't feel San Juan has treated me just right."

"Joe's all right. Let's eat and clear out," impatiently urged Dinsdale.

Pyrites was ready to shift the camp. He did not mind the proximity of the dead Indian, but he was anxious to search for rich paying hill diggings. Eating an early supper the burros were loaded and the two struck to the southeast for a mile and then turned east into a dry water-course and began mounting the divide. In all they did not cover more than two miles before the slanting sun-rays warned them it was time to make camp. Dinsdale left this matter entirely to Pyrites, and the location selected was close by a spring and near a growth of stunted burr-oak. As Pyrites pitched the tent he commented:

"We're below Elk Buttes and about ten miles east of Elkhorn Prairie. I'd like to go over there and put in a few days. Injuns used to make medicine there. They put up a framework of long poles, tepee shape, and filled it with elk skulls. And there's buffalo skulls, painted very gay with blue and red, and laid out in straight rows and circles."

"I'm more interested in the divide ahead than in any grass prairie," said Dinsdale.

"Oh, we'd look over the divide first, now we're within pistol-shot of it."

"Any danger from horse-thieves?"

"Hoss-thieves? Good land! What made you think of hoss-thieves?"

"San Juan Joe was saying they are

supposed to have their headquarters somewhere along the divide between Rapid and Spring Creeks."

"Joey is foolish at times," mumbled Pyrites. "When I'm looking for pay gravel I don't see much else. If I meet a man riding a hoss and leading another I don't hold him up and ask if he's a hoss-thief. I just say, 'Howdy. Nice day,' and push along. I've seen two or three white men leading and driving hosses out here in the hills. I've seen them mighty near Hill City, where no one is supposed to be living. That's a bang-up place for them to hide. But I never ask any questions. Climate out here ain't healthy for curious questions. And I've had white men, well fixed with hossflesh, ask me as polite as pie to stop and eat a snack with them. They didn't bother me and I didn't bother them. So if you don't get curious no one will bother us."

"Don't worry that I'll bother any one if he lets me alone," assured Dinsdale with a laugh. "I was only thinking of my nag."

"They won't touch your nag. You can ride him right into their camp and they won't touch him. Once when I lost a burro they offered to give me a hoss. Not to lie about it I used him for my pack till I was ready to go back to Deadwood. Then I left him on the stage-road. They can be mighty accommodating, or they can be very nasty."

"Stealing horses is tame work beside some other kinds of work," mused Dinsdale.

"Aye? Tame beside robbing stage-coaches, I'll swear."

"Or robbing trains," added Dinsdale.

Pyrites, who was arranging his blankets to the best advantage, glanced up and anxiously requested:

"Let's not have any more outlaw talk. We're honest prospectors. We don't want any truck with unlawful men."

"That's right," heartily agreed Dinsdale. "All I ask is not to be disturbed in my gold-hunting."

THE next morning they breathed a white mist when they crawled from the tent. The foliage dripped water, the tent shed it as if it had been raining. Pyrites wrapped his cap and ball gun in oilskin before bringing it from the tent. Dinsdale was for an immediate departure for a higher level. Pyrites insisted on breakfast and something of an examination of the gulley they had been following.

"This fog will be burned away before ten o'clock," he said. "I'll get some dry wood and after we've had a bite I'll pan around here till the sun comes through. We'd better eat our dinner here, too. Save unpacking an extra time."

"Just as you say. You're the boss," surrendered Dinsdale. "But I've got the gold fever and after we've had coffee I'm going to take my pan and strike out up the ridge."

"You'll get lost sure as apples," remonstrated Pyrites. "No sense in overlooking what's at your feet for what's over the ridge. Take the dirt as it comes, then you won't have bad dreams about passing by something that's rich. You don't know these hills, with their gorges and broken tops."

"I know hills much worse than these. Baked masses of dry cinders with no running water to tell you the lay of the land. This country is simple. All the creeks beginning with the Elk, run into the South Fork of the Cheyenne. At least they start for the Cheyenne. Man can't get lost. Don't be afraid."

"Have it so. Hope you strike a bushel of nuggets. I'll stick along here. You'll be back by noon?"

"Have dinner ready and eat if I don't show up. I may strike something big and forget I'm hungry."

Dinsdale's indifference had vanished and he lost no time in eating breakfast. In fact, so great was his interest that he had not climbed very far up the ridge before he stopped and filled his pan and brought it back to the spring.

"Hill diggings is slow work where you have to fetch to water," condemned Pyrites, yet eying the pan with deep interest. "Only way to handle rich hill gravel is to hydraulic it. Find anything beyond a color or two?"

"Give it a look," invited Dinsdale as he kneeled in the overflow of the spring and tilted his pan.

Pyrites eagerly complied and beheld a residium that fairly glittered with specks of gold. "Pay gravel! Glory be! You've hit it! That pan's worth two dollars if it's worth a cent."

"First blood for me!" proudly cried Dinsdale.

"You're lucky. You'll bring luck to me," babbled Pyrites. "We'll find a fat vein of it. We'll then find a silver ledge. I'm glad you and not San Juan is in with me."

Dinsdale abandoned the pan and suggested:

"Let's eat. Then you try out a few pans and work back and forth on this level while I go higher up. This must have washed down from some rich placer above."

"But you'll miss the signs. You're sure to overlook them. Better stay here and let me go up."

"If I miss anything you can check me up. I'll open up a few holes and if you get tired of this level you can follow me and examine what I've dug up."

This plan pleased Pyrites and the breakfast was soon cooked and eaten. Taking their pans they hurried up the slope to where Dinsdale had made his rich find. Pyrites mumbled under his breath and began to examine the bar. Dinsdale's "good-by" was unheeded. He carried a pick and pan and depended upon his handguns for weapons.

A short distance above his companion he halted and dug down a foot and carefully examined the dirt. Without water he could not determine what he had uncovered, but by rolling some of the dirt between his fingers he was rewarded with a small scale of coarse gold. He was convinced it would pan out even richer than that below. He stuck a branch in the dirt to attract Pyrites's attention and mounted higher. Arriving at a slight depression, thick with short grass and suggesting seepage he industriously accumulated another mound of dirt and again had no trouble in finding several small particles of gold.

"And horse-thieves are losing all this for the sake of running off a few nags," he murmured as he placed another branch.

Digging out samples at short intervals and finding specks of gold in each he used up much of the morning. Pyrites was nowhere in sight. The sun was nearly overhead as he filled his pan from the topmost mound. Instead of hurrying down the ridge, however, he squared his shoulders to get the kinks out of his back and glanced curiously about the panorama of hills and ridges and melancholy woods. Then staring down at the fresh mound he muttered—

"If you were all pure gold, friend dirt, I'd swap you in a second just to know what Jim Omaha looks like; just to know if he has reached Deadwood City yet."

Gray squirrels vied with red in racing through the pines and chattering various bits of gossip about the silent figure. A skunk walked boldly across the grass patch and a timber wolf peeped from the growth and sniffed the air and turned back. A mule-deer, strayed from his feeding on Elkhorn Prairie, crashed along the slope until catching the man-scent, then wheeled and sped silently over his back track. Families of long-tail chickadees boasted and bragged of their food discoveries in the boughs above Dinsdale's head. A white-winged snowbird, fresh from its breeding-place near Harney's Peak, lighted among the chickadees and gave a quick, dull, rolling cry, and its fledglings vanished behind stones and deadwood. It was the persistence of this anxious mother to distract the man's attention from the streaked babies he had not seen that finally aroused Dinsdale from his meditations.

"I won't hurt them, wherever they're hidden," he gravely assured the mother. "And don't take them wandering around so promiscus, little lady."

He mounted the ridge to where it was clear of trees. The sun had conquered the mists and the heavens shone blue. Dinsdale removed his hat and stared out over the ancient medicine-land of the Sioux, of the Crow before the Sioux. To all appearance it was a dead land. No smokes were to be seen, no habitations, no sounds of human voices. And yet there were Indians lurking in the deep gulches and, rumor persisted, there were organized horse-thieves with rendezvous on the divide, while possibly other lone prospectors, like Pyrites, were seeking their fortune in the winding depths below.

Overhead two birds streaked into view, both flying with astounding velocity. For half of Dinsdale's field of vision the one in the lead tried direct flight, then began darting and twisting from side to side, and shooting sharply upward only to drop in a long perpendicular fall. The larger bird seemed to anticipate every move and followed as if one brain were thinking for the two of them. A peregrine falcon and a passenger-pigeon, and the flight and pursuit had commenced over the plains at the

edge of the hills. It would be hard to find anything with wings more difficult to catch than the pigeon. Nothing could be more deadly in pursuit than the falcon.

In circling back the two swooped down close to Dinsdale, the pigeon striving to find cover; but the falcon was too close and the fugitive darted into the open sky once more. A twist and a turn, a swift ascent and a sheer drop for hundreds of feet, and before the pigeon could straighten out on a new course the falcon's feet shot forward and, without losing a stroke, the conqueror was winging away to a neighboring height where it could devour its prey at leisure.

"That's what Jim Omaha is," mused Dinsdale aloud. "They call him a 'blood-hound.' He's a falcon—a duck-hawk. Once he sights his man the race can end only one way."

He left his pan and pick while he reconnoitered the top of the ridge. He reached the crest only to discover another and higher ridge ahead. He descended into the shallow valley between the two and followed it down for a fourth of a mile, proceeding slowly and watchful for Indian signs. He was surprized and keenly interested on turning a wooded bend to behold a long log cabin ahead. Beyond it were half a dozen open sheds and a rough corral. There was no smoke against the blue horizon, and although he waited for several minutes he could detect no signs of life about the place. With a shrug of his shoulders he boldly advanced, telling himself:

"If any one is there he must have seen me. I'm a lost prospector, trying to find old Iron Pyrites."

The cabin door was closed and, what was unusual, blankets were hung over the small windows. These were lacking glass but were partly blocked by strips of timber. He first examined the sheds and corrals. None contained horses.

"They're ready to care for a heap of them when put to it," he thought as he advanced to the door and rapped smartly. As he had expected there was no response. There was a hole for a latchstring but no rawhide thong was visible. He tried the door and felt the bar resist the pressure.

"But they get in some way," he pondered. He stepped back and examined the windows and then returned to the door. Then he smiled at the artful simplicity of it. The hole in the door was never used for the latchstring but merely to discourage a trespasser. At one side of the door and concealed by a strip of hanging bark was the thong. He seized it and tugged sharply. The bar rose inside and the door swung open. For a few moments after crossing the threshold Dinsdale's eyes were baffled by the gloom. He closed the door and waited patiently until his gaze could penetrate to the end of the long room.

Six rough bunks were on each of the side walls. The chimney and fireplace were at the farther end with several kettles and frying-pans. Near the door was a table. This arrangement made it necessary to bring the food the entire length of the room, an unnecessary inconvenience, he decided. He passed down between the bunks and found each had its complement of blankets. Several pairs of boots littered the floor, while considerable harness, old and new, hung from pegs.

Piled in one corner near the fireplace were seven saddles. Four of these did not look as if they had ever been used. The ashes in the fireplace were cold and no fire could have burned there for twenty-four hours. Tip-toeing back to the door he puzzled over the awkward position of the table. His wonderment further increased when he discovered each of the four legs was bolted to the floor. Ironmongery was easily procured in Deadwood City and other hill towns, but why any one should bother to bring iron clamps and screws to this isolated spot and make a rough slab table secure to the floor was a problem that challenged his imagination.

He took hold of the table and lifted. It did not give. He glided to the side farthest from the door and repeated his experiment. With an exclamation he jumped back and the table banged down in place again. He had had this discovery in mind and yet it had startled him. He had lifted a section of the floor along with the table. Returning to the side next to the door he reached across and once more lifted and pulled. The table tipped quite easily. It was bolted to, and effectually concealed, a large trap-door. When he finished the door stood upright at right angles with the floor and the table rested on its side.

Darting to one of the curtained windows he pulled back the covering and briefly surveyed the course he had taken in coming

down the sloping valley. He took the same precaution at a window on the opposite side. No one was in sight in either direction. From the door he looked across to the rocky rim of the lesser ridge. It was covered with pines. To examine the height in the east it would be necessary for him to leave the cabin as there was no window at the chimney end of the cabin. He decided to chance it without completing his reconnaissance.

The owners of the place would be sure to approach from either up or down the valley. Returning to the open trapdoor, he struck a storm-match and held it below the floor. There was a rude cellar formed by a natural depression or hole. It was about six feet deep beneath the opening and had been shaped with a spade on the sides, but the bottom of it seemed to be solid rock. The flare of the match also revealed a hard-tack box filled with packages done up in bagging and blankets. Dropping to the ground beneath he caught up the first package and held it in the faint light streaming through the trap and deftly untied the cord. It contained twenty watches, ranging from a lady's timepiece to a massive gold-repeater.

"Agents have been swapping jewelry for horses, or else one gang is working both branches of the business," he told himself as he carefully retied the package.

The next package, much smaller than the first, held nothing but finger rings. With the exception of several plain bands—wedding rings he called them—the lot was scarcely worth the risk of acquiring them. The third package was rich with gold dust and nuggets. What remained he examined by the sense of touch and by weighing them in his hands. All contained jewelry or nuggets.

Replacing the loot in its box he pursued his quest eagerly but found nothing. He was lifting his hands to catch the edge of the trap when the cabin door banged open. His fingers were yanked back to pull his two revolvers.

The newcomer stopped short on beholding the reclining table. Dinsdale shuffled about and grumbled half aloud.

"That you, Rusty?" demanded the man above.

"Erhuh. Come down here," growled Dinsdale.

Shrilly whistling a strain from "Buffalo Gals" the man walked around the table and unsuspectingly lowered himself through the opening. As his feet touched the ground and as his hands were falling to his side Dinsdale brought the barrel of the heavy Colt down on his head. The fellow collapsed and remained motionless. Dinsdale stepped over the prostrate form and drew himself up through the opening and tipped the trap-door back in place.

"That makes it awkward," he muttered as he stepped to the open door and gazed up and down the valley.

The man's lack of suspicion and his readiness to accept an intruder as a member of the gang indicated that some one known as "Rusty" was expected to be in the cabin; therefore, Rusty must be in the immediate neighborhood and likely to appear at any moment. While it was reassuring to discover no body of men approaching the cabin it was disquieting to observe there were no horses in sight.

The man in the cellar had arrived on foot; and he must have come from the nearby wood or else he would have been seen from one of the two windows before Dinsdale ventured through the trap-door. It was possible that he and his friend Rusty had been together and had separated when near the cabin. This would permit the second man to be in the woods opposite the door.

But Dinsdale dared not wait for number two to show himself, nor did he dare risk a retreat down or up the open valley. He ran to the nearest point of the growth despite the possibility that Rusty might be waiting to receive him. Nor did he breathe freely until he plunged into cover. He followed up the edge of the valley for a short distance and then turned west and crossed the crest of the westernmost ridge and in a long diagonal made for the camp. He struck into his upward course at the point where he had piled the second mound of dirt. Soon he was back at the camp and Pyrites was demanding:

"Where in sin have you been? Hour to sunset and you was to be back for dinner."

"I've been in a long narrow valley between this and the next ridge," wearily replied Dinsdale. "And I had an adventure I never looked for." Forthwith he recited his experience in the cabin and his assault on the man in the cellar.

"Now you've gone and done it!" groaned Pyrites, running to the burros. "Strike that tent and help me pack. Good Lord, of all the bad luck! I panned the dirt you left and it's all pay gravel once it can be hydraulicked. And you have to stick your nose in strangers' business and let them know you done it by belting one of them over the head! Why in sin did you have to go prowling down into that hole? What made you go into that cabin where you must 'a' known you wasn't wanted?"

"Curiosity, I reckon," sighed Dinsdale, turning to help with the packing. "Once I was in I took the best way of getting out. The man I cracked over the head never saw me."

"But if he's come to, or his mates have come along, they'll scatter and soon find this camp," wrathfully deplored Pyrites. "They'll find them heaps of dirt and where we've had a fire."

"That chap won't come to his senses in a minute," assured Dinsdale.

"We ain't got a single minute to lose. If they don't catch us before dark I reckon we'll make it all right."

"Going to give the valley a wide berth and make the divide above or below them?" asked Dinsdale.

"Make the divide nothing!" snorted Pyrites. "We're going to make tracks back to the Rapid and follow it down to Rapid City as fast as we can hoof it. I only hope none of them are in Rapid City to see us come in."

"If my little adventure stops us from prospecting on the divide I don't know as I care how soon we meet them," sullenly retorted Dinsdale.

TO BE CONTINUED

Wrecker Mallow*

by

Kenneth Howell

Author of "Rule of the Sea," "Rum Island," etc.

THE passing of Captain John Mallow from his wide orbit of the China Seas and the shallow waters of the Islands was accepted by a broad circle of friendly acquaintances, mostly traders and adventurers of a similar sort, with much the same sentiment as if it had marked his death. And indeed, to their minds long attuned to the venturesome ease of free-lance trading, of sizable profits following long periods of unremunerative deals and to extraordinary freedom of action, Wrecker Mallow's return to his own country had much of the aspect of death.

They gave him a farewell dinner in

** This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

Singapore and at his right hand, wrapped in a sense of gloom that gradually was communicated to these few rough adventurers of an age that was dying, sat Mallow's partner of yesterday, the huge bodied Frenchman, Jean Cartier, friend long tried, and up to this day, mate of the trading-schooner *Wraith*.

"Why do you go away, Wrecker?" he asked for the twentieth time. "True, the day of our sort is over and that is so all over the world, but here in the East least of all. There is still a living for the *Wraith*."

Old Mallow's eyes glittered savagely.

"Yes, Jean, a living—uncertain charters, filthy cargoes of Chinese fertilizers, vegetables, the rag and tag of sea-dregs. No, by glory, the *Wraith* is not for that! Why, Jean—" his voice dropped as he swung around in his chair and looked straight at the mate—"don't you remember the tight places when we called on her for speed, for stanchness, aye, man, for faith itself, and she never failed; she gave us all she had and it was royally given, by a royal ship. No, she carries no refuse. She fell to my share of what we had, old friend, to you went the dollars."

The Frenchman, rough, vicious, with sensibilities long believed calloused by the grinding necessities of a lifetime on the sea, found his voice breaking queerly as he said:

"You have been a loyal friend, Wrecker, as stanch and true as the ship you command. Good luck to you and the *Wraith*."

From somewhere down the long table came the thud of a heavy fist and there thundered out into the smoke-filled room the doggerel song that lives on; in college drinking-places we hear it, in water-front bars, in the forecastles of ships, wherever men foregather, even to the gloomy shadows of prisons. And Captain Mallow drank deep and with arm around the mate's shoulder joined with the rest—

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here."

Under the riotous layer of song and shouted yarns that were always interrupted, lay a deeper emotion, though unexpressed, a sense of sadness, almost of tragedy, for the little group of untamed men was thinning and John Mallow had carved a niche that they knew would stay empty after he was gone. They liked him for what he was, this American who had been one of them, who had traded with them, and who had freely smashed law after law in the earlier days; who had sailed his cherished *Wraith* where others at the time had not dared follow.

They admired his daring, for they were daring; they approved his caution, for they possessed caution, but more than anything else, they all liked and some envied his record of truth. This had never been clouded. Dutch officials, English, to a lesser extent, Chinese, frowned officially on Captain Mallow, suspected him of every sort of illicit roguery that prevailed in the South Pacific, but personally they liked him. They recognized in him the adventurer, the fortune-hunter, a man defiant of ordinances that could be defied, but they saw in him no drifting ne'er-do-well, no sinister exploiter of the natives of the Islands, no liar, no thief.

"Are you going to Frisco or the East Coast?" asked Cartier.

"Gloucester," said Mallow. "I am going to fish."

And being what they were, neither man saw any absurdity in the distinction that Mallow drew in favor of the *Wraith* when he refused to load Chinese fertilizer and yet would throw her headlong into the fishing-trade.

"You see, Jean, she will still be in the game; out here we have had to race her time after time to her limit, in pinches where speed meant everything, where the closest obedience to her rudder was demanded, where master and mate and crew and ship were welded into one being—" he broke off abruptly, a bit embarrassed at his own vehemence, then finished quietly—"the *Wraith* must be like that, if she is to succeed among the fishing schooners of Gloucester. She will be like that."

"Yes," said the mate, "I think she will."

"Hi there, Wrecker, you and Frenchy lay off that girlish secrecy! Give some attention to your hosts, altogether now, boys—

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here."

Just before dawn the company left the table. One by one they wrung the hand of Wrecker Mallow. Jean Cartier said good-by at the door of the hotel.

"You leave before noon?"

"Yes; you will see me off?"

"No," said the mate, "I can not. It's a heavy blow, Wrecker; good-by, partner. Good luck."

He shook hands and swinging on his heel, walked quickly away into the lingering shadows of the night that had gone. John Mallow stared after him, stood there staring, long after the big Frenchman was out of sight, then sighed and walked down the street toward the water-front. Now that the final preparations had been made, his bridges burned, he was impatient to be off, a half-hour delay seemed intolerable.

As he strode about the yellow planked decks of the *Wraith* he appeared vigorous as a man of forty, and he had just passed his sixtieth birthday. To his disgust, some customs people came on board and ordered an inspection which lasted long past the scheduled hour of sailing. He writhed at the unnecessary waste of a fair breeze, and his face was drawn and set that night as he steered the schooner from the outer roadstead.

It seemed to him that now for the first time, out of many beginnings of many voyages, the *Wraith* failed him. Not in any slackening of response to his demands, in speed or in steadiness, but more as if she were dull in spirit, apprehensive of the harsher life toward which she was laying her course, reluctant to leave the eastern waters she knew so well.

The flare of a match at the bowl of a briar pipe momentarily illumined the face of Wrecker Mallow and the seaman on watch noted with distaste the grim, almost sullen expression. The sailor scowled in the dark. Much can be read of the probable comfort of a voyage in the countenance of a white commander.

"Extraordinary how this breeze is freshening," said the captain to the mate who had come on deck to relieve him. "Most unusual, I never saw anything like it before, right here. A clear night too."

He glanced sharply at this new officer he had picked up in Singapore. He was one of those drifting nondescript men from the beach, age indeterminate, plans, if he had any, mysteriously veiled, probably of average ability, reticent, vaguely hostile, morosely silent. He made no answer.

Mallow thrust his face close to the other, and the mate flinched at the snarling lips and the vicious glint in the old man's eye.

"See here, Mr. Mate, I've had your sort before; I know the breed." He raised his gnarled fist slowly to the level of the mate's startled eyes, then shook it twice and let it drop back to his side.

"It's a clear night too, I said," he repeated quietly.

"It is, sir," said the mate.

Far off on the starboard quarter, the deep, faint mutter of a steamer's whistle told of an incoming liner. In less than half an hour she passed the *Wraith* like a long cylinder of light. The passengers on her decks, tempted by the beauty of the night, its hush, its fresh breeze after a day of prostrating heat, strolled slowly around or lounged in chairs, looking out over the dark surface of the sea.

A brilliant moon sinking in the western sky traced on the restless waters a speckled path of silver straight from the distant horizon to the side of the ship. Like the beam of a gigantic searchlight it swept on with the steamer, ever claiming a new path, relinquishing the old, and suddenly the passengers saw a schooner, black against the streak of moonlight that had overtaken her. Just a moment she stayed in the light, close-hauled, beautiful, infinitely tragic in her loneliness, then she was gone, lost in the darkness, wrapped in the unfathomable mystery of the sea.

On the liner's bridge the junior officer on watch, age twenty, remarked to the man at the wheel:

"—— these native craft—poor lights—no whistle—all hands asleep."

"Aye, sir," said the man and grinned in the darkness.

Late that night in the forecastle he roared at his chum:

"Wot the —— do you know abart that? A neytive craft! S'elp me, 'Enery, she was a —— Yank!"

ONE day, ten years later, weary years, unlucky years for Captain Mallow, years of steady down-hill going, the old man fought his way against a raw March wind that howled through the narrow by-streets of lower New York. He was wearing a felt hat pulled low about his ears and a worn overcoat of some rough material. He was without gloves. With a sick sense of doubt, almost of panic, the Wrecker paused for a moment at a green door with a pane of translucent glass set in the frame. This was a new place for him. Men of his age rarely went to the same place twice. There was little use.

He stood with one foot on the half-step

of gray flag-stone, peering at the dirty window, whipping his tired heart to take the burden that he knew must be taken now, courageously taken, as it had been five times in the last five years. Each time it was harder, more cruel, more deadening to mind and body. His lips came together in a thin straight line.

"What am I waiting for?" he muttered. "It has to come." The green door swung closed behind him.

A few of the men in the dingy room looked up as Mallow came in, then turned away without interest. Apparently deep in newspapers, they sprawled on spindly benches that lay about in all directions. From time to time they glanced at a battered door that gave through a thin partition into the inner office of Lindstrom & Reinesten's shipping agency. They heard a low-pitched conclusion of a long telephone conversation and then the rasping scrape of a chair pushed back. The door swung open, and the genial Reinesten smiled from the doorway.

"The *Hyacinth* is in. She wants two firemen, a water-tender, three oilers, six seamen, a boatswain——"

"Good ——, Reiny," said a grinning sailor, "tell us what she don't want. She must be a real nice wagon!"

"Well," said Reinesten, "the captain is staying with her. Honest, boys, she's not so bad. Bound to Buenos Aires. Come now, sing out, who wants her?"

He looked first at the younger sailors and firemen. They were again at their newspapers, confident in their youth, sure of a better ship; then the shipping agent smiled in grim understanding as four old men came slowly forward.

"That's the way," he said mechanically, "it takes the old-timers to know a good thing when they see it. The youngsters——" he broke off in disgust.

The boys in the room hooted derisively. The four old men filed soberly into the inner office. Hastily the names and ratings were given and the last to write his name as ordinary seaman, signed "John Mallow" and gave his age as forty-seven. Lindstrom, a hard man in a hard trade, looked sharply at him.

"You're past seventy," he growled. "Why don't you go to a home? The fo'csle is no place for you. I don't care to send you to the ship."

Mallow's eyes darkened.

"To —— with your home!" he cried. "I'm shipping to sea!"

"Keep cool, keep cool," said Lindstrom.

He glanced doubtfully at his partner. Reinesten nodded.

"All right," said Lindstrom, "go to it, good luck."

When the partners were alone Reinesten said—

"It's O. K., Lars, you never owed the *Hyacinth* anything."

The telephone interrupted him. He talked for a few minutes, then pushed open the door. The men on the benches looked up.

"The *City of Galveston* is docking. A good berth. She wants a fireman, two seamen. Come now, speak up, who wants her?"

THE *Hyacinth* was well off the Carolinas far out to sea on her southerly course before Mallow fought clear of the deep depression, the sense of bewilderment that always overwhelmed him on these forced runs to sea. Every hour in the day, every task, every meal, carried its own vicious bit of humiliation. Then at night as he lay in his bunk, the aching weariness of his body came to add its toll, for the routine work which was comparatively easy for younger sailors, left the old adventurer strained to his limit. The officers were never brutal, in fact they were considerate, but the watches had to be stood and the ship's work done.

"Why did you ship ordinary?" asked the third mate one night as Mallow came panting up on the bridge with the reading of the patent log. "You are an old-timer. Any one can see it by the way you do your work. Why don't you take out an A. B.'s ticket? You are a smarter seaman than the crew we have."

"Able seamen have to climb, sir, I am too stiff for that."

"Hum," said the friendly third, "it's a bad piece of business, I mean for a man of your age going to sea at all. How old are you?" he asked abruptly.

The Wrecker's eyes narrowed and his lips set grimly, then in the dim light of the star-strewn sky he stared at the clear young face of the third officer and written on it for a sailor to read, was the gift of friendliness, not curiosity, not condescension, just friendliness.

"I am seventy years old," said Mallow simply.

The mate whistled.

"What the —— are you doing at sea? Surely you could find an easier berth than the focs'le—watchman—and there are homes," he said gently.

"I am fighting to keep out of a home," whispered Mallow. "As for a shore billet, watchman, idler, ——, man I'm a sailor; I've always commanded my own ship. I've never hit the beach and I never will," he added fiercely. "Oh, I've nothing to whine about, I ship out three or four months a year and the pay supports me for the rest of the time and keeps my ship well found and in repair."

"Keeps your what in repair?"

"My home, I should say, but then you see it is my ship as well—my last command. Eight years ago I beached her. She lies in shallow water in a cove on the Connecticut shore of the Sound. Her cabin, her passage-ways, her after-decks, are as clean as the—" He broke off. "I guess this old man's chatter is tiresome to you, Mr. Clark, but it's been so long since I have talked or found any one to listen that I have let myself go for fair."

The mate swore softly.

"Go on," he said.

"There is nothing more sir, just that I get lonely; you see I don't fit into the focs'le. There is not much to my life. On my *Wraith* I live quietly. My wants are few and easily satisfied. For company, perhaps twice a year some casual seafaring acquaintance comes on board for a dinner. Then hidden in the pantry is my one treasure." He smiled up at the tall youngster. "Wine that is priceless—two bottles from the East. You might call them my toys of second childhood. I take pleasure in handling them. But some day I hope to drink it—with an old partner of mine—a Frenchman, Jean Cartier, have you ever come across him? I always ask, but no one ever can tell me anything."

The third mate moved over to the wheel. He spoke harshly to the helmsman who looked up in surprize. Then the boy came back to Mallow.

"No," he said. "I can tell you nothing. You had better turn in. Here comes your relief."

He watched the old man walk to the ladder that dropped from the wing of the bridge to the well-deck below. Impulsively he stepped to the rail and leaned down till his face was close to the Wrecker's.

"Good night, Captain Mallow," he whispered. And he heard a low answer.

"Good night, Mr. Clark." And the tone was of a shipmaster speaking to his mate.

"—— it, Larsen, you're off your course," he snarled to the man at the wheel.

Straining, quivering, wheezing harshly in her great age, the *Hyacinth* rolled on toward the Southern Cross. The sullen gray of northern waters changed to the deep blue of tropical seas and day followed day, each outdoing the other in softness of air and brilliance of color. But neither starry nights nor sunny days were reflected in the somber routine of this old ship. The elderly crew did their work thoroughly, without much grumbling, without enthusiasm. Their watches below were spent for the most part in reading—a tattered copy of Robert Burns passed from man to man, appeared to give great satisfaction.

Often at sunset in the red glare from the western sky the Wrecker, alone, lounged over the stern rail, staring dully aft at the ship's wake, a shining white path in startling contrast to the blood-red waters. He stared, unseeing, wearied of it all, discouraged, and in the warmth of the evening, the old seaman shivered, for suddenly in the vanishing foam of the wake, he saw the purposeless drift of the fleeting years.

WHEN Mallow was paid off on the return of the *Hyacinth* to New York, he knew that he had shipped out for the last time. He could never do it again. He was through. All the way up to the Connecticut village he sat hunched in the smoking-car, thinking quietly. Late newspapers, the unfailing enjoyment of deep-water men back from a long voyage, lay unheeded on his lap.

At Melton he got stiffly from the train and following his custom stopped to speak to the agent. Without giving any thought to it, he had come to look on the man's "Back again, captain; the *Wraith* will show lights now," as a welcome. There was none other for him until he would reach the dark hull. There the old schooner would have her own welcome for him, a plaintive sort of greeting, as if she in her isolation reached out to her old commander.

With the lighting of the lamps the captain

invariably hurried into the pantry and from the dark locker took out the two bottles of precious wine. Yes, these were the marks of his home-comings, the greeting of the station agent, the silent companionship of this shell of a living ship, the glittering sparkle of the mellowed wine.

He stood now at the window of the ticket office leaning across the stained counter to talk with the man inside.

"You say some man asked here for me yesterday and then went on to the *Wraith?* That seems queer."

"Well, he asked 'bout a million questions. Wouldn't answer most o' mine though. Said he know'd you well. Big ugly-lookin' guy. Said he'd got on your track somehow; know'd you was in port. He's comin' out to the ship to eat supper with you tomorrer night. Blamed if I ain't fergot his name."

The agent ran stumpy fingers through lank matted hair, spat reflectively, then said casually—

"I b'lieve it was Barker—no, somethin' like that—um, um, Carter, yes that's it, Carter."

The glare of the incandescent lamp fell squarely on the old seaman's face, as it was pressed hard against the brass bars of the window. His voice reached the agent in a strained whisper:

"Carter—was it Cartier? Think, man; was it Cartier, Jean Cartier, a Frenchman, with a beard?"

The agent slapped his knee loudly.

"Yes, that was it, Carteer. A queer name—I thought—" His voice dropped with his jaw as he saw he was alone.

All the long way to the *Wraith,* in John Mallow's heart, over and over again came great surges of happiness, happiness such as he had never expected could again come into his empty life. The big mate was coming home, Big Jean!

For once, on this return the Wrecker had no thought of his wine, no time to go about lighting lamps, he just wanted to sit in the main cabin and realize things. One light was enough and as he sat there, his thoughts plunged at once into the past, down the long vista of dreams that had drifted away, back through the years of loss and failure, back of them all to the splendor of the South Seas, when he and his partner and the schooner had fought as one.

The dim light from the single oil lamp high in its bulkhead bracket seemed lost in the gloom of the cabin and yet the cabin was no larger than such rooms run in small schooners. And the *Wraith* was small. So much her seventy-year-old owner admitted, but that was as far as his admission went. Beyond this, admitting became contending and fiercely did the old sea-rover maintain to himself the former glory of the black-hulled *Wraith*—the *Wraith* that he had commanded in the inter-island trade of the South Pacific, the *Wraith* that had never failed him, the *Wraith* that represented the material gain of a lifetime's struggle on the sea.

In the tired eyes of the captain she was still the swift schooner of the wild island nights, those nights when obedient to his lightest touch on the wheel, almost it seemed, to his very thought, she would creep silently into some remote shallow bay where she had no right to put in, and there quietly riding at anchor, wait for the return of Wrecker Mallow.

In the blackness the big French mate would pace the narrow deck, staring uneasily over the dark water, trying to make out the darker shore-line, from sheer nervousness swearing viciously in his beard.

A vague mass slightly blacker than the night would come swiftly out from the haze of the distant shore and reveal itself a ship's boat to the silent watchers at the rail of the silent schooner. The flash of an oar blade wetly shining in the fantom gleam of a few straggling stars would show close to the ship. Then as if the sea itself had spoken, would come a low muffled hail and over the side, grim, daring, cautious, would come the gaunt figure of Captain John Mallow. Quickly the captain would go below, straight to his cabin.

Again on deck he would give a few brief commands and in the light air the *Wraith* would head out to open water, gliding easily over the smooth surface of the sea, leaving a faint wake of seething white which stretched in a wide half-circle to the dark shadows of the fading coast. Captain Mallow at the wheel would whisper to the Frenchman—

"It's all right, Jean, the pearls are small, but they are quality."

And the mate would answer—

"Good, my partner, it is a splendid trip."

Mallow shifted in his chair, started to get to his feet and then as if powerless to vanquish the thoughts of old times, again

slumped low in the leather cushion. The light from the bracket lamp feebly illuminated the thin, worn head. Great bushy eyebrows, white as the heavy thatch of hair that crowned the haggard face, veiled lusterless brown eyes, that seemed to look out on the living world as from the soul of a man dead to the present, existing only in the years that had faded.

An hour passed, ticked faithfully off by the brass ship's clock and still the man dreamed on. A mellow stroke like a chime roused the old adventurer. He stood a moment by the table as if weighed down with heavier stuff than years, then walked slowly through an inner door that opened directly into his sleeping-room.

He took off his coat and with sleeves rolled up to the elbow washed face and hands. The oblong mirror, screwed fast to the wall above the dark teak dresser, reflected a face that was uncommon, striking, not so much in the characteristics it displayed, as in the intensity of its betrayal of the captain's passing moods. And the dominant expression was not sadness, nor bitterness, nor despair.

All these things were there but as background, for before them all, overshadowing every other mood, was complete unutterable loneliness, the loneliness of years, the indelible stamp of isolation.

He undressed slowly and got into pajamas and then lay stretched out on the bunk with his thin arms pillowing the back of his head. Tomorrow Jean was coming back to him—was going to step out from the shadow of the years that had gone, as an actor in a dimly lighted scene suddenly appears from up-stage, mysterious, faintly seen, not to be believed. What had the years done to the mate? Was he old now like the Wrecker, beaten, done with life? Or had he gone on to success, to a command, to ship owning?

How the Frenchman would enjoy success! The food, the luxuries, the wine! Aye, yes, the wine. Captain Mallow sat bolt upright. Then he got out of bed. He groped his way through the saloon, down the passage and into the pantry. He opened the locker door and reached in for the two bottles. Safe! He lifted them out one at a time; then satisfied, replaced them in the locker and returned to bed.

Wrecker Mallow awoke early, just after the morning sun had flung its first bright rays through the heavy mist that hovered low over the shallow waters. As her owner and one time commander stood on the companion stairs, the *Wraith* seemed more than ever a ghost-ship. Curling tendrils of mistral floated about her dismantled top-side, but for all the effect of the fog and the derelict ship and the ever-present sense of failure in the old man's mind, there was a song in his heart now, and from his lips came a quavering illusive sound, a fantom of the mighty choruses he had heard his own men roar out, back in the days when he had ruled the destinies of living ships.

"Bound down to Rio de Janeiro."

And as he sang, he began to work. Soap-powder, scrubber, squeegee. All the long hot forenoon he scraped and cleaned and polished. With the work came surging over him new strength, fresh energy, happiness, for this was the day his old sea-partner was to board the *Wraith*, was to have an old-time dinner in the cabin, and life was good to give one late favor to a man who had not found it generous of its favors.

At five Captain Mallow left a deck which at least from the sea ladder aft was clean and fit for a seaman's eye. He went below to the pantry and from a locker brought out several lamps which he placed about in the passageway. He opened a door which creaked from long disuse and stumbled into the stateroom that had belonged to the mate. The captain peered around in the gloom, for the light in the passage came very faintly through the open door.

He went out and returned with a brass lamp which he set in its bracket above the dresser. Then came clean linen on the bed, hand-towels on the rack, water in the pitcher; all these things he accomplished, thoroughly, with the painstaking care that is only given where the heart is given. When the room was made up, Mallow went into the saloon and set the table for two.

What an excitement it was to lay out two places where one had forlornly held through so many years! To place smooth soft linen on the dark table and then to arrange the service of heavy silver plate! All of a sudden to leap back to what had gone, as if these small details, these niceties of the sea life he had known, had suddenly bridged at a single bound, the chasm of years. Captain Mallow smiled as he looked at the table brightly lighted, with its dull reflection thrown

back from the somber panels of the cabin.

He sat down on the bench that, built into the bulkhead, followed three sides of this comfortable sea dining-room, and there sat smoking in tranquil expectancy. In the dusk beyond the fringe of light, for all his sudden happiness, he looked old, worn, a shadow of the adventurer who had sailed the *Wraith* in the years the black-hulled schooner was known throughout the island seas of the South Pacific; a familiar sight boldly sailing into the least frequented ports of the East, a dark romantic mystery as at long intervals she would enter the great roadsteads of those eastern waters.

A few minutes before seven came a deep booming voice which brought the captain to his feet. From somewhere on shore came the remembered hail—

"On board the *Wraith!*"

Then the sound of a creaking sea-ladder and the two men met on deck. The gray-bearded gigantic mate crushed his old commander in mighty arms—he laughed, he wept, he prayed, he cursed, in a breath, all at once, for he was again in the old mad days and he was French. Before going below, the two friends stood for a moment by the useless wheel that once had been a part of their long night watches. They looked out from the stern over the level surface of dark water and it seemed to Mallow that the *Wraith* was living again.

The other sent a long, slow look across the Sound, dark except for the broad path of silver that stretched from a rising moon straight to the black hull of the schooner. The first flush of Cartier's happiness paled, for as he stared he saw one shadow over all. It covered his old commander on the deck of this fantom ship; it covered the ship and it spread out over the dreary expanse of this dead back-water. He shivered, for it seemed that the shadow was death.

And yet the dinner in the cheerful little cabin sent his spirits soaring and this laughing shipmaster opposite him gave little suggestion of age and decay. His eyes were too bright, his laugh too ringing for that.

A light wine was on the table and the mate wondered a bit as he remembered the heavier taste of Captain Mallow and the nights of song they had held in this selfsame cuddy, yes, by Harry, at this very table! And those wild nights had stayed in his memory bright spots in the long years of toil and risk. In jest the partners called them banquets of state, and always held them by way of celebrating the success of some especially hazardous voyage.

Neither man was a heavy drinker but after months at sea, Captain Mallow would proclaim a banquet of state to be held in the saloon of the *Wraith*, and always the sitting was late and riotous. So now through the dinner as the mild wine was sipped, the mate wondered.

When the cigars were brought out at the end of the meal, Captain Mallow bade Cartier sit still while he cleared the table of dishes and cloth. The mate sat back in his chair and watched his friend's face brighten, suddenly grow mysterious.

"Roguish, that's the word," he thought.

His curiosity deepened as the old man left the cabin. He came back in less than a minute, breathing heavily, lugging two nickeled buckets of unusual size. Cartier grinned as he saw snugly packed in their beds of ice, two great bottles, each larger than a quart, something less than a magnum. The years were swept away as the captain dropped the buckets on the floor, one beside each chair.

"From Paul's Wine Shop?"

"Paul himself gave it to me—forty years ago," said the captain reverently.

In silence the wine was poured and then Jean Cartier looked across the table at his friend. The gleam of the lamp fell full on the Wrecker's face as he stood with glass raised high. The yellow wine shone through, sparkling, translucent, and in turn the mate's glass sent its shafts of shattered brilliance into the corners of the cabin.

"To the *Wraith!*" cried Wrecker Mallow. "Bottoms up!"

He drank slowly and Cartier saw in his face the instantaneous effect of the aged wine, the satisfaction it gave, the glow it induced. And at the same instant as he tilted his own glass, doubt, bewilderment, almost a sense of dread, came over him. What was this insipid drink? Some sort of a beverage, by Harry! Yet there was the captain tingling to its biting strength. In a flash, as he drank, the mate conquered the impulse to spit out the drink and sensing something wrong, smiled and reached down at his side for the bottle. He was French.

"Ah," he thought, "I wonder what chance acquaintance visiting the Wrecker has done this thing? Sneaked back some night perhaps and stolen the most cherished

possession! What a rotten thief! The dog! And yet, yet, with all the shame of it, he left one bottle untouched. And refilled the other with something so that the old man could still believe in his treasure. Hum, it is queer, this world; I could find it in my heart to love that beast who stole from his host, for the manner of his stealing. Oh the blessed luck that gave the Wrecker the right bottle this night!"

"Jean," said Mallow, "I have saved this wine for some big moment that was to come in my life, somewhere, sometime, but up to this night it never came. Not a night have I spent aboard the *Wraith*, that I did not look to see that these bottles were safe. Without friends I have lived, without much pleasure in books, without the comfort that religion brings to those who can believe; yes, I have lived alone, I, the *Wraith*, and my two bottles from Paul's Wine Shop. Somehow in the years, we three, wine, ship and master, have grown into each other, and now tonight I am very happy, for here I am on my ship, here is my wine and here is my old partner of the sea. Drink up."

And Cartier, the big Frenchman, rough in his pleasures, brutal in his ventures, drank as if he enjoyed it, drank with pretended craving, drank with the delicacy of his race, lest his friend discover the cheat and lose the joy of this reunion. As the Wrecker drank, the years slipped away, for the wine was magic and drink for drink the mate kept with him while song for song he thundered out and his great fists flailed about.

"D'you remember the night we put in at Singapore with a belt full of pearls?" asked the captain excitedly.

"Yes, and I remember too the week later when we lost every dollar to that wretched Chinese trader—with his confounded wrecking scheme—if I'd ever have laid hands on him—you know that's where you got your name."

"A kid of a British mate, the junior on an India boat, with the down still on his cheeks! His impudence knocked me flat. For I wasn't exactly the man to choose for a—well to poke fun at you know."

"No, Wrecker, you were not."

"Drink up," said Mallow, "we'll have another bit o' song."

The night wore on; slowly the bottles were emptied and the Wrecker's wild mood passed into a cheery sense of content, as if this was not a night to make the most of riotously, but one to enjoy in the thought that more were to come. Something of this he put into words and what was left out the mate supplied for himself. Into Cartier's mind flashed the vision of a future trail no longer adventurous, no longer complex, just a simple voyage to the end, and the course would not be lonesome, for there were two men to take the wheel.

Midnight came, eight bells, and the little cabin clock roused the men. With a laugh Cartier pointed at the empty bottles.

"Dead men," he said. "Here, take my arm; steady now, Wrecker."

Arm in arm they walked from the saloon and said good night in the passage.

"Like old times," muttered the mate when he was in his own stateroom. "Where can you find better than the sea and the ships that sail on it? And the men?"

Jean Cartier woke later from a sound sleep, lying for a while in that half-awake borderland of dreams. He felt as if he were dreaming and at the same time something real kept calling. Then he was wide awake and his heart jumped queerly and then—he was on the companion ladder with his vast shoulders above the level of the deck.

A great yellow moon poured a flood of gold over the old schooner, mending the broken symmetry of her lines, mellowing her decks in a quilt of light that filtered in patchwork through the trees on the bank. Fore and aft she was again the *Wraith* of the South Seas, ghostly, illusive, a thing of life, of breath, of beauty under these northern stars. With one glance Jean drank it all in and then as he stared at the wheel, his eyes grew misty and his voice trembled.

"Oh, Wrecker, come little man."

But the dim gaunt shape at the wheel still clung to the rotting spokes and from his lips came the old command—

"Let go the anchor, Mr. Cartier; then lay aft to swing out the boat!"

Jean flung an arm about his shoulders.

"Come, Wrecker," he whispered. "The *Wraith* has made her landfall. Come, lad, it's your watch below."

And as the Wrecker followed him, into the big heart of the mate came a rush of happiness, for he thought of his savings gleaned from the sea, and he thought of what they would mean for him and for the old partner he had found—his old fighting mate—Captain Mallow—Wrecker Mallow —Mallow of the China Coast.

The Fight for the Cave

By Prosper Buranelli

IN THE YEAR OF 20,000 B. C. LEAN AK FELL IN LOVE WITH THE SIX DAUGHTERS OF UFU THE GREAT

EXCITEMENT was stirring among several score of tall, heavy, reindeerskin-clad men who were gathered about the hillside mouth of a cave. They were armed with bows and arrows, fire-hardened spears, stone-headed hatchets, flint knives and great wooden bludgeons, and they kept a rude martial array, in which every man held a weapon ready for use.

Somewhat in advance of the tribesmen stood a figure clad in more wraps than a commoner wore—it was the renowned chieftain-magician, Ufu the Great. Uttering occasional comment in a harsh tongue, the tribal leader gazed down the near bank of the broad river that flowed through the valley. Strangers were expected.

A man belonging to the cave had run in with the tidings that he and several other tribesmen, having wandered some distance down the river, had come upon a score of men, almost as many women and several children lying asleep near a dying fire. The men of the cave had stood off and sounded the call of welcome. The chief of the sleepers had awakened and returned the friendly cry. The strangers all aroused, there had been a parley. The man from the cave had bidden the unknown people to repair to the grotto and account for themselves to Ufu the Great. The chief of the newcomers had replied pacifically, and a runner had been sent in advance to give notice of the visitors' coming.

Ufu the Great sounded the high, wavering welcome cry as a group of men came in sight over an eminence that rose beside the river. The call was returned by the chief of the approaching strangers, and soon the party had arrived at the base of the ascent which led to the cave. There the women and children were left behind, while Lean Ak, the visitor's leader advanced, backed by his men, to confer with the mighty Ufu.

As the tribal headmen met, each drew his flint knife and presented it to the other in pledge of amity. The ceremony was conducted with taciturn dignity, whereupon Ufu the Great addressed Lean Ak with the customary invitation into the cave.

"It is cold," said the chieftain-magician hospitably.

"Your cave is warmer than fire," responded Lean Ak in the terms of conventional courtesy.

Before entering the cave each chief availed himself of an interval of outdoor light to inspect the tribe of the other. The men of the two clans stood in contrast. The followers of Ufu were of massive proportions all. Lean Ak's tribesmen,

while as tall as their hosts, were absurdly thin and of hungry aspect.

Inside the cave fresh logs had been fed the blaze on the hearth by the enormously fat women. The two leaders entered; their tribesmen followed; last of all came the strangers' women, these as lank as their men. Ufu the Great and Lean Ak took their places nearest the fire, and squatted on their heels, while the six daughters of Ufu brought them substantial morsels of food.

The six daughters gazed in astonishment and admiration upon the stranger. Lean Ak was thin, as his name betokened; his broad countenance bore a severe and heroic cast, and was painted carefully and beautifully with vermilion stripes, very different from the curved jowls and gaudy facial decoration that marked Ufu the Great as a man of comfort.

And as the six young women bearing gifts stood revealed by the firelight, their reindeer-skin-garbed figures displaying the usual obesity of cave women, Lean Ak's earnest eyes encompassed them, and grew fixed and somber. And abiding desire took hold of him. The six daughters of Ufu the Great had come before the lank chieftain in one of the deep hours of his life, when ardor filled the man and new forces were throbbing in him.

For a number of years game had been extremely scarce over a wide region. Hunters went about counting their bones. They were reduced to the chase of small rodents, to the digging of roots and the picking of sparse fruits—humiliating for men who had, themselves and their fathers before them, baited the mammoth, the aurochs, the bison, the woolly rhinoceros.

Lean Ak, despairing finally of the bounty of his native valley, had led his small tribe from the cave that had been their home for generations, and sought a game-filled land. They had wandered for many seasons, seasons as hungry as those from which they had fled—for nowhere did they find the hunter's Elysium. But they did, one early morning, come upon a feast for a day.

They sighted two stags engaged in a rutting-season fight. The cow grazing near by fled as she scented the hunters, who had fallen to stalking the game; but the maddened bucks continued lunging at each other.

Then one of the animals went to its knees, wounded by its adversary's antler. The victor stood in triumph for a moment—for a moment too long. A score of hard-driven arrows half-buried themselves in its side. The beast darted away, but weakened rapidly, so that the pursuing hunters came up and dispatched their prey with spear and stone hatchet. The other stag, though wounded, had fought off the men who attacked it and had escaped.

The one carcass, though, afforded a feast. Great slices of flesh were grilled over a fire, and Lean Ak and his people gorged themselves on roast stag-meat until the torpidity of overeating had stretched them on the ground in a heavy stupor. It was hours later that they were found by the several tribesmen of Ufu the Great.

Lean Ak had no wife. In happier days he had had several spouses; but they had died of the hardships of the famine years, and he had made no effort to replace them; hunger is a jealous god and tolerates few ideas in the human head save how to secure food.

But now he was full of the strong, racy flesh of the stag, was intoxicated with the juices of animal food, and warmed by the heat of the crackling fire. He breathed deep with a long unfamiliar feeling of power; his vitals were hot; his brain was consumed with restlessness as he looked upon the six daughters of Ufu the Great.

A vision came. The chief of the vagrant hunters saw himself, with the six daughters as his wives, domiciled in a snug cave, on the plains around which roamed herds and herds of noble game. And they would have sons, a score of them. And he would teach his sons how to hunt. And he would be happy.

He remained dreaming while Ufu the Great munched his food and found no need of words. Then Lean Ak propounded a question that sent a thrill through the bodies of the six daughters who had seated themselves near the two leaders. Was the great magician willing to sell his daughters?

"How much?" grunted the fat chief in reply.

Here was a difficulty. Lean Ak, leader of a poor hunting-tribe, owned no wealth of weapons and implements of flint and of

bone, or of animal hides for clothing, or of the red ocher earth for face-painting and the encrusting of the dead, or of the small sea-shells that were prized as jewels.

What had he to offer for six young women, who, he was told, were skilful in the fabrication of garments? He could think of nothing save the services of himself and his band.

But Lean Ak was himself a great chief, and the idea of obedience to another galled him. There was no certainty, either, that Ufu the Great would accept anything save valuable merchandise for his six daughters; it seemed probable to Lean Ak that he would not. In default of any purchase but one thing remained—to take the women by force.

The usual slowness of speech of cave people allowed Lean Ak an interval of silence in which to meditate upon his dilemma. He directed an appraising glance upon the tribesmen of the cave. The commoners of both clans were squatted in a half-circle around their leaders; the men nearest, and behind them, enjoying the outer circle of the fire's warmth, the women and children.

Lean Ak had not failed to observe, when first he had met with the followers of Ufu the Great, that they were great, hulking fellows, a little fat perhaps—but that added to their impressiveness in the eyes of a gaunt starveling. Now, in the red glare of the fire, the several score of huge men of the cave, who hid in their midst the fewer and less bulky men of the wandering tribe, seemed immensely formidable.

Ufu the Great leaned toward the fire and moaned gratefully at the warmth, but Lean Ak wrestled so long with his problem that at last the placid chieftain-magician marveled.

"How much?" he repeated emphatically.

"I and my men until the cold has come three times," replied Lean Ak reluctantly.

He made the proposal of three years' service half in the hope that Ufu the Great would not accept it, in which contingency the hunting-chief would utter defiance and depart with his men—he could not make a surprize attack then and there, having pledged amity to Ufu the Great. He would return leading a desperate raid upon the cave.

Ufu the Great meditated long. At last he said—

"You and your men until the cold has come four times."

"Four times," repeated Lean Ak in astonished assent.

He could not understand why Ufu the Great should want to exchange six choice women for the service of the vagrant hunting-band, but it did not seem a seasonable time for inquisitive prying. So the compact was closed, a compact which led to stirring events in that valley.

TROUBLE WAS INEVITABLE THROUGH ONE OF THE GREAT QUESTIONS OF THE AGE

THE tall, broad-faced Cro-Magnon race had lorded over the chilly plains of Europe for half a dozen milleniums, had fought with and held their own against other races that intruded from the human reservoir in Asia, had hunted the great beasts of the glacial age in heroic fashion, had decorated the walls of their cave dwellings with masterful drawings and paintings of the animals they preyed upon, and in every manner had demonstrated themselves to be men of noble fiber.

They were now in the course of a cultural change, gradual but profound. They had swept over Europe, a great race of hunters; holding virile faith in the bow and arrow, the fire-hardened spear, the flint knife, the stone hatchet, the bludgeon; and worshiping such gods as the mammoth, the bison, the woolly rhinoceros.

But now they had advanced greatly in the art of fashioning bone, and had mastered the secret of fabricating the bone fish-hook, and were coming to the realization of the effectiveness of the instrument in catching the plentiful fishes that swam the rivers. The Cro-Magnons were beginning to abandon the heroic life of the chase; they were slowly becoming a race of fisherman. But certainly the forsaking of the great ways of old did not take place without arousing dissensions among the cave people.

As far back as human traditions extended Lean Ak's ancestors had been stalwart hunting-leaders. He was of an ilk all of whose men bore the name of Ak, which they accounted for by saying that they were descendants of a divine hunter of that name

who had fought in the wars back in the days when the world began.

Lean Ak then was as ardent a devotee of the hunting-tradition as could have been found among the cave people. Isolated with his small tribe in their native valley, he had heard from occasional wanderers of men who did not hunt wild beasts, but lived craftily by snaring water creatures.

The hunters could not understand this, for it was well known that a man scarcely once a year contrived to lay his hands on one of these elusive things that lived in the rivers and lakes. And there was something in the idea of fishing that stirred a vague repugnance.

Lean Ak's first contact with fishermen came when the tribe's wanderings took them to the cave by the river.

Ufu the Great was considered the most subtle of magicians. He ruled his tribe with a greater authority than was usual among the Cro-Magnons. He had more wives than any other man. And well did Ufu the Great merit these honors.

Lean Ak and his men came as lean as desert hares, to be astonished by the sight of the chieftain-magician's followers larded like hippopotami. And yet this potentate of the cave had begun life as a lowly starveling.

The tribe had followed the art of fishing for several generations with no great proficiency. Their fish-hooks were too crude to enable them to secure a sufficient food-supply from the water.

Their life had been a hungry one until the future Ufu the Great had astonished his fellows by his skill at working bone. He developed an efficient fish-hook, which immediately brought the tribe's food-supply to comfortable proportions.

There was but one way to account for the extraordinary fish-hook—the young man was gifted with supernatural powers in the way of fabricating fish-hooks. It was thus that Ufu the Great had gained his reputation for magic.

The tribe at that time still worshiped the terrestial animal gods of their hunting-ancestors, but the ancient cult had lost its hold; it did not fit the changed conditions of life, and remained an empty survival. It was not long before the young magician, in the pride of his newly acquired station, had transferred his allegiance to new divinities.

What deity was there for him to worship, save the fish? His magic contrived to snare the sacred creatures; he ate them and absorbed their mystical essences. The Fish was the god for fishermen. And he set about bringing his fellow-tribesmen to the worship of the piscatorial divinity.

They listened favorably; but the old chief of the tribe clung obstinately and bellicosely to the outworn worship of his fathers. They killed him, and made the powerful young magician their chief.

Ufu the Great soon had instructed his followers in the rite of eating daily sacrificial banquets, great abdomen-distending banquets; he provided them with a life of plenty and of little exertion that fattened them marvelously, and made them the envy of wide regions. And peace and comfort reigned undisturbed among them for many years.

Peace and comfort! The fishermen were wedded to these twin beatitudes. After many Summers of the chieftain-magician's happy reign they had forgotten what care and anxiety were like. Then one morning a shaggy cave leopard leaped from ambush on the hillside, and carried off a child that was playing with its mother outside the grotto.

The fishermen soon found that a pair of leopards had made the hillside their haunt. The monster cats were seen several times. One of them charged boldly upon a fisherman and carried away a large fish the man had just caught. On another occasion Ufu the Great had come running panic-stricken into the cave; he said that a thousand leopards had set upon him.

The fish-worshipers had lost the hunting-spirit utterly. They knew nothing of the combat with great beasts that their ancestors had engaged in. They felt helpless before this terrible invasion, an invasion that would have tested the metal of any cave's inhabitants. For the shaggy leopards were invested with a terrible reputation among the Cro-Magnons.

It was at this point that Lean Ak and his wandering band made their entrance.

Ufu the Great now saw a way out of the leopard difficulty. He reasoned that the tribe of hunters, led by what appeared to be a fighting chief were the men for the leopards, and he was congratulating himself upon the excellence of the idea when Lean Ak dubiously offered the service of

himself and his band in return for the chieftain-magician's six daughters.

DURING the succeeding days amity prevailed in the cave. The hunters demonstrated a liking for their labor, and conducted vigorous warfare against the two leopards.

They had several skirmishes with the huge cats, in which one of the leopards received an arrow in its flank. Finally the beasts could be found no longer, and it was evident that they had been frightened away from the hillside.

THE ARTIST PAINTED A PICTURE BUT DID NOT COMPLETE IT

IN THE rear wall of the cave there was a large black hole; Lean Ak frequently stood off and peered into its obscurity. To what did it lead? To a long gallery, the hunting-chief said to himself, and perhaps to an interior cavern.

It was in such place that the cave artists found favorite expanses of limestone wall whereon to execute their pictures. Lean Ak was an artist; most hunting-chiefs were. He was a magician, too. For drawing pictures on cave walls was one of the rites of magic. By fashioning the image of the animal the artist conjured the animal itself.

Lean Ak reasoned long before that the scarcity of game had beset his tribe because the walls of his native cave had been deficient for the purposes of magic. Quite probably, he now meditated, the tunnel to the rear of the fishermen's cave would afford him the means of conjuring unlimited heads of game.

The black hole in the rear wall of the cave was to the fishermen a source of terror. No man ventured in it; no man was permitted to venture near it, lest his temerity bring misfortune upon the tribe.

Among the Cro-Magnons cave-depths were feared by all men save by the artists. And when the fishermen's forefathers had abandoned the hunting-tradition they had abandoned the magic of pictures also; it was used chiefly in controlling the fortunes of the chase. There had been no artist among the tribe for generations.

Indeed, Ufu the Great had announced the fact that the opening in the cave wall was sacred to the Fish, and that no man could venture into its black depths and return alive. Judge then what reply was given to Lean Ak when he stated that he purposed exploring the tunnel. The prohibition was so peremptory that he was constrained to respect it.

But life was beginning to irk the hunters wofully. During the days when they had skirmished with the leopards they had been fairly content, being given a generous measure of the hunting-life to which they were accustomed. Now that they were set to the tame pursuit of fishing they grew weary of Ufu the Great and his anglers. The former respect for the fat tribesmen vanished. With familiarity, the marvel of catching fish grew pale. They nourished a great suspicion that the fishermen were sorry fighters.

And especially they grew contemptuous of the Fish. The divinity that had come down to them from their forefathers was the mighty rhinoceros, and, while at first they had relished the bountiful banquets of fish, they soon again remembered with longing the feasts of seasons past when they had partaken of their own god, who was the greatest of gods—for they knew that rhinoceros steaks were the strongest and bravest morsel that ever came between human jaws.

Lean Ak had shared the disdainful sentiments of his tribesmen, and now, as Ufu the Great grew fantastic about what horrors the Fish would inflict upon any one who ventured into the black tunnel—a place for an artist to paint pictures—his contempt grew supreme.

One morning Lean Ak squatted on his heels and contemplated the black hole for a long time. The hunters were chipping flint for new weapons. Fishermen were working bone for fish-hooks. Several women were roasting fish over the hearth fire, while others stitched garments with bone needles and thongs of animal hide. Ufu the Great squatted near the fire while one of his men painted broad stripes of red across his great countenance. Lean Ak was dreaming of the pictures he could paint on the walls of the tunnel.

Finally his ardor passed out of control. He went to the fire, lighted a lamp, and before anybody could interfere with him he had gone to the rear of the cave and plunged into the black hole. After a

moment the light was lost sight of as the hunting-chief turned a corner in the tunnel.

What terror would befall? There was consternation in the cave. But Ufu the Great spoke reassuring words. The man's impiety would bring calamity upon his own shoulders. He would never return. The Fish would devour him.

The fishermen heard this with satisfaction; Lean Ak's hunters with misgiving. Commoners, they too were afraid of cavern depths, and perhaps there might be a monstrous devouring fish in the black hole. Their fear of the unknown disposed them to the chieftain-magician's fantastic stories and subtle reasonings.

Ufu the Great assured the hunters that their leader was lost to them. Many men had gone into that hole, but not one had ever emerged; the fishermen agreed solemnly to this. And since Lean Ak had perished in his impiety, Ufu the Great became the hunters' leader. Lean Ak's followers were shaken, and when the morning passed without the hunting-chief's reappearance, they accepted Ufu the Great's prononucements without protest.

The chieftain-magician commanded them to deliver their weapons over to the fishermen by way of propitiating the fish. The leaderless band obeyed dubiously. This prudent measure taken, Ufu the Great ordered every one to the river-bank to fish, so that they might celebrate an exceptional banquet to calm the wrath of the Fish.

They fished joyfully through the day, all save the hunters, who fished sadly, and the six daughters of Ufu the Great, who did not fish at all. The sisters were filled with grief at the fearful end of their lover, and after a while they returned to the cave to bewail. They squatted themselves at a respectful distance from the black hole and kept a melancholy vigil.

LEAN AK had come upon a revelation. He had found the tunnel to be long, narrow and winding; it led to no interior cavern. But its walls held many even spaces, which in the wavering lamplight gleamed white like good fortune.

The artist saw the true cause of his past troubles. What a wretched place his native cave had been, with its jagged walls upon which no effective magic could be worked.

As he made his way through the rocky gallery the light of his lamp fell upon an occasional painting executed by the artists of long years past. What superb heads of game must the men of old have conjured with those walls to ply their craft upon! Lean Ak put down his lamp and set to work.

He had never abandoned his artist's implements, but through all his wanderings had carried them in a bag secured around his girth. Now he took forth his bone tubes filled with ocher earth pigment mixed with animal grease, his hammer and his stylus of flint. He set about graving the outlines of a rhinoceros on the limestone wall, pigmenting the chiseled lines as he proceeded.

What consequences would follow from his flouting the chieftain-magician's prohibition to venture into the tunnel? Lean Ak gave no thought to that, his mind was too full. He saw game returned under the conjuring of the pictures he would paint. He saw his service completed, and himself in a pleasant cave and possessed of the six daughters of Ufu the Great. He would live the hunter's life he loved, and his sons would be hunters after him. It was hours before he thought of leaving the tunnel.

In the cave the six daughters of Ufu the Great still squatted like effigies, their wails more doleful than ever.

"The Fish has eaten him," droned one of them.

The others swayed in lamenting assent. The fire on the hearth sputtered occasionally, and there was the sibilant sound of the wind outside. In all else the cave was deep in silence.

The sisters cried out in fright as the flame of a lamp appeared in the black hole before them. Then Lean Ak stepped through the opening. Scarcely noticing his betrothed ones, he strode out of the cave. He wanted to look away over the hills where men could hunt beasts, where arrows might fly, where game would die to the thudding of stone hatchets.

The six daughters, who followed him, did not disturb his reverie. They could see that flame was in their stern lover's brain. They stood near the cave entrance, and watched him as he stared moodily down the valley. After a moment Lean Ak turned to them.

"Listen," he cried, and again turned his face to the lower end of the valley.

The sisters squatted in a half-circle before him.

The valley was quiet save for the small sound of the wind, and from the river came the shouts of the fishermen who were concealed by a low bluff near the bank. At the lower end of the valley the colors of sunset were in the sky, with heaped up clouds altering their shapes and colors, as if busily seeking the ideal of beauty and nearing it more and more. As Lean Ak stood facing the vision that comes into the west, his feverish mood sent out of control by the influence of the hour, he chanted a pæan:

"Before there were men the Rhinoceros lived.
There is no strength like the strength of the Rhinoceros.
Man is an ant beside the Rhinoceros.
Even the mammoth must die before the Rhinoceros.
The sun is bright as he falls behind the hills;
He is a Rhinoceros.
Colored like snow rimmed with fire,
Yonder cloud is a Rhinoceros.
The whole world is a Rhinoceros."

Higher and higher in the hunter-artist leaped the strong ardor that lives in men who follow the chase. He was in an hour when his love for the hunting-tradition of his race surged passionately, the mighty hunting-tradition that had begun its decline, and his spirit returned fervently to the gods of his ancestors, to the greatest of the gods, to the rhinoceros. How he yearned to lead his men against one of those divine beasts, prayerfully encompass its death and then eat it—as men eat their gods!

The six daughters of Ufu the Great swayed with the rhythm of the dithyramb. They were fascinated by their lover's impassioned psalmody. Their eyes were fixed on him, their eyes were opened wide and lighted.

They were seized with admiration for the Rhinoceros, and for men who lived by killing fearful beasts, even rhinoceroses. They were turned from the life and spirit of their own tribe, and were given over to the hunting-chief's worship of the grandiose past. They were no longer the six daughters of Ufu the Great, but now Lean Ak's six wives. And in the fire of primitive passion they rose above the dark, stagnant multitude of obese cave women, and took hold their artist-lover's radiant thought.

After a pause Lean Ak told his six wives how he had found salvation in the excellent wall-spaces of the tunnel, and how, after his pictorial magic had ended the scarcity of game, and after his service to the chieftain-magician had been completed, they would live with him in a good home cave among hills that swarmed with noble beasts. And they would be the wives, not of a fish-catcher, but of a hunting-chief who would lead his men each day to the dangers of the chase.

And they would have sons by him, sons upon sons; and descendants through unnumbered generations; and all of them would be brave, stalwart men, and would bear the name of Ak, and would cleave to the hunting-life, and would fight with shaggy beasts long after he, Lean Ak, had become a rhinoceros away in the cloudy land beyond the farthermost hill. The six wives groaned with delight as their minds embraced the vision.

Shouts sounded near by. Half-way up the hill stood Ufu the Great and several of his fishermen. They stared with surprize at the gaunt figure of the hunting-chief.

Finally the chieftain-magician, as if to test his senses, kept his way upward, and went near to Lean Ak and peered into his face incredulously. Lean Ak returned the stare disdainfully. Ufu the Great had never before seemed so fat, so unkempt, so full of earthy humors.

Across the chieftain-magician's shoulder was slung a huge fish—the choicest trophy of the day. It whipped the hunting-chief's contempt to frenzy.

"The Fish did not eat you?" Ufu the Great questioned disappointedly.

"Fish-catcher," shouted Lean Ak, "your fish is a worm."

The gaudily painted face of Ufu the Great warped with astonishment and indignation. He was so overcome that he could only sputter unintelligibly.

Lean Ak saw that he had exceeded prudence, and that his anger was baffling his plan to carry on his art in the tunnel. He must placate Ufu the Great, though the thought galled him.

A light broke. He would master the difficult situation—of which, he remembered, his insubordinate venturing into the tunnel was a large factor—by showing Ufu the Great what a mean and senseless thing it was to worship such a thing as a fish, and by convincing him with burning eloquence that the greatest of the gods was the Rhinoceros.

Ufu the Great passed from a condition of speechless anger to one of equally speechless

amazement as Lean Ak entered upon a long harangue, which grew wildly impassioned. The six sisters took their stand beside their lover, and remained motionless in the spell of his words.

The other members of the two tribes, who had come up, gathered behind their respective leaders. The fish-catchers listened to Lean Ak's objurgations with as much astonishment as their chieftain-magician displayed; the hunters felt the old, brave spirit growing hot in them as they listened to their artist-chief's mighty words of homage to the Rhinoceros.

Finally Ufu the Great could contain himself no longer. He might have contained an unlimited amount of indignation, but not of amusement. He laughed loud and long. Worship a rhinoceros! His tribe in the old days had—and very foolishly—worshiped the Asiatic Ass, but the Rhinoceros was too preposterous. The fish-catchers laughed raucously along with their leader.

Lean Ak stepped back at the mocking outburst of mirth. Icy rage shot through him.

"We will fight," he screamed. "And I will have the women. We will take them."

He turned to his men. A wave of panic came over him as he saw that they were without their weapons. Ufu the Great did not fail to comprehend the situation.

"You will fight," he shouted in huge raillery. "You will take the women. We will fight. And we will take your women."

He stepped back among his men and cried, "Strike them," in a great voice.

The fishermen bellowed like warriors, brandished their bludgeons, and moved ponderously toward their enemies. The disarmed hunters retreated before the charge.

Lean Ak, after striking for a moment, gave way. And soon the hunters were fleeing nimbly, pursued by the fishermen. The fat anglers were wretched fellows in a foot-race with the lank men of the chase, and were outdistanced. And the hunters passed from view over a hill-crest as they continued their flight toward the last red glow of sunset.

THE TWO CAVE LEOPARDS RETURNED

A BAND of wandering merchants were journeying to the cave of Ufu the Great. They carried with them a stock of precious small sea-shells and several reindeer-hides, which they purposed exchanging for a supply of the bone fish-hooks fabricated at the cave, the best bone fish-hooks known among the Cro-Magnons.

As the merchants forded the river some miles below the cave, they came upon one of Lean Ak's hunters, who, dropping all precautions, approached them and begged a morsel of food. While he ate the bit of dried flesh that was given him the merchants demanded of him who he was, to which the starveling replied with an account of his tribe's recent misfortunes.

After they had been driven away from the fishermen's cave the hunters had found themselves in the predicament of being in the open country with one set of weapons among them, Lean Ak's. They were filled with impotent rage at the loss of their women; unarmed, the only gratification afforded them was to listen to Lean Ak's promises of a ferocious revenge as soon as their lack of weapons had been remedied.

The hunters were experts at the art of shaping a flint fragment by chipping it with another piece of flint, but even so days elapsed before the impatient band found itself armed for a fight. During this time they were unable to procure any save the scantiest food, so that when their equipment of arms was complete enough for the projected raid of revenge, the hunters were too weak to attempt it. They scouted over the surrounding country, but found the same scarcity of game that had faced them during their wanderings. They were compelled to delay their vengeance until they had found a sizable head of game which would give them the strength to fight.

Lean Ak was tormented with fury during these unhappy days. Even hunger did not stay his passion for the six daughters of Ufu the Great; the desire that they had aroused in him stuck in his steadfast soul like a fixed idea. And the tightening of famine made him more bitterly resolved to drive the fish-catchers from their cave, and to possess himself of the walls of the rear tunnel for the purposes of his picture magic.

A wild pitch of feeling got the better of his judgment one day. He ordered his starving hunters on a raid against the fishermen, and at their head challenged Ufu the Great, after the custom of honorable warfare. But the hunters were too

weak for the task, and the fishermen, poor bowmen and unhandy with spear and stone hatchet, proved themselves redoubtable wielders of the bludgeon, with which weapon they were accustomed to settle their disputes among themselves. The hunters fled after a short fight, and Lean Ak himself was knocked down and given a severe clubbing by Ufu the Great, so that the hunting-chief was scarcely able to struggle free and run away.

This adventure exasperated Lean Ak even more than might have been expected. To have been beaten by the fish-catchers! Their prowess with the cudgel only increased his contempt for them—the Cro-Magnons deemed clubbing a woman's way of fighting. There was, however, but one thing to do, and that was to go on hunting persistently in the hope that a good head of game would make its appearance at last—when it did the hunters would fortify themselves with a meal, and then they would be capable of spearing and hatcheting all the fish-catchers that breathed.

The hunter stuttered with rage as he told the merchants his story, and when he had done the leader of the vending-men, a shrewd and malicious fellow, visualized in his mind an opportunity to play a sad trick upon Ufu the Great, whom he thought a fat rascal. On the previous day the merchants had seen an old woolly rhinoceros some distance down the river. The brute, had not wandered far probably, and its steaks would serve excellently to fortify the hunters for an attack upon the fishermen. So the malicious merchant told Lean Ak's man of the circumstance.

The other merchants were angry at this; it threatened to put a quietus upon Ufu the Great, with whom they were accustomed to barter profitably. They charged their leader with letting malice get the better of his wisdom, and a wordy quarrel ensued, a quarrel which the hunter did not stop to listen out. He went on speeding legs to carry the tidings to his leader.

Lean Ak was in sore spirits that day. He squatted apart from his men, who were gathered at the base of the cliff that had served as the tribe's refuge against the chill, sweeping winds, and were devouring a collection of roots and field-mice. He nursed despair, seeing little prospect of ever teaching any sons of his how to hunt. And he nursed several knots that rose on his skull where the chieftain-magician's club had impacted. He was at a point where tears would have relieved a weaker man, when the tribesman ran in bringing the malicious merchant's story. Though nightfall was not far off, Lean Ak ordered his men away to the place that the merchant had described.

The hunters slept on the bank of the river that night, ready to comb the country in the morning. It was hours after daybreak that they took up the heavy trail of the rhinoceros. They followed rapidly, and presently came in sight of the shaggy brute browsing at leisure.

Lean Ak's many excursions had acquainted him with the lay of the country at this point, and he knew of a cliff not far distant which the hunters could utilize in encompassing the death of the huge beast. He hastily laid his plans with his men to form a sudden yelling line before which the rhinoceros would break in panic, and then to direct its flight toward the cliff, over which it would dash in its blind terror. Keeping himself behind cover, Lean Ak made his apologies to the divine animal for the injury they would do to it, after which the line of tribesmen arose, began yelling fearfully, and advanced toward their prey.

But the rhinoceros was a savage old brute, and instead of turning tail and galloping in the direction of the cliff it charged the nearest yelling hunter, which was Lean Ak. The hunting-chief turned and made heroic strides. The rhinoceros continued after him, and the man saw over his shoulder that the beast was gaining rapidly on him.

Lean Ak headed toward the river where he could dive and elude his pursuer. The rhinoceros was close behind when he gained the miry bank of the river and plunged into the water. The brute in its rush floundered into a stretch of yielding clay. The man had passed over it safely, but the ponderous rhinoceros sank in deeply, and after a short struggle was imbedded to its belly in the trap of clay.

The hunters came up and were able to surround and shower blows upon the brute, and Lean Ak, who under the strong impulse of his flight had swum under water for a heroic length of time, now came to shore. He seized a bludgeon and a short, heavy spear, and bounded nimbly onto the

back of the mired beast. He plunged the head of the spear into the hide between the shoulders, and, using the bludgeon as a hammer, drove the shaft into the animal's vitals. The rhinoceros screamed and died.

Already the hunger-maddened hunters were building a fire. A gory assault was made upon the carcass, and flint knives opened the tough hide and cut away masses of flesh. As huge steaks were set roasting at the fire Lean Ak gave careful orders for the coming fight with the fish-catchers. The hunters were to eat just enough to give them full strength, and then after a short digestive rest they were to set out for the cave.

But soon after the feast had begun the anxious lover saw that his men were bent on exceeding the bounds of feeding that he had set for them. They were gorging themselves outrageously. He called upon them to desist, but the hunters had forgotten their women, had forgotten their revenge; they were eating, and that summed the world to them.

Lean Ak's protest, to be sure, was not made with the savage air that ensures obedience. He, too, was eating, and tearing with his teeth at the slices of pungent rhinoceros flesh, roasted, which gave him a sensation so pleasurable that it weakened his eagerness to be away against the fish-catchers, weakened his longing to see the six daughters of Ufu the Great once again, weakened his noble ambition to be the ancestor of brave men through unnumbered generations who would be hunters and not fat fish-catchers. In short, it was not long before the band, leader and all, had gorged themselves into a profound stupor, like so many pythons.

Not an hour had lapsed before the merchants passed that way, coming from the fishermen's cave. They caught sight of the smoke of the fire, and found the sleeping hunters surrounded by the remains of the feast. The merchants understood the phenomenon well enough, and, though they had feasted with Ufu the Great that day, they fell to cutting slices of flesh for themselves from the mangled remnants of the rhinoceros carcass.

They squatted beside the motionless figures of the hunters, and roasted their meat at the fire. During the silence of this pleasant occupation an idea moved in the head of the malicious merchant.

Ufu the Great had driven sharp bargains, and the merchants had left the cave in sour mood, so that now when the malicious merchant confided to his companions a project to play a rogue's trick on Ufu the Great they were pleased. The cunning fellows ate and deliberated, and then went away in the direction of the fishermen's cave. But first they carefully removed traces of the fire and of the feast, covering with sand what was left of the rhinoceros carcass.

Back at the cave Ufu the Great evinced interest in the malicious merchant's recital, which related that there was a trick of magic by which the merchant could stretch Lean Ak and his hunters unconscious on the ground, so that they would be at the mercy of the fishermen—this could be done for a hundred bone fish-hooks. Then Ufu the Great could use his enemies for decorative statuary in his cave, or he could make fish-hooks out of them. The merchants would perform the magic, and would lead the fishermen to their bewitched enemies—all for a hundred bone fish-hooks.

This scheme was ingenious enough. The merchants understood that the hunters had gorged after a long fast and had fallen into consequent coma—a thing common among hunting-people, whose feasts are large and infrequent. And at the same time the men of travel understood that fishermen with a steady, moderate food supply were unfamiliar with the phenomenon. Ufu the Great would think the sleepers permanently bewitched, when they would in reality come out of their stupor in a dozen hours or somewhat more. To leave behind him a situation of such possibilities pleased the perversity of the malicious merchant.

To Ufu the Great this proposal opened channels of salvation. He had contrived to get rid of the two leopards, only to call in a greater evil. When they had beaten the hunters the fishermen were heartened, but still they never knew when the vengeful tribe out in the hills might attack them again. Ufu the Great was a man of peace, and the ever present prospect of fighting distressed him.

And then the malicious merchant's offer attacked his traits of piety and of magnificence. He could take the bewitched hunters and make a sacrifice to the Fish that would not be forgotten as long as men

lived in caves. So he tried to beat down the stiff price of a hundred bone fish-hooks, but when the malicious merchant would not moderate his demand, Ufu the Great accepted the terms.

The merchant fashioned the rude figure of a man out of mud and threw it into the fire with words and gestures of incantation. The rite was to cause Lean Ak and his men to fall down and remain motionless, bewitched until the spell was removed.

Then the merchant led Ufu the Great and all the fishermen to the place where the hunters were sleeping. Ufu the Great was awed at this demonstration of potent magic, and he paid the hundred fish-hooks without a grumble.

Some of the fishermen wanted to cut the hunters into small pieces without any delay, but Ufu the Great forbade them. Not a sacrilegious blow should fall upon the bewitched men, he announced; they were to be treated tenderly, for they were sacred to the Fish, and were to be offered up in solemn sacrifice on the following day. It was a pious thing to treat destined victims with every honor.

Crude boats of wicker and animal skins were brought down the river, and the hunters, still deep in stupor, were ferried upstream, and were deposited in a corner of the cave. The slow and tedious task was completed just before darkness fell, and the fishermen lay down to sleep and dream of the great event of the morrow.

Morning light streamed through the cave entrance and awakened the fishermen; it awakened Lean Ak also. The artist-chief was a more sensitive organism than his men were, and his stupor was less profound than theirs. Yet when he stirred slightly and opened his eyes drowsiness was still heavy in his brain. He raised his head slowly and stared with dazed incredulity upon the scene before him.

The fishermen were bestirring themselves. One of them threw fresh logs on the fire, and Lean Ak laid his head back as the flames leaped and lighted the nooks of the cave.

A procession of frantic thought beat in the hunting-chief's head as the talk in the cave and the revelation of an occasional cautious glance revealed the situation to him. The fish-catchers had found the hunters in post-prandial coma. Because the rhinoceros steaks had seduced Lean Ak from his duty the hunters now lay unarmed in the cave.

But they would awaken as strong as mammoths. For they were full of the strongest meat that man could eat. And they could seize weapons from the surprized fishermen, who seemingly did not expect them to awaken. Not astonishing, because the fishermen knew little about the lives and feeding habits of hunters.

The danger was that the hunters would not awaken simultaneously. One of them would start up drowsily while the others remained in stupor. The half-awakened man would be struck down before he had cleared his brain. His fellows would be killed as they lay. And Lean Ak would have to fight alone and unarmed.

If only he could get several of his men awake at the same moment! They would be able to stand off the surprized fish-catchers. That was the thing to be contrived. But it would have been a fatal thing to move about in the bright firelight trying to bring the hunters to consciousness.

Lean Ak waited for a time when the fire should burn low and shroud the sleepers in shadow; or until the bulk of the fish-catchers had left the cave. Meanwhile he trembled with anxiety lest one of the hunters should start up, suddenly awakening.

But the fire did not burn low, nor did the fish-catchers leave the cave. After the morning meal they set about making preparations for the sacrifice. Ufu the Great squatted before the fire and chipped at the edge of a large flint knife, while a number of fishermen carried in a large, flat stone which was to be the sacrificial altar. Lean Ak observed this with half-closed eyes; he felt himself already dead.

The six daughters of Ufu the Great were overwhelmed with grief. They approached the motionless destined victims, desiring to gaze upon the form of their bewitched lover. But Ufu the Great cuffed them and drove them away. They huddled near the hearth fire, and dolefully watched the preparation for the sacrifice. Lean Ak, observing this, felt the stir of his old vision for a moment, and thought sadly of his unnumbered hunting-descendants, who seemingly were not to be.

The hunters' women were crowded at another corner of the cave, after having been beaten for venturing too near their comatose spouses. Although it was many

days since the hunters had fled unarmed and left them in the fish-catchers' possession, they had not entirely forgotten their former lords.

The fisher people crowded around Ufu the Great and with grunts of anticipation watched him whet his sacrificial knife. They approved, too, of the flat stone. Occasionally several would go near the prostrate hunters and stare at them, but not one braved the wrath of Ufu the Great by administering sacrilegious blows to the destined victims.

Ufu the Great, having sharpened the knife to his liking, harangued his followers, shouting so loudly that Lean Ak expected at least one of his men to start up at the sound. The chieftain-magician led his men to the corner where their enemies lay, and pointed out that the bewitched ones still remained deep in the magical spell.

This was as a boast, for Ufu the Great by now had turned the credit for the marvelous sorcery upon himself; at the bottom of facts it was he, and not the merchants, who had worked the marvel. In thanksgiving to the Fish he uttered a psalm, a prelude to the sacrifice:

> "Men were born of the river.
> In the river swims the Fish.
> The Fish is our meat.
> The Fish gives us strength.
> The Fish fattens us."

He continued with a long speech addressed to the prostrate hunters, telling them that they had become fishes and would be eaten sacrificially.

Lean Ak's anxiety now had become a high fever. He saw no further hope than to leap to his feet, snatch a bludgeon from the hand of a fisherman and make a lone fight of it. If there had been three or four of his men fully aroused and ready for an instant slashing fight!

There was little prospect of that, he saw, and the only thing he could do was to lie still until the last moment, when his sudden uprising would cause the greatest amount of surprize and confusion. But here again the hunting-chief's calculations went awry.

Several of the fishermen who had received exceptionally hard beatings in the fight with the hunters several days before nourished a quantity of malice that it pained them to hold in bounds. These fellows, as they listened to Ufu the Great's preachments, stamped and snorted and spat with impatience for the sacrificial work.

The chieftain-magician's harangue proved overlong, and finally they could not deny themselves a small advance upon the approaching fund of revenge. They were standing at the edge of the crowd of fishermen, and in close proximity to their feet lay the forms of several of their detested enemies. Tempted past endurance, these vindictive fishermen nudged each other, and when Ufu the Great shouted his loudest, one of them directed a sly but very heavy kick upon the ribs of the hunter nearest him. Two other vindictive fishermen instantly followed with even heavier kicks administered to two more hunters.

The kicks were given with abandon, with light heart and heavy foot. They were kicks a reindeer might have administered; kicks such as are found among simple, hearty men; kicks the like of which might have made an impression upon a mammoth.

Under the heart-shaking impact of those supreme kicks, the three unfortunates kicked were jarred out of their stupor, profound as it was. With loud grunts of pain they sat up. The fishermen recoiled in bewilderment. The chieftain-magician's apostrophe came to a sudden halt. The three awakened hunters sat and stared with an astonishment born of clear wits—no shadow of slumber remained in their heads after those stupendous kicks.

Lean Ak was on his feet. He had heard the outcry, and a glance had told him to strike. He leaped forward and wrenched a war-club from the nearest astounded enemy and laid it about him furiously.

The mob of fishermen backed away in panic. Lean Ak, filled with rage, plunged after them. Then, seeing but a single man against them, a number of fishermen recoiled and went at the hunting-chief, swinging savagely with their clubs.

But now Lean Ak's three awakened tribesmen rushed into the fight, after having taken weapons from the several fishermen that Lean Ak had knocked down. The four hunters strove mightily against the outnumbering enemy. Their blows fell with the strength born of roast rhinoceros flesh, of the heartening knowledge that they had fed plentifully. They were hard pressed, though, for the bulk of the fishermen

had recovered from their consternation at the hunters' strange resurrection, and one by one had joined their bolder fellows in the fight. Before this augmenting force the hunters had to give ground, and soon were stumbling over the bodies of their still comatose fellows.

Now came a strange scene. At Lean Ak's command the hunters struck at their enemies with an access of vigor and rage, and at the same time they kicked savagely at their prostrate comrades. These, receiving kicks of an effectiveness scarcely less than those the vindictive fishermen had achieved, roared with pain, seized weapons and got up and joined the stubborn fight.

By this time the cave was dreadful pandemonium. The two clans fought to the tune of terrible yells. Wounded men screamed as they went to the floor. The women and children crowded to the farthermost corner of the cave and shrieked incessantly.

The din reached its height as Lean Ak singled out Ufu the Great, who had been clubbing valiantly along with his men, and attacked him in a manner to indicate to the chieftain-magician the difference between a hungry man and one who has spent the night digesting rhinoceros steaks. Under the vindictive blows of the hunting-chief's bludgeon Ufu the Great sank to the floor swooning.

The hunters shouted in terrible joy as they saw this; and now, reinforced to full strength by their awakened fellows, they began a final wild push.

The fishermen gave way and retreated to the cave entrance, fighting more weakly each moment. The hunters were driving them panic-stricken through the entrance into the open when the stampeded crowd of fishermen recoiled violently. As if in a mad fit of terror, and with no attempt to fight, they rushed back against the hunters, seeming as if they would trample them under foot. Lean Ak and his men were carried across the cave by the plunge of the frenzied mob.

As the fishermen cleared from the entrance a shaggy cave leopard sprang through the opening. It was followed by another leopard.

THE party of merchants, after having received their hundred bone fish-hooks from Ufu the Great, had gone their way apparently. But really they had stood at a distance and had watched the carrying-away of the sleeping hunters.

Then after the fishermen had left the vicinity the merchants returned to the river-bank, unearthed the remainder of the rhinoceros carcass, built a fire and devoured a second meal. After this they went their way, leaving the fire burning.

Sparks from the fire presently had set the sparse, dry vegetation afire. The flames had spread, and soon a lively grass fire was sweeping among the hills.

During the course of the night it reached the haunts where the two leopards had taken refuge after having been driven by Lean Ak's men from the neighborhood of the cave. The leopards fled in terror before the racing flames, and continued their flight even after the sweep of the fire had been checked by a stream. They were wandering, distracted with fear, on the hillside near the cave entrance when the fishermen emerged into the open.

These, catching sight of the great cats, lost their fear of the hunters in a greater fear, and in crazy panic turned back into the cave. The two leopards, cowed and trembling, followed the men into their refuge.

The hunters were carried to the rear wall of the cave before Lean Ak was able to extricate himself from the struggling throng. His fighting mood turned to the new enemy; the hunting tribesmen, too, no longer struck at the fishermen when they saw their natural foes, the leopards.

Lean Ak took a flint knife between his teeth and a short, stout spear in his hands, and advanced slowly upon the leopards. Several of his men followed to support him. He was filled with the spirit of the new fight, a fight which, it seemed, he should not have. The leopards' fear was heightened by the hearth-fire and shouts of the men; there was no fight in them; they cowered on their bellies against the front wall of the cave.

Then as Lean Ak went forward, one of the hunters back with the fishermen, having secured a bow, loosed an arrow. The shaft set itself in the haunch of the male leopard. Instantly the brute was snarling with pain and rage. It crouched and sprang upon the hunting-chief as he approached. Lean Ak received the charging beast on the point of his spear, and flung it back. The leopard retreated and crouched for a second charge.

The she-leopard, its fright undiminished, had crawled around the cave, and now it had approached the crowd of fishermen, who stood watching Lean Ak's fight with the male leopard. Ufu the Great returned to consciousness, but still lying palsied with fear, espied the slowly approaching beast and was seized with a new terror. He yelled and leaped to his feet. The mass of fishermen, when they saw the she-leopard coming toward them, fell into a second panic, and, led by the chieftain-magician, stampeded across the cave toward Lean Ak.

The hunting-chief was poised to receive the second spring of the male leopard when the fear-crazed fishermen impacted against him. He was thrown forward, and the charging beast set its claws in his shoulder. Lean Ak struck again and again with his flint knife, while one of his hunters beat at the animal with his stone hatchet. But the panic-stricken mob continued throwing him before it until he fell, still struggling with the leopard.

The mob of fishermen recoiled crazily and flung themselves through the cave door and out into the valley. The hunters ran screaming to aid their chief.

Lean Ak rose to his feet with a final glance at the leopard, which now lay still. He stood, smeared with blood, a heavy gash on his face. His eyes were glaring, his muscles convulsing. He remained poised in the rage for battle, as if awaiting another enemy.

Six figures arose from the crowd of the cave women huddled in the corner. They came and kneeled before the hunting-chief. He did not look at them, but still glared in fury. They trembled, and broke into a wail—

"O great Rhinoceros from the hills,
Look down on us as from a mountain."

When Lean Ak heard them, a violent shaking seized his body. His mad eyes softened as he bent his head to them. He bade them take him and bind up his wounds. Half a dozen hunters were killing the female leopard with spear and stone hatchet.

AFTER these memorable events there was peace in the valley. Ufu the Great and his fishermen fled far down the river and found refuge in another cave. With the chieftain-magician's skill at bone fish-hooks they again feasted on bounties of fish, and, being excellent providers, they could not fail to secure women enough and more from neighboring tribes to replace those that they had left behind them in their former cave.

It proved that the rhinoceros, which had saved and so nearly ruined the hunting-tribe, was the forerunner of a migration of game, so that the men of the chase, too, lived in contentment and good feeding with their old wives and the new ones they had taken from the fishermen.

Lean Ak was happy with the six daughters of Ufu the Great. He hunted in the hills and drew pictures on the cave walls. He had a score of sons. And he taught them, and they taught their sons after them, to slay great beasts and to worship the Rhinoceros—

The Rhinoceros that roams among the clouds:
The Rhinoceros that awaits his children away in the farthermost valley.

SONG OF THE SHIP

by Bill Adams

I'M WAITING for a tow-boat for to tow me to sea
And my decks are harbor weary, as weary may be—
The seas are running greenly and the ocean winds blow;
And I'm waiting, just waiting, for to get me a tow.

There's men with cheery voices and a roll to their feet,
The sons of all the oceans where the big winds blow sweet—
They're heaving and a-hauling and a-loving of me,
And together we are waiting to blow down the sea.

Oh, there's dust of dusty harbor on hatch and on rail,
And there's grime of many cargoes in all of my sail,
But it's soon I'll be flying and washing me clean
Where the horses go a-roaming and cold seas are green.

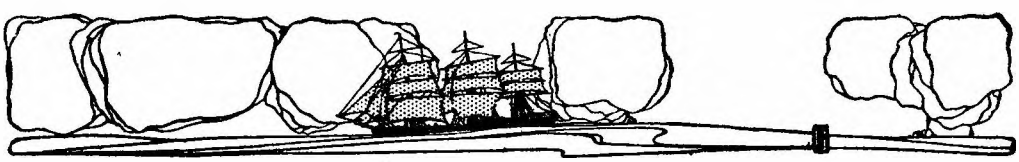
I'm the queen of all the clippers that wing o'er the sea,
And the soft trades are a-waiting to whisper to me.
Where the dark winds of the midnight go wailing their wrath
I'll be dancing by the starshine all down the long path.

Oh, there's sadness and there's sorrow to those who don't know
The curl of dancing furrows where the stormy winds blow—
But there's laughter and loving in the deeps of the sea
To the sons of the ocean who go sailing with me.

When my topsails are ribboned and my wheel swept away
In the squall before the morning, then great is the day
When the sons of my loving with their hands red with blood,
Shall battle till the star-rise with the wrath of the flood.

There's a port that awaits us and it's gleaming and bright
With the gems of the sunset and the pearls of the night;
It's there that we'll be sailing—oh, it's there that we'll blow,
When the tug-boat comes hailing for to take us in tow.

Farewell to weary harbor with all of its noises—
"Roll and go," they'll be singing and glad are their voices.
And for shipwreck and for drowning but little we care
When the last dock swings open and it's seaward we fare.



Direct Methods

By

Thomson Burtis

Author of "There and Back," "Feud's End," etc.

A DE HAVILAND airplane was spiraling down over the level expanse of Langham Field. As the slim young pilot in the front seat slowly throttled the Big Liberty motor which had carried the ship from Washington the passenger peered down interestedly. Twenty-two massive twin-motored bombers were lined up on the Eastern edge of the field, nose to nose in two lines. They looked like waiting monsters, slothful but terrible in their suggestion of power. The sinking sun sent shafts of light flashing from the metal, and as the dropping De Haviland gave the two flyers constantly changing angles of vision it seemed as though the ships were alive, so blinding was the play of light from glistening turn-buckles and the glass covers of the instruments on each motor.

The D. H. landed lightly, the pilot taking unusual care to avoid running into the lines of ships which cut off a quarter of the field. He taxied to the line. Before he had finished running the gas out of his motor his passenger was out of the back cockpit and had removed the flying coveralls he wore. He was in civilian clothes. He took a soft hat from the rear, put it on, lit a cigar and waited for the pilot.

When that gentleman had leaped out and lit a cigaret the civilian stretched out his hand.

"Thank you, lieutenant, that was fine. I enjoyed it greatly. Would you mind seeing to it that my suitcase is unstrapped and sent up to General O'Malley's office? Thank you. That is headquarters up there, is it not?"

"Yes, sir—General O'Malley's headquarters."

"See you later, I hope. Good-by."

He walked briskly down the row of tremendous corrugated iron hangars. He did not stop to inspect in detail the overgrown Handley Pages and Capronis and Martin bombers, although his brilliant dark eyes rested continuously on the line of ships. De Havilands and S. E. 5 scouts were constantly landing and taking off. Once he did stop in his tracks to watch five S. E's. take off in a V formation, scoot a mile north of the field, and then line up in single file. One by one they dived—dived until the sing of the wires could be heard on the field. As they came perilously near the ground they would suddenly straighten. At that instant an egg-shaped projectile left the ship and hurtled groundward. In a few seconds came the explosion.

"Small bombs," the civilian told himself as he resumed his walk to brigade headquarters. "I wonder whether some of them could be used——"

A seven-passenger army car stopped beside him. He looked up quickly into the

face of a portly man wearing the insignia of a lieutenant-colonel.

"Can I give you a ride, Mr. Graves?" inquired the colonel, getting out of the car.

"Thank you, but I'm just going up to headquarters. But you have the advantage of me sir."

"I met you in Rome in 1918," stated the colonel. "My name is Sax."

"You have a better memory than I, colonel. But I was there. Glad to have seen you again. Good-by."

He walked on, leaving the colonel to climb back into the car.

"Now that's funny. I'd give a little piece of change to find out just what that fellow's business is," muttered the portly officer as he settled himself in the car.

Graves walked into the small, one-story frame building which had been dignified into Headquarters of the First Provisional Air Brigade, and walked over to the sergeant-major's desk. Evidently he knew something about the army.

"Mr. Graves, to see the adjutant," he stated.

He spoke with a certain preciseness in a modulated voice that instinctively gave one an impression of culture and refinement.

"Yes, sir."

The sergeant-major disappeared into the adjutant's office with unusual expedition, returning in a few seconds to say—

"All right, sir."

The captain who arose as Mr. Graves walked into his office gave him a quick survey in which interest and appraisal were equally mingled. Graves had removed his hat, revealing thick, iron-gray hair which lent distinction and force to his appearance. He was a little above medium height, and the unobtrusive perfection of his clothing hid a pair of stalwart shoulders which a wrestler would have had no reason to be ashamed of.

"I have an appointment with General O'Malley, captain," said Graves.

"Yes indeed. The general is ready to see you."

The captain motioned toward the closed door which led from his office.

"Thank you."

Graves walked over to the door, opened it, and closed it again behind him after entering the inner office. In both speech and action he appeared to be a very direct gentleman with a pronounced disinclination to waste either time or words.

"General O'Malley?"

"Yes. I'm glad to know you, Mr. Graves."

As the two men shook hands there was a pause lasting several seconds. Eye to eye, they adjudged each other as strong men will when each knows that the other is worthy of his steel.

Graves knew that before him was perhaps the most brilliant and audacious of the younger officers of the army—the great chief of a hazardous service which even then was preparing to prove that its fledgeling wings would carry it far beyond where anyone save its officers believed it could go. As for the general, he had in his desk a letter from the Secretary of War—a brief note which stated succinctly that Mr. Graves would be treated with the utmost consideration, be cooperated with to the fullest extent, and that he carried with him authority the nature of which he personally would divulge.

O'Malley watched his visitor closely as he turned to find a chair. There was a change in his appearance when seen in profile which was almost startling. Full-face, his countenance was broad and strong, with the high forehead of a student and the slightly tightened lips of a firmly molded character. In profile Graves looked like a hawk—one saw that his nose jutted aggressively from his face, and that both forehead and chin subtly strengthened the impression. Even his body seemed thinner and taller.

GRAVES deliberately flipped the ash from his cigar and then reset the weed in his wide, slightly drooping mouth. His brilliant eyes rested on the general's face.

"General, I have here some papers for your inspection, in order that you may become somewhat acquainted with my mission. Needless to say, not a soul aside from ourselves and persons whom I may find it necessary to tell must know even a detail of the matter."

Very few men would have spoken as tersely and directly to O'Malley. The general, however, merely nodded.

"I surmised as much," he said quietly.

Graves drew a thin, long envelope from his pocket and presented it to O'Malley.

It did not take the general long to read the enclosure. It was signed by a very great and powerful government official, and left no doubt as to Mr. Graves' position.

The general reread the last sentence.

"—and is hereby empowered to use any methods he sees fit to accomplish his mission, which is one of the gravest importance to the welfare of the United States."

"So-o-o," said the general at length, laying down the document slowly. "And what is it you wish, Mr. Graves?"

"First let me find out whether I am correct on all points or not. You have gathered here, as I understand it, the veteran pilots of the Air Service to take part in the coming bombing tests. You likewise have concentrated here for the use of the Air Brigade the most up-to-date material the Air Service has."

"Correct. Right here, Mr. Graves, is probably the best organization of its size the Air Service of any country has ever known. With those Martin bombers out there, manned by the pilots of this brigade, we are ready this minute to back up all our claims, and you know we made some!"

O'Malley joined in Graves' spontaneous laugh over that last forceful statement. The general's adventures in trying to put across some of the things he wished to do in the Air Service had been diversified, to say the least. He was a firebrand whom every one simply had to like or dislike—there was no middle ground.

The flyers of his service idolized him. Flyers, being on the whole of a type a little different from the general run, it follows that many good men would dislike and distrust O'Malley for the same things which his young men loved.

"Well, general, here is my mission in a nutshell. You know by the papers, if through no other means, of the series of tremendous mail robberies, totaling millions, which culminated in the half-million dollar haul near Cleveland two months ago."

O'Malley nodded.

"Operatives of our service, after months of patient and very skilful work, have run down what we believe to be the greatest criminal organization of its kind the country ever saw. It is almost a certainty that every mail robbery of any size since 1919, has been engineered and carried to a successful completion by this organization.

"The group is so powerful and so wise that its ramifications are almost unbelievable. We don't know all about them yet, but we do know that its organization includes agents all over the country for the safe disposal of securities and other valuables; that it includes brokers, business men, cracksmen, gunmen, government employees. The brains of the gang, the man to whom all credit for the conception and execution of these tremendous crimes and the organization of the whole thing goes is Stanislaus Hayden.

"I won't bore you with his history—suffice it to say that he is one of the most remarkable combinations of brilliancy, farsightedness, and executive ability that I have ever known about. If he were anything but a mentally and morally warped specimen, he might have been another Morgan or Stinnes.

"Now here is the situation. Hayden is at present in West Virginia. He is living on the top of a mountain in Farran County, miles from the nearest town. With him are several underlings—I believe them to be some of the men who actually pull the robberies themselves. Just why they are living in seclusion up there I do not exactly know, but I presume that it is first of all a good hiding place, and secondly that it keeps Hayden away from the surveillance of the police. He has been mixed up in some monumental deals—or at least suspected so strongly that he is watched—but for two years he has fooled us completely on this new organization of his. What makes him unusually dangerous aside from his ability is the loyalty he inspires in those under him—rather a combination of loyalty and fear, I should say. Anyway, a few small potatoes whom we have nabbed quietly will tell nothing. Apparently they realize that he is a really great commander-in-chief, and trust him to help them."

"But how did he——"

"How he got into West Virginia I do not know. A year ago he dropped from sight, and the operative who finally traced him down has no idea when he came into that part of the country. I believe that the gang planned to quit operations before long, and that for months Hayden has been a hermit simply making his pile with the idea of retiring on his money in the near future. He would not be safe in any city in the country to carry on his operations."

Graves talked as precisely as ever. Every

word was clear-cut and incisive. His slim, long-fingered hands were motionless except as he carried his cigar to his lips. He paused a moment to get up and drop the stub into the ash receiver.

"As I said, Hayden is staying on the top of a mountain in Farran County with some henchmen. There is no question that all of them would fight to the death—you know what the Postmaster General announced recently about mail-robbers, do you not?"

"It was plenty," nodded O'Malley.

"There are several facets to the situation. In the first place, that little nucleus of men is well supplied with artillery and ammunition ranging from machine-guns down. In the second place, their dwelling place is so strategically advantageous that it might take a hundred men dead and wounded before they could be captured. The only road leading to the hunting cabin where Hayden has his headquarters is narrow and winding, like all those mountain roads, and by reason of a three or four hundred foot precipice and some other details of the country a dozen men could hold the place for a considerable time against ten times their number.

"But most important, we want Hayden alive, and *the fact that we have him must be unknown.* As I said, we know vaguely, without many details, that he heads this vast organization. But we have come to a stone wall in our efforts to find who the biggest culprits under him are, or all the ramifications of the conspiracy. We believe that Hayden is the only living man—at least the only one we can get our hands on—who can tell all. And the moment he was killed or it was known that he was captured, every criminal under him would be gone. The organization would probably disappear in a night. My mission is to capture him, alive, and with nobody but the men with him in that cabin knowing it. We will see to it that they do not spread the news, because every escape they have will be guarded, and they will be in a state of siege up there without any method of sending news to the outside world. Their immediate capture is unimportant, but we can take no chances of an attack for fear of killing Hayden. If we get him, we can make him talk, I believe. We will use almost any measures."

"You have quite a contract, I should say," remarked the general, tapping on his desk with a penholder. "I thought I might have a glimmering of what you wanted from us, but what you say about getting him alive changes things."

"No, I don't want any bombs dropped on him," returned Graves with a smile. It was a singularly warm and winning smile, lightening the subtle hardness of his face. The sardonic hint around his mouth disappeared, and his eyes seemed to reflect the smile in their depths.

"Now as to what I do want," he went on after a moment. He seemed to be incapable of detouring for more than the smallest of intervals from the business at hand. "It would be impossible for any of our operatives to get close enough to the place to capture Hayden without publicity, or without fighting for their lives, except in the manner I have in mind. Before I describe to you my proposed method of getting Hayden, I want my men. Then I need only discuss the matter once."

"Just as you choose."

"I want two pilots and a Martin bomber, equipped with extra gas and oil and heavy machine-gun equipment—all she'll handle, in case we need them. These two pilots—the ideal ones for my purpose—would be A. 1. flyers, first. That is probably the easiest of my requirements."

"You can't throw a stone out of this window without hitting a real pilot," stated the general. "We have the finest personnel in the world."

"I am inclined to believe you are right, general. Now secondly, it would be advisable that they be older men—none of your brilliant kids. Nobody must know that Hayden is captured—before a breath of it gets out we must make him talk, and then come down on his men all over the country in one swoop that will be the biggest coup in the history of the Department of Justice, so far as straight criminality goes. For this and other reasons, these fellows must be men of the utmost discretion."

"I can readily see your point," agreed O'Malley, lighting a cigaret.

"Next, I want men who have knocked around quite a bit—resourceful, able to handle themselves in any kind of a shindig whatsoever, and not afraid of —— or high water. Rather the soldier of fortune type, you know—I think you get my idea. They will be asked to volunteer to do this thing with me, as a sporting proposition and as

a duty to the United States. Although this method of capturing Hayden is rather forced on me by circumstances, I believe that you can fix me up with men whom I can depend on."

The irrepressible O'Malley's mouth widened into a grin as Graves finished.

"You are paying the Air Service a great compliment, Graves," he said.

Graves relaxed briefly.

"You've got an outfit, I know," he admitted. "I wouldn't trust the accomplishing one of the biggest things I've ever worked on to strangers if I didn't believe it."

Then he started hammering away again. The general got the impression of resistless tenacity about him—the feeling that until his job was done the aristocratic, meticulous Mr. Graves could never be swerved for an instant from his progress toward the goal he was endeavoring to reach.

"Can you produce two such men—and if so, how quickly, general?"

O'MALLEY did not answer for fully two minutes. He placed two immaculately booted and spurred feet on his desk, sunk into his chair, and thoughtfully smoked. Then he reached for the bell on his desk.

The adjutant entered and saluted.

"Get me Lieutenants Broughton and Hinkley, Evans. Tell them to report to me at once. Use every effort to get them, regardless of whether they are on the post or not."

"Yes, sir."

Captain Evans saluted stiffly and went out.

"I think these two men fit your description best, Graves. I'll admit I'm curious to know just what you want with them. Broughton is an old first-sergeant out of the artillery. Got his commission in the artillery and transferred to the Air Service. A —— good big-ship pilot, too. Hinkley is a long, lean, sardonic bird who has the coldest nerve I ever saw and gives not three hoots in hallelujah for anything or anybody. Both of them flew on Border patrol for two years—Broughton out of Nogales and Hinkley—an observer until recently—at Marfa. Broughton is a nut about guns, and one of the best pistol shots I ever saw. Can draw and throw a gun and fan it and all that. I'm a fair shot myself, but he is wonderful. How good Hinkley is on that stuff I don't know, but I do know he's been a captain in the army of Brazil, and a sailor from the Horn to Bering Sea. Both of them around thirty, I think."

"They sound available," granted Graves.

He relapsed into silence. After a moment or two he took out another cigar, offered it to the general, who refused, and finally lit it himself. His gaze rested for a moment on the line of great Bombers which he could partially see through the open window.

"Bombing today?" he inquired.

"Just practise. Those ships out there are all loaded with thousand-pounders—we practise tomorrow on the hulk of an old battleship out in Chesapeake Bay. The first test is only two weeks away."

"Going to make the grade?" inquired Graves easily.

He seemed to have suddenly shed his former terse directness. And that he was talking to the famous General O'Malley, chief of Air Service, did not seem to cut any figure with him at all.

"Are we going to make the grade?" repeated the general, his eyes flashing. He hit the desk a resounding blow with his fist. "We'll sink anything they put up in ten minutes. Fellows like these two you're going to meet now and the rest of the men who fly those ships out there are going up and show the world——"

A knock on the door interrupted him.

"Come in!" he shouted.

Captain Evans obeyed.

"Broughton and Hinkley are on their way, sir," he reported.

"Good. Send 'em in as soon as they get here. Now, Graves, let me tell you——" and the general was off on the passion of his life, which was flying in general and his flyers in particular.

Graves deftly inserted the proper question at the proper time, and before long the dynamic general had blueprints and specifications and maps out to strengthen his arguments further.

He was in the midst of describing what a two-thousand-pound bomb would do to a battle-ship, Times Square, a dock, or anything else it hit when Captain Evans entered again.

"Evans, you bother me to death. What the ——"

"Lieutenants Broughton and Hinkley are here, sir," returned the adjutant, standing at attention. Captain Evans was very correct.

"Oh yes. Send 'em in. From now on, Graves, it's your funeral. Come in, boys. Mr. Graves, may I present Mr. Broughton and Mr. Hinkley. Sit down. All right, fire away, Graves."

II

"YOU gentlemen are here, upon General O'Malley's recommendation, in order to let me give you an opportunity to volunteer for a special mission upon the success of which depends to a considerable extent the lives of many hundred people. Even more important, it has considerable bearing on the future welfare of this country. Least important—in itself, without considering the ramifications resulting from it—it means the capture of a very important and dangerous criminal."

Graves' remarkable eyes flitted from one flyer to the other as he studied the effect of his words. Broughton was a thickset, tanned young man possessed of a certain reserve which involuntarily commanded the respect of Graves. He was blond-haired and blue-eyed, and his gaze was as steady as it was noncommittal. Tall, lath-like, Hinkley had an air of careless recklessness about him, helped along by the pronouncedly sardonic cast of his face. Like Broughton, he preserved silence.

"With General O'Malley's permission, I will go over some of the ground I have already covered with him for the benefit of you gentlemen," Graves went on after a moment.

He proceeded to tell the airmen of Hayden, his importance and the difficulty of capturing him without great publicity and loss of life.

"The only dope we have on the exact layout of his headquarters was obtained through field-glasses by operatives who climbed adjoining mountains and studied the place from all sides. He lives on the very peak of a mountain, without another cabin within miles. But one rough road, winding around the mountain side on a very steep grade, leads to it. For several miles before it reaches the summit of the mountain the cliff drops away sheer from one side of the road, and on the other rises with almost equal steepness. There are so many sheer ravines, and so forth, that it would be almost impossible to get even two hundred men up by any other way than the road; that is, providing they carried machine-guns and other supplies which would be necessary if they stood any chance of capturing Hayden. He has several guards, sufficiently armed, who have every strategic point guarded. Hayden is absolutely without hope, if his presence in this country is known. Capture means —— for him, and he is almost as sure of it as I am. Being a man of force and brilliancy, although he is crazy, and possessed of a weird magnetism which induces real fanaticism among his followers, the few men up there will undoubtedly fight for him to the death. My job—in which I would like to have you gentlemen help me—is to capture him without publicity or loss of life."

"If there's a chance we may be working for you on this picnic, it might not be discourteous for us to ask who you are?"

It was Hinkley speaking. He was lounging lazily in his chair, one long leg drooping over the other. Graves smiled.

"Here, perhaps, is enough to satisfy you," he returned, handing Hinkley the document which had been laying on the desk since O'Malley had laid it down.

"I don't know just who he is myself," confided O'Malley as Hinkley glanced over the signed note. "But I have a feeling that I'd give a month's pay to be in on what he is going to do."

Broughton smiled at his irrepressible chief.

"That remains to be seen, general," he said gently—the first word he had spoken since entering the office.

"Mysterious, but impressive, Jim," laughed the irreverent Hinkley as he passed the sheet of paper over to Broughton.

The flyer read it slowly, and handed it back to Graves without comment.

"My scheme is this," said Graves, leaning back once more and setting the cigar in one corner of his mouth. "That's wild country—no place to land. The only cleared spot for twenty miles—or in other words near enough to Hayden to suit my needs—is right around his cabin. It is small and rough and on a grade so steep that according to my information it would make a man puff to climb it. I want you gentlemen to fly me over there in a Martin bomber, which I understand is about the safest of ships in a crackup. This ship will be equipped with extra gas and oil tanks to insure large cruising radius. No ship with

ordinary gas capacity could safely make the hop, I understand; in any event would not have fuel enough for any reconnaisance.

"In the ship there will also be provisions, machine guns, Colts and plenty of ammunition. I want you gentlemen to fool around with the motor when we are over Hayden's headquarters, make a supposed forced landing, and endeavor to crack up the ship without hurting any of us. I will be in the uniform of a colonel. You will also be in full uniform.

"Naturally we will crack up in Hayden's front yard. It is the only cleared spot, as I said. He will not like our presence, nor will any of his henchman be very enthusiastic. But we'll be 'in,' and it's a —— sight easier to get out than it would be to get in.

"What we do from then on is on the knees of the gods, so to speak. Some way or other we must invent a way to get Hayden and get him out of there. It's a man's-size job, all right, but we've got to figure on a little luck and then taking advantage of it.

"You men are recommended as flyers, and also as men who've had some diversified experience. This is not flattery, it is a statement of facts. I expect that you can handle yourselves in any company, and that you'll be able to come to bat in a pinch when we get up there.

"It's a hard contract, and you will get nothing out of it except a document in the secret archives of the War Department which may sometimes help you. Now first, what do you think of the plan insofar as it concerns the flying end of things, and secondly, do you want to declare your selves in on it?"

Graves had been talking as clearly and without excitement as always, and now he waited with equal calmness for a reply. General O'Malley was sunk deep in his swivel-chair, watching the younger men with a half-smile on his face. In his heart was a growing respect for the equable Mr. Graves.

"How much flying have you done, Graves?" he inquired impulsively.

"I made my second flight today, coming down from Washington. What do you say, gentlemen?"

"Can't get you off the track a minute," said O'Malley genially. "I'll subside."

There was silence for a moment. Hinkley smoked a cigaret, blowing rings at the ceiling with an air of complete indifference. Broughton was gazing steadily at Graves, his scrutiny untroubled by the fact that Graves noticed it. The stocky, slightly stolid-looking pilot was the first to speak.

"A deal of that kind is ticklish business without those in it knowing their helpers a —— sight better than we know each other, sir, but one thing and another about it sort of sells the proposition to me. Count me in, I guess."

"Suits me," declared Hinkley. "When do we go?"

"The first minute that the ship is ready. From Washington I got this dope—tell me if I'm wrong. A Martin lasts around five hours in the air if you take a chance and win on the oil staying with you. Fifty extra gallons of gas in each motor, and approximately fifty per cent. more oil than usual, will assure us of seven hours in the air if we need it. It may take time to find our man."

Broughton nodded.

"When can the extra tanks be installed, general? Major Jenks of the Engineering Division said that it was a comparatively simple job. As I understand it there is plenty of room in a Martin, and of course to any ship that can lift your two thousand pounders the extra weight will be a bagatelle."

"For a landsman you're pretty wise," the general complimented him. "I'll have the exact estimate in about ten minutes."

He pressed the bell and instructed Evans to have the engineer officer of the field report at his office immediately. Then the four men plunged into a discussion of guns, food, and other details. Graves had exact figures at his finger tips. Not a detail was brought up which he did not settle as smoothly and quickly as he talked. There was something ruthlessly direct about him—an air of resistless efficiency that was queerly at variance with his appearance, which inclined rather more toward being that of a student than a man of physical achievement.

Mutual respect grew in the minds of the flyers and of Graves. He was no amateur at reading character and estimating men, and he found the airmen to his liking.

The engineer officer, ordered to use every facility at his command to expedite the changing of the Martin, said that on the morning of the second day the ship would be ready for test. At noon it should be ready to go.

"Good," said Graves. "I guess we've covered everything, gentlemen. Hinkley and Broughton will attend to gathering the equipment, general, providing you furnish them proper authority. I will be back about nine A.M., day after tomorrow. I guess there is no need for me to emphasize the need for absolute secrecy—you all realize that. If any of you want to reach me, you can call the Monticello Hotel in Norfolk and ask for Room 220. Don't ask for Graves.

"Thank you for your help—I'll see you day after tomorrow. Good-by until then."

With a smile and slight bow, he left.

"NOW I wonder just who in —— he is?" inquired Hinkley as the two flyers started to walk toward the bachelor quarters.

"Search me, but he's turning up two thousand a minute, looks like. I figure I might not mind having him behind me in a scrap of any nature whatsoever."

"He's probably some big agent of the secret service. There's a lot of those eggs that pull off big stuff and nobody ever knows it. Take that Zimmerman note, for instance, during the war. At least, that's what my ex-pilot Dumpy Scarth says."

"Dumpy ought to know," grinned Broughton. "What do you think of our coming *soirée?*"

"If I thought, I'd probably never go!"

III

"I WISH I was back in Texas. This muggy heat makes me sweat like ——."

"Any amount of heat that can wring moisture out of your skin and bones deserves respect, Larry," returned Broughton, shifting his body a trifle so that he could lie more comfortably.

The two men were lying in the shade of an S. E. 5 wing on the line in front of the Engineering Department hangars.

"Where's Covington now? By the time he gets through testing that Martin it'll have flown twice as far as we're going to fly it and be all ready to get out of whack again," remarked Hinkley, rolling a stem of grass around in between his lips.

"It'll be right when we get it though. Did he say it was fully equipped?"

Hinkley nodded.

"Even our suitcases are in, and artillery enough to equip all the armies of the allies. That's the ship now, isn't it?"

Both men watched the Martin which was gliding majestically over the hangars on the Western edge of the field. It was wide and squat-looking, the one motor on each wing with the nose of the observers cockpit between giving it the impression of a monster with a face. Over seventy feet of wingspread, two Liberty motors, weighing nearly five tons with a full load—it seemed so massive that the idea of flying it would have been ridiculous to a landsman who had never seen one in the air. There was none of the lightness and trimness usually associated with airplanes.

It squatted easily on the ground, the high landing gear thrusting the nose ten feet in the air as it landed. It came taxying slowly toward the waiting pilots.

"Ready to go, I see."

Broughton sat up and Hinkley turned at the sound of Graves' voice. He was already in coveralls. The open neck showed the stiff-standing collar of an army uniform with officers' insignia on it.

"Yes, sir. And you?"

"Right now. Is there anything more to be done to the ship?"

"Not unless Covington has discovered something in this flight," replied Broughton. "A little more gas and oil to make up for what Covey has just used and we'll be set."

Coversation became impossible as the ship rumbled up to the line. Using first one motor and then the other, depending on which way he wanted to turn, Covington brought the bomber squarely up to the waiting-blocks. The attentive ears of the flyers listened closely to the sweet idling of both motors while Covington waited in the cockpit for the gas in the carburetors to be used up before cutting his switches.

"Listens well," stated Hinkley.

Broughton nodded.

"While they're filling it with gas let's make sure we understand everything," said Graves. "This will probably be our last opportunity to talk."

"Let's see what Covey says first," suggested Broughton.

The test pilot, a chunky young man with nearly three thousand hours in the air on over sixty types of ships, assured them briefly that everything was in apple-pie condition. And when Covington said a

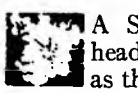
ship was right, few men in the Air Service made even a casual inspection to verify it.

"We'll have her filled in five minutes or so. Where in —— are you bound, anyway?" he inquired curiously. "You've had us flying around here as busy as "Lamb" Jackson getting ready for a flight."

This irreverent reference to an officer who flew semi-occasionally to the accompaniment of enough rushing around on the part of mechanics to get the whole brigade in the air caused Broughton to grin widely.

"We're carrying Colonel Graves here to Dayton, and want to be prepared for a forced landing. There's a little unrest among the miners, over in West Virginia, you know."

"There'll be more if all that artillery gets into action," returned Covington. "Well, good luck. I've got to take up this —— Caproni and find out——"



A SICKENING crash made the heads of all four men jerk around as though pulled by one string. On the extreme western edge of the field a mass of smoke with licking flames showing through hid a De Haviland, upside down.

"Hit those trees with a wing and came down upside down," came the quiet voice of Graves. His face was white to the lips.

Covington rushed into the hangar, bound for a telephone. Before he reached it there came two explosions in rapid succession. Then a blackened figure, crawling over the ground away from the burning ship.

Neither flyer had spoken. They watched fire engines and ambulances rush across the field, and saw that horrible figure disappear behind a wall of men. Came a third explosion.

"Bombs," said Hinkley.

"Two cadets from the 18th Squadron," yelled Covington from the hangar door.

"Tough luck," said Broughton, his tanned face somber.

Graves, still white, looked at the flyers curiously. In his eyes there was suddenly sympathy and understanding, but no trace of fear.

"I suppose there is no chance for either of them?" he asked.

"Not a bit."

"Words are rather futile, aren't they? But if you don't mind, let's make sure we understand each other now so that there will be no question of our procedure, insofar as we can lay it out ahead of time."

Mechanics had resumed their work after the brief flurry caused by the accident, and several of them swarmed over the Martin, supplying it with gas and oil in each motor. There was very little to be said by Graves, except to emphasize previous instructions.

"I am banking on their respect for the United States Army—something which no class of people ever loses. I hope it will be fear and respect mingled, and that not even Hayden, suspicious as he will be, will dare fool with army officers. You both have shoulder holsters as well as your belts?"

Both men nodded.

"That's all then, I guess."

"And the ship is ready," said Hinkley.

"I left my helmet over in the hangar. I'll be right out," said Graves.

He started for the hangar with long, unhurried strides.

"Larry, I'm growing to believe that this man Graves has got something on the ball," Broughton remarked slowly as they walked toward the ship. "In addition, he's got nerve."

That was a lot for Broughton to say on short acquaintance, and Hinkley knew it.

"I wouldn't trust any man in the world in a knockdown fight as far as I could throw this Martin, Jim, without seeing him there first," the tall pilot said. "But I feel a lot easier in my mind!"

IV

GRAVES climbed in the observer's cockpit, which is the extreme nose of the ship. Directly behind him, seated side by side and separated from him only by the instrument board, were Broughton and Hinkley. Broughton was behind the wheel. On the scarf-mount around the observer's cockpit a double Lewis machine-gun was mounted. Several feet back of the front cockpits, where a mechanic ordinarily rode, another twin Lewis was mounted on a similar scarf-mount.

Broughton turned on the gas levers, retarded the two spark throttles, and with his hand on the switches of the right-hand motor waited for the mechanics to finish swinging the propeller.

"Clear!" shouted one of them.

Jim clicked on the switches and pressed the starter. The propeller turned lazily,

the motor droning slightly as an automobile motor does when the starter is working. In a few seconds she caught. Similar procedure with the left-hand motor, and shortly both Libertys were idling gently.

Broughton's eyes roved over the complicated instrument board before him. Two tachometers, two air-pressure gages, two for temperature, air-speed meter, two sets of switches, starting buttons, double spark, double throttle, and on the sides of the cockpit shutter levers, gas levers, landing lights and parachute flare releases—it was a staggering maze to the uninitiated, but the two airmen read them automatically. From time to time they turned to watch more instruments set on the sides of the motors; oil-pressure gages, and additional air-pressure and temperature instruments, to say nothing of gages to tell how much gas and oil they had.

Finally the pilot's hand dropped to the two throttles set side by side on his right hand. Little by little he inched them ahead until both motors were turning nine hundred. He left them there a moment, watching the temperatures until one read sixty and the other sixty-five. He cut the thottle of the left-hand motor back to idling speed, and then slowly opened the right one until the tachometer showed twelve hundred and fifty. He let it run briefly on each switch alone, listening to the unbroken drum of the cylinders. He went through the same routine with the left motor before he allowed both motors to idle while mechanics pulled the heavy blocks.

The ship was headed toward the hangars. When the block was pulled the right-hand motor roared wide open. Without moving forward three feet the great ship turned in its tracks, to the left. After it was turned it bumped slowly out for the take-off.

You can almost tell a Martin pilot by his taxying. The least discrepancy in the speed of either motor will make the ship veer. There is a constant and delicate use of the throttles to hold it to a straight course, without getting excessive speed. The two big rudders, both attached to one rudder bar, have little effect on the ground.

With a tremendous roar the Martin sprang into life. Jim set himself against the wheel with all his strength to get the tail up. As soon as that effort was over the Martin became suddenly easy to handle. It took the air in but a trifle longer run than a De Haviland. Neither flyer had his goggles over his eyes. Being seated ahead of the propellors, that terrific airblast which swirls back from an airplane stick was not in evidence. The propellers whirred around with their tips less than a foot from the heads of the airmen.

As soon as he had cleared the last obstacle and had started to circle the field Jim synchronized the motors until both were turning exactly fourteen-fifty. He studied gages and adjusted shutters to hold the temperature steady.

One circle of the field proved that the Martin was all that Covington said it was. It handled with paradoxical ease—a baby could have spun the wheel or worked the rudders. Only a slight logginess when compared with smaller ships would make a pilot notice what a big ship he was flying.

Jim was still new enough on Martins to get a kick out of seeing what he was tooling through the air. The wings stretched solidly to either side, totalling over seventy feet. Struts, upright and cross, were like the limbs of some great tree. Four feet to either side of the cockpit, resting on the lower wing amid a maze of struts and braces, the Libertys sang their drumming tune.

Broughton swung up the James River and passed between Petersburg and Richmond. The smiling Virginia country was level and cleared, and there was nothing to weigh on the flyers' minds except what might happen at the end of the flight. Both of them let their thoughts dwell on what lay ahead. Perhaps Graves' mind was running in the same channel, but he was apparently devoting all his faculties to enjoying the flight. In a Martin the country is spread out before you—you can watch it as comfortably as from some mountain peak.

THEY were flying slightly northwest, and passed Richmond a few miles to the south. The terrane commenced to become rough and patchy. Fields were small and clumps of trees studded the ground thickly. Miles ahead the Appalachian Range loomed majestically. The altimeter showed six thousand feet, but the Martin would not miss some of those peaks by a very large margin.

Both Hinkley and Broughton paid increasing attention to the instruments as the foothills slipped behind, their low green tops

rolling away to the foot of the range. Finally Hinkley held up his wrist-watch and pointed. It was time for his trick at the wheel. Both men loosened their belts. Hinkley stood up, took the wheel, and waited for Broughton to slip into the left-hand seat.

It was not a performance to be essayed by a nervous person. The ship skidded perilously during the moment when neither man had his feet on the rudder bar.

Hinkley took up the duty of flying while Broughton began studying his map. Their course would take them past Lexington, which would be an easy landmark because of the fact that the campus of the Virginia Military Institute could be easily picked up. From that time on careful observation would be necessary, for few landmarks are available at all, and these few unreliable, when one is well over the Appalachians.

Lexington slipped by, and the Martin thundered along above a smiling valley. Hinkley watched the compass like a hawk, striving to hold exactly to the course they had calculated. Soon they were over the main range of mountains—for the next hour their only hope lay in those two mighty Libertys.

It was a scene of breath-taking majesty to look down on the far-rolling range, the mountain tops of which were less than a thousand feet below. The bottoms of the ravines, however, were far down, the infrequent houses as tiny as doll dwellings. The altimeter showed six thousand feet.

Broughton's map showed that a small river, winding its way north and south, should come in sight very soon. By following that river northward until a railroad that twisted and turned on itself, crossed it, they would be twenty miles due east of Farran County. When they reached Farran County they would have to depend on observation to pick the right place, for only an approximate location was indicated on the map as Hayden's headquarters.

As they reached the crossing of the river and the railroad Broughton leaned over and tapped the motionless Graves on the shoulder. Graves turned, and Broughton pointed to the map and then below, indicating the crossing. Graves nodded.

As Hinkley turned due west and they roared toward their goal Graves studied the faces of his assistants once more. Hinkley's thin face was more hawklike than ever below the tight-fitting helmet and the goggles. The aerial headgear gave him a Mephistophelian appearance. There was a sort of perverse recklessness graven there, and not a trace of weakness. Broughton, clear-eyed and untroubled, seemed to typify quiet capability. Graves turned again to the primeval grandeur below with a contented smile.

In a moment Broughton and Hinkley changed seats again. It was more difficult this time, for the scrambled currents of the mountains were beginning to toss the great bomber around as if it were the lightest and least stable of scout planes. Masses of cloud above them made the air more bumpy, as always. The transfer was accomplished quickly, however, and then all three men began their difficult search for Hayden's cabin.

It was almost impossible that they should not be on the course—at least near enough to be able to see the cabin. Graves took out a pair of field glasses, and ceaselessly searched the ground below. One factor made the quest a trifle easier. Not a single mountain did they see which showed any sign of either clearing or habitation, so that there was no question, as yet, of making a choice.

It was a strip of country now where five-hundred feet cliffs and sheer ravines rivaled the majesty of the mountains. Save for the tremendous trees, in place of the scrubby mesquite, it reminded Broughton of the mountains around El Paso. To the border flyers country like that was no novelty. They checked up the maze of instruments frequently, but aside from that showed no signs of undue excitement.

Hinkley peered steadily northward for a moment, and then shook Graves by the shoulder. He pointed to a towering peak, on which a cleared spot stood out sharply. Before Graves could train his glasses on it a fleecy cloud blocked his vision. Broughton banked sharply and skirted the cloud.

Once again the view was clear, and for fully thirty seconds Graves scrutinized the clearing. Then he motioned Broughton to fly that way.

It was five or six miles away. Four minutes was sufficient to bring them almost over it. Once again the field glasses came into play. Both flyers could see a large timber cabin built a little below the crest of the clearing, close to the trees. The

clearing was on the eastern slope, including the top and perhaps twenty yards of the western slope. There did not appear to be ten yards of level earth—the mountain literally came to a blunt point.

Graves slowly inserted his glasses in his case, and then turned to the flyers. He nodded briefly, and pointed down.

Jim retarded the spark on the left hand motor, and motioned Hinkley to turn off the gas line. To do more good, he changed the altitude adjustment completely. The object of all this was to lean down the gas mixture in the carburetor.

Shortly, as the gas had practically run out the motor began to pop back with loud reports. Hinkley turned the gas on again, and then Broughton began to click the switches on and off rapidly. It sounded as though there was a badly missing motor out there on the left wing.

He motioned Hinkley to follow his lead, in order to give himself a good opportunity to size up the landing situation. He was spiraling down slowly, with Hinkley seeing to it that the left motor was cutting out almost completely.

THE long way of the clearing was uphill. The lower Broughton came, the steeper it looked. It appeared to be perhaps two hundred yards long, narrowing to nearly a point at the peak. The best way to crack up would undoubtedly be to run up the hill, over the top, and ram the trees with what little speed was left. There would undoubtedly be stumps or ditches which would crack them up before that, but the trees made it a sure thing.

A few men could be seen now, standing around the cabin. Graves studied them carefully, his glasses out once more. Broughton and Hinkley were inspecting that clearing, with no time for humans. Jim handled his great ship in that slow spiral automatically, jockeying the wheel incessantly as the air currents became worse.

Six hundred feet above the mountain top, he came to a decision. He could land without cracking up.

Hinkley worked the switches more rapidly, and Jim helped out by rapid thrusts forward and back with both throttle and spark levers. Popping, spitting, missing—no one who had ever heard a motor could believe that the ungodly racket meant anything but a badly disabled engine.

Broughton spun the wheel rapidly, and turned westward, curving around until he was headed for the lower corner of the clearing. His line of flight would carry him diagonally from this corner to a point a few feet below the peak.

He stalled the Martin as completely as possible. The air-speed meter showed sixty-five miles an hour. The great weight of the ship caused it to drop almost as fast as it glided forward.

The rim of trees formed a barrier nearly sixty feet high. The tail-skid ripped through them. Jim fought the ship with one hand while he turned both throttles full on for a moment to stop that mush downward which was the result of lack of speed.

As he pulled them back Hinkley cut all four switches. Then Jim banked to the right, so that his wheels would hit the ground together. He judged it rightly. For a second he thought the ship was going to turn over on the right, or downhill wing. It seemed to hover on the verge of it. The pilot snapped on the right-motor switches and the propeller, turning from the force of the air-stream, caught. The motor sprang into life as Jim thrust the throttle full on. It swung the right wing in time, and he cut it as the ship's nose was turned up hill, both wheels on the same level. His observation as to the smoothness of the clearing had been correct. The slightest depression—even a rut—would have overturned the ship.

Before any one could say anything Jim felt the ship settle backward. It took a thousand revolutions on the right hand motor to stop it, but the propeller bit the air in time to prevent the tail-skid breaking.

"Work the left-hand switches while I taxi up!" yelled Jim into the pleased Hinkley's ear.

Graves, his face white but his smile firm, settled back in his seat as Jim pressed the starter on the left hand motor. It caught.

Several men came running over the brow of the hill as Jim turned up the left hand motor to equal the right. The thousand revolutions on the right hand motor had not been sufficient to move and thus swing the ship, but just enough to hold it steady. It started slowly. As soon as it had a little momentum Hinkley cut the switches, and at the same time Jim jerked the throttle back. A loud report, and a brief miss was the reward of their efforts. Graves looked

back approvingly, and then turned to watch the group of men nearing the plane.

The ship almost stopped, and had started to swing, before the grinning flyers caught the left hand motor again. Its progress up the slope was spasmodic, and it would not have been a surety to the most expert of observers that the left hand motor was not suffering from a plugged gas line or an intermittent short circuit in the ignition. With the walking men close alongside, Jim brought the Martin to the top of the hill. There was just barely clearance enough for the wings.

As soon as the wheels were slightly over the top, enough so that the Bomber could not roll backwards, he turned off the gas. Soon the motors began to spit and miss, and then the propellers stopped. Broughton snapped off the switches.

"Now for the fun," remarked Larry Hinkley.

V

IT WAS a miscellaneous collection of men who stood around the ship. Three of them were very well dressed and looked like business men. Others, mostly in flannel shirts, were slim, hard-faced, youngish fellows. Several were foreigners. The rougher-looking element paid most attention to the great ship, but it was a noticeable fact that all of them spent more time appraising the flyers than they did in satisfying their curiosity regarding the bomber.

"How do you do, gentlemen, and just where are we?" inquired Graves calmly as he removed his coveralls.

There was a few seconds pause as everybody took in his uniform. It was garnished with several rows of ribbons across the front of the blouse, the flyers noticed.

"This is in Farran County—nearest town Elm Hill," returned a burly, hard-faced man who was wearing a coat over his flannel shirt, and loosely tied necktie. He was somewhat older than any one else there except the three men who were dressed so meticulously.

"How far is Elm Hill from here?"

It was Broughton who asked that question.

"Twenty miles. What's the matter—have trouble?"

It was the hard-faced man again, and he glanced from face to face quickly as he asked the question. Two of the other men had walked to the end of a wing, inspecting the ship. The eyes of the others were constantly flitting from the ship to its passengers, and they listened closely.

"Yes. This —— engine here went flooey on us. We're lucky to get down alive," replied Hinkley.

Both flyers were trying to pick Hayden out of the dozen men who surrounded them, but somehow none of them seemed exactly to fit their mental pictures of the noted criminal. Several of the crowd were conversing in low voices.

"Where were you going?" inquired one of the well-dressed men on the edge of the circle. He was small, wore glasses, and his thin face had a fox-like look about it that gave him a subtly untrustworthy appearance.

"Inasmuch as it seems necessary to throw ourselves on your hospitality for a while, it may be well to introduce ourselves," Graves said quietly. In some uncanny way his dignity and competence seemed to radiate from him, increased by the prestige of his uniform. Both the airmen felt its influence.

"I am Colonel Graves, of the United States Army Air Service. These are Lieutenants Broughton and Hinkley. We are flying from Langham Field, Virginia, to Dayton, Ohio, on important army business. I trust that we will not trespass on your hospitality too long, but I fear we will have to dismantle the ship and send it home by rail. We can't take off out of this field. We are lucky to have had such an experienced pilot as Lieutenant Broughton to land us. We did not expect to find so many people in this deserted place."

A portly, fleshy-faced man with small eyes set in rolls of fat shoved his way forward. He had been talking to the fox-faced little man.

"Just a little fishing party up here," he said with an attempt of heartiness. He was dressed in a rich-looking brown suit, and a huge sparkler gleamed from his elaborate silk cravat. He was smoking a big cigar.

He darted a warning look from his small eyes as two younger, roughly dressed men in the background allowed their heretofore guarded voices to become a bit too loud. One man caught the look, and ceased abruptly.

"It certainly is a good country for it,"

replied Graves pleasantly. "I trust we will not impose on you too much——"

"Not at all, not at all," the stout man assured him, but the looks of the others belied his words.

Groups had drawn off a little way and were conversing in undertones. All the men seemed to have poker faces—there was no hint of expression in them, although both flyers, as they removed their coveralls, caught disquieting as well as disquieted looks thrown their way. Graves continued to converse with the fat man. The tough-looking customer who had originally joined the conversation stood by himself, meditatively chewing a blade of grass. His huge right hand, which had been in his coat pocket at the start, was lifted to his jutting, prize-fighter's chin, while his expressionless gray eyes dwelt steadily on the airmen.

"Quite some ship, eh? It's a big reskel!"

The dialect of a New York east-side Jew came familiarly to the flyers' ears. It was a small, hook-nosed, black-haired man, whose shirt, tie and putteed legs all gave an impression of personal nicety even here in the wilderness. His face was somewhat pasty, and his lips very thin. He did not look over twenty-five.

"It sure is," Hinkley assured him, throwing both pairs of coveralls into the cockpit of the ship.

Neither of the flyers wore a blouse, but were arrayed in O. D. shirts, breeches and boots. Both wore a sagging belt and holster, with the butt of a Colt .45 protruding from each container. Their garb and general appearance fitted the wildness of their surroundings perfectly. Graves had his automatic out of sight, in his pocket. The sight of the guns the flyers wore caused additional low-voiced conversation on the part of the onlookers.

The hard-faced American turned and started for the cabin without a word. Hinkley and Broughton walked over toward Graves.

Every one but the fat man started to walk around the ship, examining it with interest. Broughton started to walk toward the lower edge of the clearing. He had an idea that he wanted to verify by pacing off the distance and examining the rim of trees on the lower end.

Graves was talking casually to the fat man, describing the flight, when a loud exclamation and a sudden burst of conversation caused him to turn. The machine guns had been noted for the first time.

"You fly well armed," said the tall, stooping Jew nastily. Every one else was silent, awaiting Graves' reply.

"The ship is from Langham Field, where all the planes are equipped for bombing and other tests against battle-ships," was the easy reply.

Hinkley, who had been wondering whether Graves would think of that excuse, smiled admiringly.

"Doesn't miss many bets," he told himself.

The fat man's careful geniality was suddenly gone. While the knot of men who were now clustered close to the rear cockpit of the ship engaged in further low-voiced conversation his little eyes roved from nose to tail of the ship, coming back to rest on Graves' untroubled face.

The man who had gone to the cabin came back over the hill. Another man was with him—a powerfully built fellow who towered over his companion. Every one became suddenly silent, as they came nearer. Hinkley knew instinctively that this was Hayden.

HIS deeply lined, somewhat fleshy countenance could have served as a model for the face of a fallen angel. The wide, cruel mouth, high forehead and square jaw all indicated strength, and yet suffering and dissipation were graven there. His eyes, as he approached the ship, were in direct contrast to the rest of his face. They were large and bright—the eyes of a dreamer, and they almost succeeded in counteracting the cruel force of his face. Hinkley had a glimpse of the man's magnetism in those eyes.

"How do you do, colonel?" he said quietly.

His voice was deep and rich. He removed the slouch hat he wore, revealing thick black hair sprinkled with gray. It strengthened the impression that he had Slav blood in him, for his complexion was dark and his eyes liquid black.

"We dropped in on you unwillingly, but we are fortunate to find people here. My name is Graves."

"I am glad to know you."

He did not offer his hand, Hinkley noted. He stood quietly, looking at the ship. Broughton came back at this juncture, his eyes taking in the massive figure of the newcomer with slow appraisal.

There is an unconscious respect and curiosity engendered in even the most unemotional person by any man who is noted—or notorious. A great criminal, a great artist, a champion chess-player, the survivor of a widely heralded accident—anything unusual draws its meed of attention. Hayden, without the benefit of his reputation, was an arresting man. With it, he repaid study.

"I am very sorry, colonel, but we have but little food here—scarcely enough for our party. I will have some one guide you down to Elm Hill, where you will be more comfortable," Hayden said at length.

"We have a little food in the ship. It's getting late, and we'll just sleep out here under the wings," returned Graves quietly.

Suddenly a devil peered forth from Hayden's eyes. The softness was gone, and savagery was there instead.

Graves looked into that queerly demoniac face without emotion. Apparently he did not feel the sudden tenseness that had every one in its grip. All felt the battle of wills going on there—that there was something underneath which did not appear on the surface.

"I think I'll turn the ship around and head it into the wind," came Broughton's quiet voice.

It broke the tension. Graves turned to Broughton and Hinkley.

"I think it would be best. We'll give you a hand on the wing—it's a narrow place to turn in," he remarked casually.

Hinkley primed both motors from underneath, and Broughton got into the cockpit. As soon as the motors were running Hinkley and Graves set themselves against the left wing. With the right motor full on they succeeded in turning the ship until it was headed down the slope, pointing toward one corner.

"If you don't turn 'em into the wind the controls are liable to get flapping," Hinkley explained to all and sundry. "With a smaller ship, wind sometimes turns 'em over, getting under the wing, too."

Larry was wondering whether Broughton was planning to try a take-off. It looked like suicide to him, but Broughton was the doctor, Hinkley shrugged his shoulders at his thoughts, and then looked goodnaturedly at the lowering faces about him. He was enjoying himself.

Without another word Hayden walked toward the cabin. The others followed slowly.

"I'll be back in a moment," announced the fat man. "If there's anything you need——"

"Nothing, thank you," returned Graves.

"We are as welcome as rain at a picnic," remarked Hinkley after the man had got out of earshot.

"Just about," agreed Graves as Broughton returned. "To tell you the truth, I expected that we would get away with things a lot better than we seem to be doing. Those three well dressed men are undoubtedly some of the higher-ups in Hayden's organization—the man that went after him is Somers. He is the only one I know. Somers served ten years in jail for killing a man when he was a radical leader. It was a strike affair. His specialty used to be salted mines and that sort of stuff—he's a rough customer who can take care of himself. I'm surprized to see him all dressed up out here—if he's working the city end of Hayden's scheme he's rather out of his element. We believe he's the actual leader on the robberies themselves. That little Jew, Meyer, is the only other man known to me personally. He's a New York gangster—good with a gun."

"How do things look to you?" inquired Broughton.

"The whole bunch is too —— suspicious," Graves returned unemotionally. "Part of this gang are simply down here for a visit, I imagine, to consult with Hayden. He isn't taking a chance on getting within miles of a big city policeman. I imagine that most of the men who do the actual robbing are here, too, hiding out until the next one is pulled. Probably the prosperous-looking men are the birds who help get rid of the securities Hayden gets hold of."

There was silence for a moment. Graves paced up and down slowly, his head bent in thought.

"I'm going up to the cabin on the excuse of getting some water to see what I can see. We've got to work fast, I can see that. Hayden is audacious and brilliant, and suspicion is enough for this gang to work on."

"The old boy seems to amount to something, all right," was Hinkley's tribute.

"He is a wonderful man. If he did not have that perverted twist in him, he might be almost anything. I would suggest that one of you fool around with this supposedly

missing motor, and the other one walk around and find out as much as possible about the guard system. We've got to be planning how we are going to get out of here. If you can do it without suspicion, you might see what they have along that lane there."

GRAVES started for the cabin as he finished speaking. Hinkley strolled carelessly over toward the lane which led away from the cabin into the woods. Broughton climbed up on the motor with a wrench in his hand and commenced tinkering with the valves.

The cabin door was open, and Graves could hear a conversation in which many low-pitched voices took part. He walked in calmly. All conversation ceased as he entered.

"Could we borrow a pail of some kind and get some drinking water?" he asked, taking in his surroundings with a single lightning-like look around.

There were eight bunks, built double-decker, against the four walls of the cabin. Each was occupied now by a cigaret-smoking man. Hayden stood in a doorway which apparently led into a small lean-to at the rear. Somers was sitting on a rude stool. There was one small table, littered with candle grease and cigaret butts. There was only one window, close to the ceiling. A sort of half-darkness made it difficult to make out the features of the men lying on the bunks.

He waited fully a half minute before receiving an answer. Then the fat man got to his feet.

"I'll get you one," he said.

He had darted a quick look at Hayden, Graves noticed, before saying anything.

He saw nothing but suspicion in the faces of the men about him. He surmised that few of them lived there, but were there for a meeting with their chief. Perhaps that might account for their attitude of extreme suspicion, which did not seem justified under the circumstances. Then there was always the possibility that some one of them might know him.

"How long do you think it will be before you get the plane out, Colonel?"

It was Hayden's deep, rich voice.

"Several days, I imagine," returned Graves, watching his man narrowly.

"I should think that unless your headquarters were notified where you were——"

It was a half question.

"We will wire from Elm Hill tomorrow. If we do not, they will have forty planes out looking for us," Graves explained.

He caught several meaning looks passing between various of the men at his last statement.

"I should think it would be a very difficult job to locate a plane that was really wrecked in these hills. Of course in your case you're in a clearing and it would be easy."

Hayden's voice was smooth and his words almost pleasant, but there was nothing in his eyes now to give the lie to his face. He was the personification of power and ruthlessness.

Graves' sixth sense, developed by years of contact with the world of crime and intrigue, warned him now. His mind probed behind Hayden's apparently casual words, and what the government man thought he found made him look at Hayden with new amazement. He thought back over the things he knew of the man before him.

For years he had been a thorn in the side of enforcers of the law all over Europe and America. A dozen times big coups—jewel robberies, bank robberies, huge swindling schemes—had been laid at his door, but never yet had he been caught dead to rights because of his genius for organization and leadership. There was a South American revolution which star chamber gossip of the secret service said that Hayden had conceived, promoted, and finally cleared a hundred thousand dollars on. When supposedly he had left the country, police and secret service alike had drawn long breaths of relief.

There was bigness and sweep about Hayden, and Graves knew that what he suspected of the man's plans concerning himself and the two flyers was by no means too audacious for Hayden to contemplate. He would order it with no compunction, and it would be a mere trifle for those men lying around the room to execute.

These thoughts raced through his head as he relighted his cigar.

"Traveling by plane is queer business," he remarked casually as he threw the match out the door. "We often have trouble with people, strange as it may seem. Moonshiners through this state, Tennessee and Kentucky always think we're after them if we have a forced landing anywhere near by.

Miners and hill-billys and their sort always figure army men and an airplane are there for some purpose. Consequently we always go on a trip well prepared with food, and heavily armed."

He watched the effect of his words on his listeners. He was disappointed. His explanation of the artillery the Martin carried, besides what he had said about the ship being from Langham Field, apparently had no effect in lightening the heavy suspicion that he could feel in the very air about him.

"Well, if you'll be good enough to give me the pail and show me where the water is I'll go back to the food," he said.

The fat man led him outside and around the corner to a small tent which sheltered a stove. A plank table with benches was beside it.

A young Italian who appeared to be the cook gave them a pail.

"The spring is right down the path. You can't miss it," said the guide.

His small eyes did not meet Graves' regard for more than a second.

The government man got the water and went back to the Martin. He found Hinkley already there.

"Find out anything?" he asked as he set down the pail.

"There's a tent and three men on the top of a steep cliff right above the road. They all seem to be foreigners. And you ought to see the cliff on the lower side of the road. Anybody that stepped off that would have time enough to say his prayers and make a will before he hit bottom. Those three men could hold that road against an army if they had a machine-gun. I came near getting shot myself. They said they were camping."

"It sure looks like a musical comedy war," remarked Broughton, sitting cross-legged on the motor.

"There may not be so much comic opera stuff about it, at that," stated Graves, removing the cigar from his mouth. "It's bad."

He told them briefly of his experience, and then went on:

"The size of the matter is, gentlemen, that those men are up to big things. They're so big and Hayden is in such a predicament that in my opinion he will take no chances. It was only the luck of having an operative over here who happened to be very familiar with Hayden that caused us to know he was here. In view of the questions he asked me about the difficulty of finding a wrecked plane in these mountains, plus what he is, I believe he plans to kill us, burn the plane, and then bury the motors or something. I expect that if I am right it will happen tonight."

His words were as calm and precise as though he were discussing the weather. He replaced the cigar in his mouth and puffed it slowly.

"Somehow or other I can't believe they would go that far on suspicion," said Hinkley. "They——"

"Are playing for big stakes, lieutenant," Graves cut in. "And you cannot figure them as normal. Somers has killed men—he was in jail ten years. Hayden would sanction anything necessary for the success of his project. What are our three lives to them, compared to the prizes they are playing for, or the results of their being run down?"

"Lots of people will have seen our ship passing over," suggested Broughton. "They may figure that the army will just say another wreck and let it go, but an investigation might be embarrassing."

"They could kill us in such a way that it would look like a wreck," said Graves. Burn our bodies with the plane, or something like that."

Both airmen nodded.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Hinkley inquired.

"If you'll pardon me, Mr. Graves, I have a scheme that might work," announced Broughton. "It's no better than a fifty-fifty shot, but I believe that you're right, the more I think of it, and in that case I believe our chances of ever getting Hayden and getting out of here are about as good as the old snowball in ——. I've got a crazy idea we could take off here."

Hinkley was not greatly surprized, but Graves was.

"You really think so?" he inquired with the nearest approach to eagerness that the flyers had ever seen him show.

Broughton nodded.

"On account of the slope, only half a load of gas and oil now, and the fact that even if we stall completely getting over those trees that the mountainside is so steep we can nose down and get up speed. What do you think, Larry?"

"Just about fifty-fifty," was Hinkley's reply. "Of course I don't know a great deal about Martin bombers—I'm a pursuit man and Jim here is the big-ship expert. It'll be a hair-raiser, with everything to lose and pretty nearly everything to gain. Inasmuch as these yeggs are so suspicious, I don't believe we'd have a Chinaman's chance to get Hayden and get out of here——"

"Except by strategy they won't understand," Broughton cut in. "You see, Mr. Graves, I figure it this way. If you tell them we're going, they'll lose some of their suspicion. Probably half the reason for killing us would be to prevent our telling anybody about their funny rendezvous up here, plus the plausible reason for our death if anybody gets nosing around. The ship gives them that——"

"And any of them who are afraid of the police through their past reputations could disappear while some unknown tells the army all about the wreck," Graves suggested.

"Exactly," agreed Broughton. "They'll lose their suspicion, and will think that we see nothing unusual in this place. When the motors start they'll all be out for the take-off. By some hook or crook we ought to be able to get Hayden near enough the ship and a little away from the others so that we can knock him on the head, chuck him in the back cockpit, and give the old ship the gun."

"If they're all too near, one of us can get in the back, fiddle with the machine gun, and then suddenly announce that we'll mow down the crowd unless Hayden gives himself up," said Hinkley amiably.

GRAVES was almost excited at the hopeful vista suggested by the flyers. His pace was a little faster than usual as he covered a path twenty feet long over and over again. A fresh, unlighted cigar was clamped in the extreme corner of his well-chiseled mouth.

"Of course I am in your hands as far as flying is concerned," he said as though talking to himself. "I don't know how many of them will be armed, but the chances are that in the excitement the shooting will not be very accurate."

Every one was silent for a moment. Then Broughton made another suggestion.

"They will be back of us, sir, and if we can get in the front cockpit fast the bomb compartment, which is as high as our heads, will protect us from shots while we are taking off. They'll ricochet off the steel runway, I believe, at the angle of fire they'll shoot at. Besides, they'll hold their fire at first for fear of hitting Hayden."

Graves threw his untasted cigar away.

"We'll do it," he said calmly. "There are men with field-glasses over on that mountain there keeping watch. If we fail, all hope of getting Hayden alive and without publicity will be gone, but no man up here will get out. All the routes are blocked, if they only knew it. It will mean a lot of men killed capturing this party, and our swoop on Hayden's gang all over the country will be incomplete, but we'll have done our best."

"Let's get the motor started then, right away," said Broughton. "It's getting dark already."

The western sky was red as fire still, but the sun itself had dipped behind the mountains and the valleys were filling with purple shadow.

The motors were started without trouble. The roar of them brought every one out of the shack. Luck was with the flyers, for only three men came close to the ship—Hayden, Somers, and little Meyer. All the rest of the men stayed near the shack, fifty yards away from the Martin. The machine-gun holdup appeared to be unnecessary. The three men stopped about ten yards away.

Graves walked up to them.

"We have the ship fixed, and have decided to try a take-off," he said.

The comfort this brought to the three agitators was obvious. Graves looked around and beckoned to Hinkley, who strolled up casually. Broughton was idling the motors, now, and preparing to climb out.

Graves went a few steps to meet the flyer.

"Get close to Meyer and disarm him when I give the signal. Tell Broughton to do the same to Somers—knock him on the head if necessary. I'll get Hayden, and then the three of us can heave him in the back cockpit and get in before that gang up there can get their guns. I don't believe any of them carry revolvers."

Hinkley grinned delightedly.

"Fast work, partner," he breathed.

The three were standing quietly, talking in low tones, when Hinkley and Broughton came up.

"Well, good-by," said Graves, extending his hand to Hayden. Broughton and Hinkley watched him closely.

His fist shot up like a flash of light, carrying all his weight with it. The big man fell like an ox. At the same time the two flyers leaped in, revolvers in hand, and crashed the butts down on the heads of their respective victims. It was such a complete surprize that the ruse was funny in its effectiveness.

Somers and Meyer were disarmed in a trice. Before the astonished henchmen of Hayden had recovered from their surprize and covered half the distance between the cabin and the ship the three government men had heaved the unconscious Hayden into the rear cockpit and were scrambling forward over the bomb compartment.

Without waiting for belts to be adjusted Broughton jammed on both throttles. Bullets sang close to them; the gang had held their fire at first for fear of hitting Hayden, and now the bomb compartment shielded the flyers completely. Their heads did not show above it.

By the time the marksmen had realized this and had veered to go around the wing the ship was in motion. For a few seconds two men wrenched at the rudders in a mad effort to disable the plane, but the sturdy controls held. Then the Martin was moving so fast that the men had to let go.

For twenty-five yards Broughton ruddered the ship straight down the slope. It was extremely steep there, and the heavy ship picked up speed amazingly. Then Jim swung it slightly to the left, to get the benefit of the extra yards that would give him.

The trees rushed nearer with terrible swiftness. There came a quivering bounce, and then, with a feeling of infinite relief, he felt the ship leave the ground. He pulled the wheel back as far as it would go.

The Martin made it. There was not an inch of margin, for the elevators and rudders swished through the trees and the nose of the ship dropped in a stall. For two hundred feet Broughton had all he could do to keep it from dragging in the trees on that nearly sheer mountain side. Then it picked up speed, and with both Libertys still running wide open turned eastward through the thickening shadow, streams of fire from the exhausts trailing behind like banners of triumph.

VI

THE peak they had left was a trifle higher than any of the others, so it was unnecessary for Broughton to waste time getting altitude. The Martin drove steadily eastward over the murky world below.

Probably no ship is ever so helpless as when flying over country like that at night, but the successful culmination of their adventure was such a tonic to the airmen that the chance of a forced landing seemed only a minor thing, scarcely to be considered.

In a few minutes Graves turned and passed a note back to Hinkley. The tall flyer read it with difficulty in the darkness, and then passed it to Broughton, steadying the wheel to give the pilot an opportunity to read it:

> Although the ammunition and guns in the back are packed where I do not believe Hayden can get at them, I believe it would be wise for me to climb back there in order to take no chances with him. He is desperate, and might try to take us all to —— with him.

It would be an easy matter for Graves to get from his cockpit into the flyer's compartment, and from there back to the rear cockpit. The roof of the bomb compartment provided a four-foot runway which is not a difficult matter for an experienced airman to negotiate. Nevertheless, climbing around a ship under the best of conditions is no parlor sport.

It was a tribute to Graves' nerve that Broughton looked at Hinkley and then nodded at Graves. The secret agent promptly unbuckled his belt and crawled beneath the instrument board into their cockpit.

With the aid of wire and struts he inched himself over the flyers' heads, and started crawling along the runway. Broughton throttled as low as he dared to kill speed. The air was smooth as glass, as it always is at night, which made Graves' attempt easier.

Finally Hinkley turned to Broughton and nodded with a wide grin. Broughton relaxed from the strain of keeping the ship absolutely level, and looked around. No one could be seen in the rear cockpit. Then Graves' head appeared, and the firm mouth was smiling beneath the big goggles. He nodded cheerfully. Apparently everything was all right. Hayden's head had come into

contact with something when they had heaved him in, Broughton surmised, and he was probably as unconscious as a sack of meal.

They were now a speck in the starry sky above the mountains. In every direction nothing but the black voids of the valleys and the shadowed sides of towering mountains met the eye. Both flyers had seen awe-inspiring sights in the air, but there were few which could compare with the panorama spread out below them now. There was mystery and greatness there—widely scattered pin points of light from the wilderness, with an occasional far-off cluster that represented a town—all contributing to a grandeur and beauty which was more impressive because less seen than suggested.

SUDDENLY Hinkley's long fingers gripped Broughton's arm. He pointed to the right hand motor. For a moment Broughton could not fathom his meaning. Then his heart sunk as he realized what had happened.

A tiny spray of water was spurting from the radiator. Perhaps one of the bullets had hit it and weakened it, or more likely it was only a failure in the material. In any event, it meant that within a few minutes all the water would be gone, and even before that happened the motor would be useless.

The pilot strove to pierce the gloom below to discover any sign of a landing place. There was none. Parachute flares would do no good down there—one can land in the trees blindly with as much chance for life as in the daytime.

While Broughton was still trying to pick up some clearing, which would show lighter than the woods, Hinkley loosened his belt. He leaned over to yell into Broughton's ear:

"I think I can hold it for a while!"

He threw his leg over the side of the cockpit, leaning far backward to avoid the propeller which was whirling within inches of him. Finally he decided not to risk it, and climbed back. He went back on the bomb compartment and crawled down on the wing from there. Little by little he made his way forward to the leading edge of the wing. Once again even the throwing of an arm for a few inches would mean being mangled by the propeller.

He held to the struts and made his way to the motor. The design of the radiator helped his scheme. On a Martin it is a square contrivance set up above the motor, and well toward the rear of it. On most planes the radiator is in front of the motor, with the propeller turning two inches in front of it.

Hinkley fought the wind viciously while he extracted a half dollar from his pocket and wrapped it in his handkerchief. It took precious time to accomplish it on his perilous perch, and all the while the water was getting lower. Already Broughton had opened the motor shutters wide to hold the temperature down.

Finally Hinkley placed the wrapped coin against the leak. He pressed hard against it with his hand. He could feel the handkerchief soaking, but he knew that the motor would last many precious minutes more because he had reduced the leak by over half. He set himself as comfortably as he could. One foot was less than an inch from the edge of the wing. His right arm was crooked around a strut. His left held the temporary barrier against the radiator. In this position he fought the propeller blast.

The heat of the water made him change hands frequently. Once he nearly fell into the propeller doing it, for both hands had to be free for a second at one time in order that the coin be always pressed against the leak.

Then he had to change fingers, for his thumbs were both scalded. One by one he used the tip of each finger, and one by one they scalded. His thin lips were set into a line that was like a livid cut in his face, but the makeshift plug was always there. He did not even glance at the ground six thousand feet below. He wondered whether Broughton knew what he was suffering, and would land at the first opportunity.

Broughton did, but for a half hour he could find no place. Then the great ship cleared the last peak. Over beyond the foothills plowed fields gleamed dully in contrast to the black spots of trees.

The left hand motor was eighty-five Centigrade, flying throttled to a thousand revolutions and with the shutters wide open. It was difficult to handle the ship with the right motor turning up so much more. Broughton came to a decision. To take a chance was the only way.

He cut the right hand motor until it "revved" up a thousand, and started a shallow dive. In a moment the Martin was

diving through the gloom at a hundred miles an hour. It was only three thousand when they cleared the foothills. The country was still ragged, but it was level.

Broughton pulled his left parachute flare. A sense of ineffable relief filled him as he saw a fiery ball drop earthward. Those flares didn't work as invariably as they might.

The eyes of the three airmen, stranded there in the darkness, followed that ball of fire with unwinking eyes. Suddenly it burst, and a brilliant flare swung downward on a small parachute. The earth was lighted up fairly well in a circle of at least a mile's radius.

Broughton cut his motors still further. He beckoned to Hinkley. Hinkley knew the desperate need for haste—that flare would not last long and the other one, hung to the right hand wing-tip, might not work. He worked his way rapidly back to the cockpit, careless of his raw finger-tips as he grasped wires and struts to help him along. The flare was within three hundred feet of the ground, and the Martin a thousand, when he reached the seat and strapped his belt.

There was just one possible field. It was a cornfield, apparently, about seventy-five yards long. There was a fence at both ends. Next to one fence was a road. On the far side of the other was a very small clump of woods.

The flare was growing dim and perilously near the ground as the Martin, with all switches cut, skimmed the fence and settled. The corn was nearly as high as the bottom wing. The bomber no more than hit the ground before darkness came as suddenly as though a light had been turned off in a room.

The ship wavered, and there was a rending crunch from the landing gear. Then a crash as the ship nosed up slowly and the front shell of the observers cockpit folded back until it loosened the instrument board.

"Hooray!"

It was Hinkley shouting.

"Jim, I *never* was so glad to get on the ground in my life!"

Broughton made a wry face. He was suddenly weak from the strain.

For a moment the two sat there motionless, not even bothering to unloosen their belts. Then Hinkley turned to look at Graves. That gentleman was unloosening his belt.

"We thought you might want to smoke a cigaret, so we landed," said Hinkley.

Graves held up the frazzled butt of a cigar.

"I chewed it up from the time you got out there on the wing," he replied. "We came pretty near trading a Martin for a pair of honest-to—— wings, didn't we?"

"Or coal-shovels," grinned Hinkley. "How's Hayden?"

"Came to once and I put him out again and tied him up," replied Graves calmly. "Let's flag this car coming down the road and see where we are. I'd like to get the first train I can get to."

"We're not far from either Lexington or Richmond. I saw the lights of a big town a few miles north," said Broughton as all three men climbed out.

They lifted Hayden out of the back seat. His head was bandaged, and he was still unconscious.

"I bandaged him up—he was bleeding pretty badly," remarked Graves, lighting a new cigar with a steady hand. "Let's get over to the road—there's a regular parade of autos coming."

A string of headlights extending so far that some were mere points of light were coming down the road. The noise of a Martin, plus the parachute flare, had aroused the whole country.

Broughton lingered behind to use an electric-flashlight on the ship. The ground was soft, and there was a ditch they had hit, besides. That was the reason for the nose-over. It was better so, he reflected. They would have run into the fence and then the trees at the further end of the field, and some one would probably have been hurt.

Within fifteen minutes there were a hundred marveling people around. The flyers hired a guard for the ship, and then accepted the invitation of a man who drove a luxurious touring car to spend the night at his home. Hayden, whose identity was not revealed, spent the night in the town jail of Ellis, Virginia, guarded by the tireless Graves in addition to the regular warden, and accompanied that gentleman to Washington by train early the next morning. He was handcuffed, and rode in a baggage car to avoid publicity.

As he was leaving Graves shook hands with the flyers in a matter-of-fact way.

"You'll hear from me," he stated. "Perhaps I may see you again before long. Good-by."

HINKLEY and Broughton had to wait for a crew to come from Langham Field to dismantle the Martin and ship it home. The day after their return to the field the newspapers blossomed forth with across-the-page headlines telling of the round-up of a stupendous conspiracy which had been responsible for the series of great robberies that had been astounding the country.

The story of Hayden's capture was not a part of the press reports, and Hayden himself was not too prominent in them. They saw Graves' fine hand in that. They could readily realize that any revelation of their identity would be more dangerous than the glory involved would warrant, even were they desirous of nibbling at the fruits of fame.

A few days thereafter there came a letter to each of them. The contents were alike. There were two copies of a letter signed by that same great government official whose name had appeared on Graves' letter of authority. The letter was addressed to the Secretary of War. As they read those letters Hinkley's smile was as mocking as ever and Broughton's face as stoical, but each of them still has his copy, carefully locked up and preserved as though the most precious of possessions. As Hinkley once confided to Broughton while slightly under the influence of the demon rum—

"I don't think a bit more of that letter than I do my right eye!"

"HISHIMISHISH BATAT-T"

by Frank H. Huston

A nani sana, A nani sana,
Nina ni na ti naku
Ni na na ga qu;
Ti naha thihu, nani sana,
Hathi na—hc suna nu.

My children, My children,
It is I who wear the Morning Star
On my head;
I show it to my children,
Says the father—the father says.

PROBABLY nothing in the customs of the plains tribes has been less understood, more greatly misrepresented, or has had more balderdash or hysterical rot written concerning it than the Sun Dance—the Dog Soldier organization being a close second in this respect.

Actuated by the same motives that impel the devout Mohammedan to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hindu to bathe in the Ganges or to sleep upon sharp spikes, or the Flagellantes to scourge themselves with thongs and cactus limbs, the participants fulfilled a vow to the Great Spirit, made by them under stress of some great danger or event. It most distinctly was not preparatory to war, or to graduate the neophytes into the rank of warriors; but simply a "placing of candles upon the altar."

It was generally held about July. Anybody could give one. Sometimes it would be a squaw, with a plethora of this world's goods; or a brave or chief, under a religious impulse, would be the giver; but the whole tribe or band would have a certain part in the ceremonies.

A squaw with a sick child would make a vow to "The Grandfather" god. A warrior in great peril would promise to participate. In the former case a male relative or a friend would do the actual "dancing," both acquiring merit, as the Buddhists would put it.

When the preliminaries had been arranged, the tribal "caller" would pass through the camp, with head thrown back, and in stentorian tones announce the coming event, inviting all and sundry to fulfil their religious vows.

A certain number of the choicest and most beautiful virgins of the tribe, accompanied by the medicine man, or men, would go some distance to procure a suitable tree

trunk, and either carry or accompany it to the site of the dance, remaining with it until it was erected.

Whenever possible, one of those unfortunate bisexual individuals so frequently found among a primitive people, and especially among the Crow Nation, was required to fell the tree, but in the absence of such a one that duty fell to the maidens.

The trunk had to be carried by the virgins, or dragged by ropes to the camp to the place where it was to be erected, accompanied by mounted warriors who yelled, shot at it with arrows or guns, and lashed it with quirts until it reached the chosen spot, generally the center of the camp circle.

Every one lent a hand in excavating a deep hole in which to plant it; but the maidens erected and tamped it, leaving from fifteen to twenty feet standing above the ground. It need hardly be said that it was very solidly planted, the strain upon it later being considerable.

At the peak was hung a dry and whitened buffalo skull. Long thongs of rawhide were attached in pairs, and on the day appointed, the dancers assembled before sunup to dance, after a night's vigil of prayer and fasting.

Those who had fore-thoughtedly "seen" the medicine man and against whom he had no grudge, were assured of an early and successful outcome, but wo betide the unlucky wight who had incurred his ill will, for then deep and wide were the cuts he would make through the pectoral and trapezoid muscles, rendering it difficult and sometimes impossible to tear loose.

One young brave after vainly trying to burst the flesh and muscles, had his friends hitch a pair of ponies to his heels and was dragged loose by this means.

The flesh of the breasts was pinched up by the medicine man, a sharp knife slid under the breasts and a stout stick inserted in the wounds, these being attached to the thongs dependent from the tree trunk. A bone whistle was placed between the lips of the dancer, and as the sun rose, he danced, throwing himself backward, jerking to burst loose, continually blowing the medicine whistle, keeping his eyes toward the sun, and rubbing sprigs of the white sage between his palms.

During the entire ceremony the tom-toms kept up their monotonous tump tump, and the devotee's friends cheered and encouraged him to strenuous effort. If successful in breaking loose, he was conducted by admirers to his lodge, and the horrible jagged wounds roughly dressed, care being taken to leave them open so that the cicatrices might be plainly visible in after years.

If by nightfall, he had not succeeded in freeing himself, or if he fainted under the ordeal, his friends cut him down, and cared for him.

Some observers (sic) have stated that if the unsuccessful devotee failed, he was considered disgraced, became an outcast, and was relegated to a place with squaws and as a squaw, but this is wholly incorrect and the product of their imaginations, for no stigma attached to failure.

Sometimes the dancer would hang his personal medicine-bag to the post, and among different tribes there was more or less variation in the details, but the underlying principle and object to be obtained was the same everywhere. The dance was only prohibited by the United States Government for the same reason that the Flagellantes of New Mexico were enjoined in their practises, or the Holy Rollers restrained by the Dominion Government when they started their hegira westward, stark naked—namely, to prevent an excess of religious fervor, and the consequent accidents and fatalities that so frequently occurred.

One day only was employed for this dance, and it could not take place again for a certain period, but those who successfully passed the ordeal gained a considerable prestige, and were held in high esteem by the tribe. Even today—one who has been adopted into the Brules and at one time was private secretary to the late Bill Cody assured the writer—hundreds of the young Christianized bucks of the missions and reservations would avidly seize a chance to dance "The Wauchipe of the Sun," or the *Hishimishish Batat-t*, as it was known to the Arapahos, "The People of the Blue Cloud."

A Free-to-All 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.

KENNETH HOWELL'S story in this issue is dedicated to H. B. S., a shipmate of a hundred thousand miles.

YOU'LL remember the article in which Captain Dingle gave his experience in sailing his sloop *Gauntlet* from New York to Bermuda single-handed, a feat never before accomplished except by some one a century or half-century ago. You'll remember that a hurricane left him afloat but helpless, without water or food. But he failed to mention one little incident connected with his dog.

Here is a letter written to Captain Dingle last Summer by one of the men on the ship that towed him the few remaining miles to Bermuda. There is also another letter from some one else who was serving on that ship at the time, but I put it in the Camp-Fire cache and will give it to you when it comes to light. He, too, mentioned the dog incident Captain Dingle skipped. That little incident and the fact that Captain Dingle skipped it seem to me a tolerably complete character-reference that any of us would be glad to shoulder.

Charlestown, West Virginia.

Curiosity seems to have the better of me, so am writing to you.

WHILE serving aboard the U. S. S. *Niagara* I witnessed the rescuing of a man at sea who to my idea was a Captain Dingle. We found him while scouting Bermuda waters in search of another

American ship believed to have been disabled during a hurricane.

I was forward on our ship when we sighted an object and as we proceeded toward it we found it to be a small craft with sails bedraggled and its occupant seemed to be in a no better condition. He hailed us and extended an empty demijohn to signify his desire for water.

Upon questioning this man we found that he had encountered a severe storm, his sextant and chronometer out of condition and with no sail. His companion, an Airedale, lay in the stern. Upon giving the man water his first thought was of his dog. He watered it and then proceeded to take care of his own wants. We asked to tow his craft and suggested manning his sloop while he came aboard to rest. He turned down our offer and took the tiller himself. We gave him a line and then started for Hamilton.

Some one had sighted us from the land station and word soon reached Hamilton that a ship was turning the island and making harbor with a small craft in tow. Upon our arrival we were met by quite a number of people, including this man's wife and child. He thanked us, and when asked the name of our ship, our second officer put a humor to the situation by calling out "Suicide Squadron."

I HAPPENED to be over in Hamilton the following morning and stopped at a barber-shop. Barber and I had a conversation. Said Captain Dingle just left. Read an account of his experience the next day in Bermuda paper.

The incident then closed. I remember the name Captain Dingle and just came across it while reading a story of yours. That sea story and my sea experience brought two and two together and right there my curiosity rose. I seem to have you connected with that episode.

Now if such should actually be the case it would be a great favor to me if you could so inform me. That would make reading your stories all the more interesting.

Thanking you in advance for any enlightenment, I beg to remain.—J. H. ENGEL.

Vote on Expedition

THE matter of drawing up a ballot turns out to be a hard job. What I've tried to do is to make it register the general drift of opinion already expressed in your letters, to bring the plan definitely to a head and to make the ballot as simple and concise as possible. Very commendable idea, but when I read the ballot over it looks as if I were trying to force the vote in certain directions. For one example, why limit the destination to three places? Looks as if I did, but I don't. I list those three places only because they were the most prominent in your letter opinions. Numerous others were mentioned by you, but none of them often enough to pick it out above the others.

The main point is that the form of the ballot doesn't count. Nothing is barred because I didn't put it on the ballot. On any one of the ten points you can vote in any way you please, ignore what I've written and insert what you please, add as many points besides as you please. In fact, No. 10 is for that special purpose. Say your say on any point whatsoever. The ballot is only an outline or suggestion meant to simplify as much as possible.

In only one way have I consciously shaped the ballot to further a "cause" and, so far as I can judge from your letters, on that point I think I only voice the feeling of the majority. Also, I can see no other way of handling the matter. The point I mean is this: The whole plan will have to be centered in the hands of a committee or a group of officers, or nothing will get done. The fewer, the better. To that end I've suggested a general committee of nine to be chosen by you, who will select from their own number the real, active committee of three, the remaining six to act as advisors on call. I can see no practical way of going about this except to delegate just as much authority as possible to the three men who will have the work to do. Give them our vote on as many points as we please, but leaving final decision on even these three points to the three men we choose to represent us. A certain idea may look very good to most of us, but when it comes to putting it into actual operation there may be obstacles or objections we can not now foresee. Also there's the matter of funds. Suppose we vote to send the expedition to Central Africa. Fine. But suppose our capital proves not large enough to finance a satisfactory expedition to so far a point? Isn't it better to name our preferences as to destination, list them according to number of votes received and then leave it to our three representatives to make it the one nearest the head of the list that funds and any other practical factors make possible or advisable?

Same as to receiving and handling funds. It means trusting those three men absolutely, except, of course, that the six others of the general committee and we in the office will keep in touch with what's doing and any one of you is free to investigate at any time.

The committee should obviously be chosen from those living near New York or willing to come to New York for the purpose. You can vote for any one in the world you please (except me!) if that person

can and will serve. Naturally the selection of the nine is a matter of first importance, so I'll explain why I've listed the names I have. You'll note that most of them belong to our writers' brigade, chosen, of course, because they are at least to a degree known to all of you, live in or near New York or can come here. Marshall R. Hall, financial editor of the Pittsburgh *Dispatch*, is known to you through his plan for financing the expedition and is willing to serve if chosen. John Held, Jr., one of our artists' brigade, is known to you through his general work, has had practical experience on exploring expeditions and is keenly interested. Though Arthur O. Friel tells me he is likely not to be in New York I've ventured to include his name on the slender chance, for I know many of you would want him on the committee. Irving Crump is editor of *Boys' Life*. J. E. Cox and L. B. Barretto are on *Adventure's* editorial staff, their names given because the magazine is the only practicable means of communication between committee and readers in general and should, I think, be represented among the nine. Harold Lamb is versed in financial matters. Frederick Moore has knocked about the world more than the usual amount even for "our crowd." Talbot Mundy is out West but may be back in New York in time for service. L. Patrick Greene is of the writers' brigade and the editorial staff. John L. Binda is research director of the National Foreign Trade Council and one of our "Ask Adventure" experts. Henry Collins Walsh is president of the Travel Club of America. Add to these names any you like.

How to Vote

SEND in your vote on a postcard or by letter, not using either for any other business. Address Expedition, *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. You need write only the number of the ballot items, adding after each your vote and signing your name, with address, at the end. Your vote obligates you in no way.

For example, a vote would look something like this—

(1.) 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17.
(2.) Yes.
(3.) Yes.
(4.) China, West Indies, Peru.
(5.) (b) Yes.
(6.) Yes.
(7.) (a) Yes.
(8.) (b) Yes.
(9.) (a) Yes.
(10.) I think that, etc.

Thanks to comrade "Ohioan," that's about as simple and easy as it can be made. Of course my filling in "yes" above doesn't mean anything, not even a hint; first I tried alternating "yes" and "no" but found it didn't make sense, so I called 'em all "yes." We in the office are going to vote like the rest of you; we promise not to stuff the ballot-box. And when the time comes to count the ballots we'd be mighty glad if two or three of you would drop in to help with it; it may be quite some little job.

Importance of Voting

CAMP-FIRE needs your vote. We want just as full an expression of opinions as we can possibly get. This vote is what determines the nature of our expedition and is too important to let go by default. If you're at all interested in the expedition, and it seems most of you are, register that interest now in definite form so there can be a fairly good idea of how many can be counted on. If there's to be an executive committee, the choice of its members is of the highest importance; now's the time to do the choosing. Most of the work is going to have to be done by a few; your share of the work is this little job of voting; be a good comrade and hold up your end. It's a poor sport that won't hold another man's coat while the other man does all the fighting for both.

This expedition can be made something we can all feel proud of. It needs your vote.

(1.) Vote for nine out of the following (or any other names) for General Executive Committee who will choose from their own number three as an Active Executive Committee. 1 Edgar Young, 2 Harold Lamb, 3 Arthur D. Howden Smith, 4 John Held, Jr., 5 Marshall R. Hall, 6 J. E. Cox, 7 Talbot Mundy, 8 Arthur O. Friel, 9 F. R. Buckley, 10 Irving Crump, 11 J. Allan Dunn, 12 L. Patrick Greene, 13 Kenneth Howell, 14 Frederick Moore, 15 Stanley Schnetzler, 16 G. W. Sutton, Jr., 17 Robert Simpson, 18 William Patterson White, 19 L. B. Barretto, 20 Henry Collins Walsh, 21 John L. Binda.

(2.) Are you willing to leave in their hands all matters connected with the expedition except that the points in this ballot shall be decided by majority vote of readers and adhered to by the committee so far as possible?

(3.) Shall expedition be under scientific auspices and executive command aside from points here voted on?

(4.) Name 3 places as preferred destinations in

order of preference, adding any not named here if you wish: (a) Yucatan, (b) Central America, (c) Amazon.

(5.) (a) Shares par value $1; no limit to number of shares to one person; names published, but not amounts, (b) par value $5.; otherwise as above, (c) par value $10.; otherwise as above.

(6.) Do you endorse, in general, Marshall R. Hall's plan?

(7.) Do you favor a permanent organization, an Adventure Expedition Club, for (a) sending out later expeditions or, (b) general Camp-Fire purposes?

(8.) If any profits or surplus funds at end of expedition, shall they (a) be paid pro rata to contributors, (b) held for permanent expedition fund, (c) held for permanent general Camp-Fire organization?

(9.) What name for expedition—(a) Adventure Expedition (b) Camp-Fire Expedition?

(10.) Vote here on any point whatsoever.

SEVERAL of you have called attention to the subject of the following letter. I may object to fruit-tree-eating deer in agricultural countries, but even there I'm for giving them a chance if they'll give me one, and I'm strong against the wholesale destruction of game our country has seen and still sees. The remedy must lie not only in right laws but in observation of laws by citizens. Too many consider it merely "smart" to violate a game-law.

As to preservation of our forests from commercial rapacity, I'm for it. Any blamed fool can cut down a tree it's taken centuries to make, but I've yet to see the man who can make a full-grown tree. Worse, there aren't enough men who will even see to it that new trees are started or even given a chance.

We need to cut down trees, but also we need to have trees that are not cut down. We're inclined to forget that latter truth. If you doubt that truth, either the scientists or a little hard thinking of your own will convince you.

Philadelphia, Pa.

In *The Saturday Evening Post* for the 14th and 21st inst. appear two articles by Mr. Emerson Hough anent the extension of the present Grand Cañon National Park to include the great pine forests of the North Rim—same to be consecrated forever to the American people as "The President's Forest."

Comparatively few Americans have been afforded the opportunity of crossing the great Kanab and Kaibab plateau and viewing the splendors of the Virgin River Cañon, the Vermilion Cliffs and that wonderful stand of timber of which Mr. Hough speaks. I am one of the fortunate ones. I know whereof I speak, and for me to attempt to add anything to Mr. Hough's masterly article would be redundancy.

The history of the natural resources of America is a history of destruction without parallel. We received a wondrous heritage and spent with both hands. The romance of the timber industry is an epic of wastefulness, and that of our wild life, our game, is a tragedy!

Our lifetime has seen the passing of the American bison, the carrier-pigeon and the antelope. At the present rate of destruction the moose, the mountain sheep, the grizzly and the wapiti will soon be as extinct as the great auk. I am only a young man—thirty-one—but I have seen the bays of Tidewater Virginia literally covered with Canada goose and brant. Now they can be counted by hundreds when ten or fifteen years ago they appeared in countless legions. Some of our bird-life, ducks particularly, is on the increase; thanks to the Federal law protecting migratory birds and prohibiting the heinous "Spring shooting," but the big game of America is going fast.

Is the great pine forest of southern Utah and northern Arizona—the last stand of virgin timber in the country—to follow the bison and the carrier-pigeon as a sacrifice to crass commercialism?—H. H. Birney, Jr.

IN OUR Camp-Fire cache are many letters on various points pertaining to snakes, letters that we haven't yet been able to get into type. So I shudder at adding a new snake question. But it's interesting and here goes.

The question arose in Santie Sabalala's article in this issue. I'd heard the fact or legend that snakes can and do milk cows, had never found any real verification and had read a statement from the Department of Agriculture (or some State Agriculture Department) that a snake is *unable* to milk a cow because the structure of his mouth does not allow of suction. I told the above to Mr. Sabalala and his reply follows.

Now scientists frequently prove fallible in their reasoning and common sense, as witness their disagreement among themselves and, for example, the medical fraternity's learned handling of the appendix question. I can remember when they delivered the dictum that it was a mere remnant of past ages, no longer performing any function. They arrived at the conclusion by the naive process of reasoning that it couldn't have any use because *they* had been unable to discover its use. What you might call sand-lot reasoning, as practised by boys under fifteen. But they, as usual, got away with it. For a time. Now I understand they're beginning to learn that it's a decidedly useful link in the glandular chain.

Tonsils, too. I hear that they've tried looking at facts and have noted that when a child's tonsils are partly taken out he generally has appendicitis within a half dozen years; or wholly removed, within two or three years.

Other scientists the same way. Doctors, like editors, have no monopoly on mistakes. The Department of Agriculture or some of those people prove most impressively that leaves aren't worth gathering as fertilizers. Well, I can't prove they are, but how the —— has Dame Nature managed for hundreds of thousands of years to rear her forests and various other children in the wild state on practically no other fertilizer than the leaves and stems that fall back to the earth? Maybe she hasn't, but it sort of looks to my ignorant lay mind as if that had been at least the main diet.

ANYHOW, when these same scientists tell me a snake can't milk a cow I don't accept it just on their say-so. Also, there's another factor of doubt. Maybe they didn't say so. They certainly seemed to say so, but those birds know less about how to say so than any other literate class I know. Take me, for example. I have average intelligence and I've been specializing for thirty years on how to handle the English language, going or coming. It's been my life job. I'm no wonder at it, but by heck I'm just as much a specialist in that line as these agriculture scientists are in theirs. And I'm here to say that they can *not* use the English language with either correctness or common sense or intelligently. Consequently, when, as a specialist in the use of words, I read their statement that a snake can't milk a cow I know that the words as used and arranged by them can't possibly mean anything except that a snake can't milk a cow. Yet I hesitate to accuse them of meaning to say what they really do say. I know from sad and numerous experiences that they may have meant something entirely different and innocently thought they said it—quite possibly, for example, that cows can't milk snakes, which is probably entirely true.

Nope, their saying a snake can't doesn't prove he can't, though of course it is humanly possible that in this case they succeeded in saying what they meant and even that what they meant is soundly based on facts.

On the other hand, I can't see why Mr. Sabalala's cow should be so blamed contented and happy when her milk was being squeezed out of her by pressure on her udder in general from the coils of a huge snake wrapped around her body.

So there you are. As you see, I don't know much about it myself. But my sympathies are all with Mr. Sabalala's side of the argument—and with his cow.

Cleveland, Ohio.

In the queries that you were kind enough to enclose, it is stated by scientific authority that cows can not be milked by snakes. It happens that the writer witnessed what seems to be a phenomenon while acting as a little cattle-herder.

THE cattle are driven in at night-time, when they have calved, and it was noticed that a certain red cow was "dry" by the time she came into the Kraal to be milked. The boy herders were accused of having milked her sometime in the day (sometimes they do), but each and every one of us denied this, even after receiving a terrible thrashing at the hands of the harrassed owner (who it happened was the writer's uncle). The cow came into the Kraal dry for four or five days running, and the thing began to get on the owner's nerves.

About two days later while playing "Ceya" (African game of heads and tails) my uncle came suddenly on the scene. He was a very awesome and inspiring-looking person, for he was over seven feet tall, with a hard face topped off by a head of bushy, curly, dirty-looking hair. The game stopped instantly. He demanded whether we knew what was happening to the cattle, and was informed no. He strode away toward where the cattle were grazing. We meekly followed. He looked over the immense herd but could not see his favorite red cow, and so he whistled for it. As you may know, natives train a certain ox or cow to obey certain calls and whistles, and train oxen to dance, run and race in the same way that pet dogs and ponies are trained in civilization.

HE WHISTLED five or six times and a contented *moo* came from a certain thorn-tree where the cow was standing. My uncle walked over to where the cow was, muttering to himself, for there was something wrong as the cow always galloped to him when he called or whistled for it. We youngsters jostled each other as we followed him to the cow. About ten feet away my uncle stood stock still, whispering to himself.

We crept up. My hair stood on end and my spine became cold, for a huge snake, hanging to a low branch of the tree by its tail, had wrapped itself around the cow's back and forward of the udders in such a way that they, the udders, would be under *compression* and *leak*. It had turned the upper part of its body around the hind legs and inserted itself between the legs—and with the side of its mouth was drinking the milk as it streamed out of the teats.

MY UNCLE turned around and sent one of our number back to tell all the men to bring back with them a "Sanda" (hammer that is used to kill oxen with) and large hunting-spears. In a very

short while the whole Kraal came out, men, women and children, and not only did they bring spears but battle-axes and arrows. They had sensed something alarming in my uncle's message or else the boy had decorated the tale; anyway they came in their hundreds. Everybody was silent with fright and awe when they viewed the scene.

The snake went on quite calmly with his milking operations, my uncle took the sanda-hammer, swung it in a mighty arc and hit the red cow in the center of its forehead. It moaned a little and fell down on its right side, the snake's body still twined around it; that blue, dirty, rope-like body twisted and twirled about and uncurled itself around the dead cow. The Abafan closed in on it with their battle-axes and spears and in no time they had chopped its body into little bits of meat that resembled canned salmon. My uncle seemed very upset as he commanded that the horns of his favorite be preserved. The Abafan declared a banquet and made a fire and roasted the meat right then and there.

As to how the snake ever came to acquire the taste for milk and learn how to milk a cow I do not pretend to know.

THE other little factors I have adjusted to the perspective of the civilized mind. The two minds are very much alike in their opposition. The heathen thinks one is a terrible prevaricator when informed that people live way up in the air (sky-scrapers), and, on the other hand, the civilized man gives a crooked, cynical smile when informed that certain natives are able to do without any kind of food whatsoever for five or six days, subsisting on the emergency food inside their bodies which happens to be situated in the buttocks. The Koranas of southern Africa have this ability. Many people in these "arid days" over here don't care anything about a camel, but I think a few would not mind having the ability that the Koranas are blessed with.

I read only to-day how the late king of Servia, Peter II, had gone to the front during the war, urging his soldiers to stick it out about the camps—deaf, partly blind and well over eighty. Kos had all his faculties and was used to riding a baboon.—SANTIE SABALALA.

HA-NA-CHA-THE-AK has the floor and I humbly stand corrected for something at a past Camp-Fire that, without intention, placed him in a false light:

Los Angeles, Cal.

Dear Iwodake-Ape-Itancan: Kindly allow Ha-na-cha-the-ak to offer a slight correction. He has no objection to letting the Camp-Fire brothers (and sisters) know his Indian name nor its meaning.

It means Buffalo Bull and was given him because he happens to be built that way, wide, thick, tall, being 6 feet 2½ and weighing 232.

The B. B. recognized the aptness of the name, when he took a slant at his reflection in a full-length mirror and considered the bones of him. No, he is not pawing up the earth over bearing the name.

Only, Camp-Fire folks *et al.*, please do not address mail to me under that name or its translation, since the postman will ring the bell and make me come down two flights of stairs to explain.

Having been known to a host of friends as Big Jim for thirty-five years, I do not feel especially overburdened with a new name. It certainly will not make my "hump" abnormal from carrying it.—HA-NA-CHA-THE-AK.—BIG JIM.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

HAVING already published and re-published "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure—And After," the funeral sermon delivered over the body of the "square gambler" by the Rev. Mr. Knickerbocker, we're now being asked to print it a third time. That looks to me like carrying it pretty far, but if enough of you want it again and the rest of you don't object, why, that's all the reason in the world for its third appearance. Only I want to be very sure of the demand before printing it again.

NOW wait a minute before you start anything! Two comrades are going to talk about something connected with religion. Therefore some one will undoubtedly accuse them and me of deliberate and hostile propaganda. So in advance I want to state there's no propaganda or intent of propaganda. It's merely some interesting matters for speculation that concern Americans and Canadians and, being free-born citizens, we by heck have full right to speculate and are by heck going so to do.

First a letter to Talbot Mundy referring to his story, "Under the Dome of the Rock."

St. George's Society of New York, N. Y.

I read your last story and thought that the following information might be of service to you:

ABOUT a year or so before the war one of our members, Hon. John Parker, raised a fund. I think it was the *World* or the *Journal* at that time in their Sunday edition gave a big statement of what this fund was for, with pictures of various parts of Jerusalem. It seems that Mr. Parker got some information, either through a very old manuscript or some other source, concerning the treasures of the Temple: the Ark of the Covenant, the tables of stone, etc. I understand that these have been supposed to have been destroyed with the burning of the Temple. It appears to be tolerably certain that these never reached Rome with other spoil, and it has been a mystery as to what became of them if not burned up.

An old chap who was much interested in old-time things told me some years ago that the Ark and the tables of stone in the Temple were not the originals—that they had been taken by the Prophet Jeremiah a great many years before and hidden in Ireland. What authority he had for this I can not say.

ANYHOW, according to the Parker statement it appears that the priests had a chamber cut in the solid rock, leading with a passage to the Temple, where in case of fire or danger they might place the treasures. That they had done so, and that until

this day they were there. The Turks would permit no kind of excavation or search being made. Parker went to Jerusalem with some friends and before long they had to escape. Whether they found anything or not, I can not say, as I don't think any further statement was made.

If the real Ark was found, I wonder would it retain its death-giving powers? I should think that if any one did locate these things he would become famous. L. D. LANGLEY.

Now here is what Mr. Mundy has to say. By the "Anglo-Saxon people" he must mean merely "ancestors of the people we now call Anglo-Saxons."

One of the most wonderful things in the world is how truth persists in spite of the historians and in spite of all the "interests" that are inavariably united to distort facts. If you want to start a fight, there isn't any easier way to do it than by telling the true story of the Ark of the Covenant in what are known as "educated circles," and yet the facts are as plain as a pike-staff.

THERE undoubtedly is a secret chamber underneath the Rock of Abraham in Jerusalem, but the Ark of the Covenant will never be found in it, if for no other reason than because Jerusalem has been looted and scoured too frequently by conquering armies. What Romans and Mahommedans perhaps overlooked, the Crusaders undoubtedly took.

Very briefly, the fact is that the Anglo-Saxon people are the descendants of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel. The Jews are the descendants of the Tribe of Judah only, with part of the Tribe of Levi and possibly some of Benjamin. The Ten Tribes were carried off into captivity by Tiglath-Pileser, the King of Assyria, somewhere about 800 B.C., and there is ample evidence to show that they migrated northward and spread all over Europe, gradually working their way toward those "Islands of the Sea" of which Isaiah speaks, and which were certainly the British Isles. They became established in Sweden, Norway, Scotland, Britain and the north of Ireland as the Anglo-Saxons, and the very word British is derived from the Hebrew Brith, meaning covenant. "British" means "the People of the Covenant," which in turn is a Biblical synonym for the Children of Israel.

AFTER the Ten Tribes were carried off into captivity, the Tribe of Judah with part of Benjamin and part of Levi maintained a precarious foothold in Jerusalem until the time of King Zedekiah, during whose reign complete disaster overtook this remnant of the Children of Israel. The Babylonians took Jerusalem, killed all the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and then put his eyes out, and carried off him together with all his surviving subjects to be prisoners and slaves in Babylon. There is an account of what treasure they found and carried off, but it does not include either the Ark of the Covenant or the Stone of Bethel, the two most important national treasures.

WHEN Jerusalem was taken, the prophet Jeremiah was in jail, standing up to the neck in sewage, having made himself frightfully unpopular by prophesying to Zedekiah and his court what would happen if they should continue their unstatesman like practises. So, as he was an anti-Zedekiah man, the conquering Babylonians were kind to him; they set him free and let him go.

Now there was a prophecy hundreds of years old to the effect that there should never cease to be a descendant of King David on the throne of Israel; that the throne, in fact, should be established forever; but there is nothing anywhere in the Bible that can be even twisted to imply that the only valid line of descent is on the male side. The male line of David became absolutely extinct with Zedekiah, but his daughters were not killed by the Babylonians, and it became Jeremiah's business in life to make provision for the fulfilment of that ancient prophecy.

THERE is absolutely no doubt whatever that, certainly more than a century before the death of Zedekiah, there was an Israelitish settlement in the "Isles of the Sea," including Ireland. There had been a constant traffic between the seaports of Philistia and Phenicia, and the coasts of Spain, Brittany, England, Scotland and Ireland. And the name of the king who reigned in Tara, in Ireland, at that time was Heremon, an indisputably Hebrew name.

The Ark of the Covenant and the Stone of Bethel had been hidden, perhaps, in that secret cave under the Dome of the Rock mentioned in my story and referred to in Mr. Langley's letter. Jeremiah recovered both, and took them as well as the princesses of Judah down into Egypt, where the palace has recently been discovered in which he and the princesses are recorded as having been the guests of the reigning Pharaoh.

NOW there was absolutely nothing left in the Land of Canaan. The only possible chance of carrying on the line of David was to emigrate, and the only place to go to was Ireland, where an Israelitish colony was prospering under an Israelitish king.

So Jeremiah took Baruch the Scribe and the Princess Temi Tephi, oldest daughter of King Zedekiah, along with the Ark of the Covenant and the stone of Bethel by sea to Ireland, landing at a place now known as Carrickfergus, about the year 583 B.C. In fulfilment of his self-appointed task, Jeremiah succeeded in marrying the Princess Temi Tephi to King Heremon, thus contriving to perpetuate a purely Israelitish royal stock; and from that pair are descended the present royal family of England. The Ark of the Covenant was placed for safe-keeping in an underground vault that has not been rediscovered, several attempts having been frustrated by the British Government, who object, perhaps rightly, to interference with ancient landmarks. The Stone of Bethel, which is the identical stone on which Jacob laid his head when he had that dream about the ladder reaching up to heaven, became the royal coronation stone (as it always had been) and was renamed Liafail.

ABOUT 450 A.D. King Fergus I carried the "Liafail" to Scotland and placed it in the Abbey of Scone, where it became known as the Stone of Scone, and from thence in 1296 it was removed by King Edward I to London and placed in Westminster Abbey, where today it forms part of the coronation chair of the British Empire. So that the lineal

descendants of the royal line of David are today crowned, seated on the same stone on which David sat when he was first anointed king over Israel.

OF COURSE, in giving that short sketch of the real history of the Ark of the Covenant and the Stone of Bethel, I have merely touched the high spots, so to speak. There isn't space in Camp-Fire to give references and proofs, although the proofs are available and far more convincing than any of the so-called proofs offered by the writers of school history books, who denounce the whole story of Anglo-Israel, and, being without any valid argument, usually fall back on the time-worn tactics of "abusing the plaintiff's attorney" when the subject is broached.

Here, however, are one or two interesting statements of fact. The single lion on the British Royal standard is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The harp in the other corner of the quarterings, known as the Irish harp, is the harp of David. The present Prince of Wales was christened David in recogtion of the fact that he is directly descended from King David of Jerusalem. (If you don't believe that, go and ask the Prince of Wales; he's a perfectly fine fellow, and as frank as daylight.)

Queen Victoria, who made no secret of her convictions on the matter, had two family trees drawn up by a member of the College of Heralds, tracing her own descent straight back to King David of Jerusalem. And now for a piece of authentic inside history:

SHE sent one of those family trees to the Kaiser, who, as her grandson, she supposed would take an interest in the facts as to his ancestry. He took too much interest! He became convinced that as the descendant of King David of Jerusalem it was up to him to fulfil the Bible prophecies and "restore the kingdom." That, and nothing else, accounts for his extraordinary pilgrimage to Jerusalem, when he made them tear part of the wall down so that he might ride into the city in pomp. That also accounts for the amazing hospice that he built on the Mount of Olives (mentioned in several of my stories) in which, done in wonderful mosaic, are portraits of himself and his ancestors, David included, in one family group, with David's mustaches turned up to heighten the family resemblance.

That also accounts for the "me and God" substance of his reasoning. And it was that, and nothing else, that made it possible for the German General Staff to push the Kaiser over the edge, so to speak, and plunge him into what he truly believed was Armageddon. He considered himself the divinely appointed, royally descended, agent for the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy.

THIS is mighty near enough, I guess, from one voice at the Camp-Fire. But if anybody wants some more, I'm loaded, so have it your own way. The last question in Mr. Langley's letter, in which he suggests that if the Ark of the Covenant were to be found today it might still have the unpleasant trick of instantly killing any unauthorized person who touched it, is to my mind the most interesting of all. But it might not be easy to handle without stirring the religious prejudices of some of those folk who seem to enjoy getting angry whenever any legend is probed. However, if the skipper permit, I'm willing to handle that without gloves, provided the crew is interested.

The whole of history will have to be rewritten some day—or rather, you might say, written; for they've hardly made a beginning at it yet. Meanwhile, to me, much the best fun in the world is digging out old myths and discovering that they are much more nearly true than anything recorded in the "highbrow" history books.—TALBOT MUNDY.

A STOLEN identification-card, and put to crooked uses. It's the first case of the kind in all these years. Luckily, a warning in our magazine will make the ice sort of thin under the borrowing imposter's feet. The stolen card was No. 540, one of the earlist issued.

Bridal Veil, Oregon.

You may, perhaps, remember that I wrote you sometime last Spring, relating the fact that some fellow had rifled my belongings in a hotel and had stolen a lot of identification papers, cards, citations, etc., including an *Adventure* card.

Well, he evidently meant business as I have had several letters from different sources showing that "I" have been in Panama, Callao and (what do you think of this?), in Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D. C.

Now isn't that a —— of a thing for a man to do? One of the letters is from a Mr. ——, Hotel Tivoli, Ancon, C. Z., and reminds me of the fact that he loaned me one hundred dollars on the boat en route to New Orleans. As I have never been in Panama or thereabouts I was at a loss to understand it until I received advices from the headquarters of the American Legion telling of the various occasions upon which I had been "assisted" by Legion members both at Panama and Callao and also giving me my first information as to my sojourn at Walter Reed Hospital.

This fellow, whoever he is, seems to have a pretty fair line on my military service, with just one exception: he has always said that he (or I) went over with the Princess Pats, so he evidently has not heard of "The Emma Gees." He certainly is generously endowed with "nerve" and I have been almost tempted to wish I knew his prescription for extracting money, in hundred-dollar bunches, from perfect strangers.

I have written to all the places I can think of in the effort to head him off and it occurred to me that you might be willing to print something in the nature of a warning in "Camp-Fire." I know of no other publication which reaches so far, and, for our own protection, the members of Camp-Fire should endeavor to run down and exterminate such imposters.—HERBERT W. MCBRIDE.

BE MARKING down your favorite stories as you go along and at the end of the year send us your list for our annual vote by readers on the fiction published in the magazine. We want to know what stories you like the best so we may try to get more like them. Results of the 1921 vote will be published in an early issue. Any one may vote.—A. S. H.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange,* 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.

WILL SELL: 1919, Mid-Aug., First and Mid-Nov., 1920, Mid-Jan. to Mid-April and First June to Mid-Dec., inclusive. 1921, Mid-Jan., First Feb., Mid-Feb., First March, First April to Dec. 30th, inclusive. 1922, Jan. 20th, Jan. 30th, Feb. 10th, Feb. 20th. All in good condition. Best offer.—Address HENRY AIKEN, Route 4, Travellers Rest, S. C.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Assn' of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressd envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

3. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

5. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn). Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

6. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

8. New Guinea
DR. ALBERT BUELL LEWIS, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

9. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, P. O. Box 202, Hollywood, Calif. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

10. Hawaiian Islands and China
P. J. HALTON, 714 Marquette Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

11. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

12. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine St., New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

13. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, Niger River to Jebba, northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora, tribal histories, witchcraft.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached)*

14. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

15. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

16. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

17. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

18. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

19. Africa Part 7 Egypt and Barbary States
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Egypt and Sudan, Tunis, Algeria. Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

20. Turkey and Asia Minor
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

21. Balkans, except Albania
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Greece, Jugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, Roumania. Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

22. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., N. W., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

23. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., N. W., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

24. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

25. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

26. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, 90 So. Orchard St., San José, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

27. Mexico Part 1 Northern
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.

28. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Topolobampo, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

29. ✠ Canada Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and 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.*)

30. ✠ Canada Part 2
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31. ✠ Canada Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay and southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

32. Canada Part 4
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

33. Canada Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, Mount Vernon, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

34. ✠ Canada Part 6
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

35. ✠ Canada Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

36. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

37. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, 172 Chittenden Ave., Columbus, Ohio. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

38. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona (except portions mentioned below). Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

39. Western U. S. Part 2
VICTOR SHAW, 172 Chittenden Ave., Columbus, Ohio. Cliff dwellings, Two Grey Peaks, the Carrizo Mts., Cañon De Chelley, Chin Lee Wash, the Moonlight Country, the Blue Mts. (Utah), Navaho Indian Reservation, in general. Pack trips, prospecting, hunting, camping, trapping and mining, habits, etc., of Navaho Indians.

40. Western U. S. Part 3 Colorado and Wyoming
FRANK MIDDLETON, 1727 Lafayette St., Denver, Colo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

41. Western U. S. Part 4
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Montana and the northern Rocky Mountains. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

42. Western U. S. Part 5
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas and Oklahoma. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

43. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

44. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and 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.

45. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

46. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks. Automobile, motorcycle, 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.

47. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HOWARD A. SHANNON, *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Va. Motor-boat and canoe cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and tributary rivers. 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.

48. Eastern U. S. Part 3
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

49. Eastern U. S. Part 4
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

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.)

A.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

C.—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.

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.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. ARTHUR BENT, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

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 may be called upon for general information relating to 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.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

What Mr. Spears Thinks of "Ask Adventure"

WE HAD quite an argument in the office here as to whether to print the subjoined or not. Some of the fellows thought it self-advertising, and I guess it is at that; but others said it was telling the truth, and I guess they're right too. We asked Mr. Spears how about it, and he wrote:

Use your own judgment about printing my letter *re* "A. A." It was just a frank expression of my feelings about the work. You know how a man is apt to feel about patting himself on the back and saying out loud what an awful lot of good he's doing in the world. I have a warm glow of that feeling now! But it might help some inquirer to understand how we all feel about doing what we can, individually and collectively, to help them to some of the rich things we have had in our own lives. Go to it—

So if you think we're capping our own game, or that Mr. Spears is capping his, please forgive us all this once. We don't do it as often as we might. Neither does Raymond. Anyhow, here's his appreciation of "A. A."

Little Falls, N. Y.

Let me say that no work I do is more interesting, and I like to think none more useful—really helpful—than answering questions. You are running one of the most remarkable Universities of Learning ever any one did undertake, covering Practical Life in All Lands, and you'll never know what you've done for thousands, especially for the Youngsters.

Every once in a while a letter comes in, long after an inquiry, which gives evidence of service of a needful sort having been had through "A. A."

I recall particularly a Canadian veteran who went down the Mississippi, and spent the Winter in the strange region between Memphis and Helena. Long afterward he "came again" and mentioned the good time he had on his trip down the river.

I know with what interest Harriman, Liebe and Solomons consider the problems presented through their districts.

Isn't it a fine thing to have such a clearing-house to which youth, with their longings for manly lives, can appeal for the information through which they can realize on their hopes?

Unquestionably "A. A." helps wonderfully in the training of the spirit of youth to desire noble things, and to point the way for deserving the superior joys of clean life amid great surroundings.

To appreciate the great moments of life—that is Adventure; and I ask nothing better in life to do than the privilege of helping any or all to come wisely, with wide eyes, all prepared, to the splendid hours which make life worth living. Adventure is a matter of appreciating crises at their full worth. Often, long after an event, we learn of its wonderful significance—if we had only known then!

The full statement of "Ask Adventure," as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

The Wealth of Mexico

A COUNTRY containing all the elements of riches, save enterprise. This answer, by the way, is lagnappe pure and simple on Mr. Mahaffey's part, for he

doesn't have to pay any attention to such general inquiries as this one. See rule four on page 183:

Question:—"I would like to get some information about the southern part of old Mexico, about mining and minerals, what the country and people are like and any other information that you would think useful to a stranger going down there.

I have had four years' experience in the engine service on American railroads. Are Mexican railroads operated by American capital?"—FLOYD WILEY, Klamath Falls, Ore.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—The only railway line operated by American capital at present is the Sud Pacifico de Mexico, with shops at Empalme, Sonora, where you can write to the superintendent about work. All the other lines are under Government control, and as the motto has been "Mexico for the Mexicans" very few foreigners are employed at present. The return of the lines to the owning companies will probably take place soon, and then there will be more chances with them.

The following is a sketch of the southern part of Mexico, covered by myself:

The area, including the islands, is 767,198 square miles, population about 15,500,000 or 29 per square mile. The coast-line on the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea is 1,728 miles, in the Pacific Ocean 4,574 miles.

The inhabitants are mostly mestizos, a mixture of Indian and Spanish blood and their descendants. There are also a considerable number of Europeans and other foreigners, Spaniards predominating. A very large percentage of the population is of pure Indian blood, many races being found.

The chief physical features are two great mountain ranges which traverse the entire republic, forming between them a great number of valleys and plateaus. The immense elevation on which the capital of the republic is located is called the Plateau of Anahuac.

The fringe of lowlands situated along both coasts is called the Tierra Caliente or Hot Lands, running from sea-level to an elevation of about 3,000 feet. The mountain range on the west is known as the Sierra Madre Occidental, and that on the east the Sierra Madre Oriental. The more important peaks are: Popocatepetl, 17,520 ft; Orizaba, 18,250; Malinche, 13,400; Nevada de Toluca, 14,950; Colima, 14,970; Ixtaccihuatl, 16,860.

The climate is modified by elevation and is partly determined by vertical zones. The district covered by this section is in the tropical zone, the Tropic of Capricorn passing to the north of Mazatlan.

The district along the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific is the Tierra Caliente, extending inland and upward to an elevation of 3,000 feet, and has the heat of the tropics, tempered by sea-breezes, which render the heat of the day bearable. This region is refreshed by Summer rains, which fall rather regularly, beginning in June, increasing in July and ending in November. The average annual temperature in this region is between 80 and 88 F. It rarely falls below 60; but temperatures of 105 to 110 have been known in Acapulco, Guaymas and Vera Cruz.

The region from 3,000 to 5,000 feet is known as the Tierra Templada and has a climate like the temperate zone. The average annual temperature is between 73 and 77 F.

The temperature rarely varies 6 to 8 degrees during the year. The dry season is from October to May.

The cold region has an elevation of from 7,000 feet upward and is called the Tierra Fria. This region has an annual average temperature of between 50 and 62 F. Most of the great central mesa or plateau is located in this zone.

Although it is almost impossible, on account of the great extent of the country, to fix the seasons, they may be described in a general way as follows. Rainy seasons, middle of May to middle of October, when rainfalls are very heavy and of almost daily occurrence. Rest of the year is the dry season. Very little rain falls during this season.

Travelers should note well the season as during the rains many of the roads and trails are impassable and many washouts take place along the railways due to the unstable soil of the roadbeds.

Few rivers of Mexico are of any importance for navigation. The principal rivers are the Rio Grande, 1,500 miles; Mescala or Balsas, 426 miles; Lerma or Santiago, 540 miles; Conchos, Grijalva, Panuco, Usuamacinta and Papaloapam.

The largest lake of Mexico is Lago de Chapala, located in the State of Michoacan, between that State and Jalisco. It is about 70 miles long and 20 wide.

The soil of Mexico is suitable for many crops, both of the tropics, semi-tropics and temperate zone. Within a radius of 300 miles may be found crops of all three zones. The principal products are wheat, corn, cotton, tobacco, rice, rubber, coconuts, chicle, coffee, beans, sugar, henequen, guayule, chick-peas and many others. Cattle-raising is a source of great wealth. Hides, skins and wool form a very important resource to many people.

The principal industry of Mexico is mining, deposits of all the important metals being found in almost all the States and Territories. There are found gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, antimony, manganese, coal, iron, marble, magnesite, tungsten, zinc, quicksilver, slate, pigments, kaolin and semi-precious stones. The mining laws are about the same as in the U. S., claims being 2.47 acres or one hectare.

Although Mexico is not a manufacturing country there are many large and small plants for supplying local needs. Textiles, flour, shoes, cigars and cigarets, sacks, rope, leather, iron and steel, nails, sugar, etc., are produced. Most of the larger towns have their ice and electric plants. Flour-mills are very important.

English is spoken by many Mexicans, but Spanish is indispensable in doing business. The currency is based on the gold standard, the standard of value being the peso, worth about 50c gold. The silver coins are peso, 50 cents, 20 cents and 10 cents. Bronze coins 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, and 1c. Gold coins 20 pesos, 10 pesos, 5 pesos, 2.50 pesos and 2 pesos. The metric system is used in the country.

As far as mining is concerned it usually is a rich man's game on account of the great expenses in developing a property, lack of communications, etc., all of which make it a large expense to make a mine out of a prospect.

To go to Mexico, according to the law as in force at present, you will need a passport, costing you $10, and the visé of the Mexican consul at the border where you cross, another $10. On account of the slack times in the U. S. many have come to Mexico

in search of work, and as the low price of metals has caused the closing of many mines there are many Americans and other foreigners out of work. I would advise you to wait for a few months before making any preparations.

Send one dollar to the Pan-American Union for their book on Mexico and twenty-five cents for their map of Mexico. Write to the Department of Commerce for the latest Supplement to Consular Reports covering any part you may be interested in.

Hints to Shooters

WORDS of wisdom from a Wisenheimer:

Salem, Ore.

USE only nitro-solvent oil in the barrels of your firearms; any good light oil in the action, when in use. Storing guns should be done by thoroughly cleaning both action and bore, then after seeing that both are well dried out, coat with heavy grease, such as cup grease, or B. S. A. Saftipaste. I do not favor commercial pertroleum jelly, as some of it contains acid that will attack the steel.

Oil your holsters well with neat's-foot oil, not mineral oil. This will keep them in much better condition, and prevent them from becoming brittle and eventually breaking.

Ivory sights seem to show up best in poor lights, but the gold bead sights are better adapted to rough usage, being less easily broken. Either can be smoked and blackened with a match if the light is too bright, thus causing dazzling.

Never file the sear or trigger of any arm to get an easier pull; use a fine oilstone, and work carefully. A three-pound pull is the best general pull I know of; safe, yet not too heavy for fine work.

Use a good brass brush to clean out dirt, powder fouling, etc., and finish with a rag soaked in nitro-solvent oil. (There are four good ones on the market now.) Leave this in the barrel a day or so, then clean out with a dry rag, and if no fouling shows, re-oil with the nitro-solvent and rest content.

Never jerk a trigger hurriedly, but squeeze it gradually. This makes for better accuracy every time, I find.

And lastly, make a practise of opening the breech of every weapon you touch, and see that no cartridges are in it. It's good life insurance.—DONEGAN WIGGINS.

Hill Billies

THEY'RE one hundred per cent. Americans, even if some of 'em do shoot up the people who try to enforce the eighteenth amendment in the Southern mountains:

Question:—"Your territory seems closest to that point I desire information on. Perhaps my wishes are facts generally circulated through the roundabout territory. If I am off-side please do not consider it indelicate to excercise your territorial prerogative.

I am somewhat vague about the mountain people. I presume there are some in Virginia as well as Kentucky. They are, as moonshiners and mountaineers, generally considered a class as a whole. Unmistakably they are native American people. Where did they spring from originally? Are they the descendants of original pioneers in what was, at that time, the southwest of the country?

Their claims were those of homesteaders, weren't they? What was the term of years necessary to insure possession? There may be a difference, in that respect, between Kentucky and your own State. I would appreciate any information apropos which you may be in possession of. In a word, I suppose this is requesting a favor rather than an "A. A." Dept. due.

About when was it that revenue men began to round up mountain-dew distilleries? And what was the object? From what I have been able to perceive through fiction the mountaineers seemed "getting along all right" until the law took it into its hands to make them run better. Of course that was due to lack of truthful depicting of the conditions. What were the hill billies' refractions, anyway?"—LUCIEN EMERSON, Hudson Heights, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—The mountain type to which you refer inhabit the highlands of the Blue Ridge in Virginia and North Carolina, and the Alleghany Range, which includes the Greenbrier and Cumberland Mountains in West Virginia, Tennessee and southwest Virginia.

They are distinctively American, probably the truest type in the country. Prior to 1710 while the seaboard towns in Virginia and Maryland were increasing in population a vast wilderness, interposed between the outposts of the English and French forts and the Blue Ridge, long remained the borderline of Virginia. In 1710 Governor Spotswood penetrated this virgin tract and laid open the mountains and valleys of the Alleghany district to the enterprise of pioneers.

As the population of Virginia and Carolina pressed eagerly across these trails a new type was born—the American backwoodsman. Facing the hostility of the Indians, every home, however humble, was a fortified station; and every person, young or old, who was able to use ax, club or rifle was a combatant in case of emergency.

Every able-bodied man was a soldier from sheer necessity. Life was a forced state of existence against the dangers of the tomahawk, scalping-knife and rifle. None but the most vigorous and athletic types dared venture to establish themselves in such a wilderness.

These people developed men of extraordinary physical strength and endurance. Beyond the limits of civilization, and untrammeled by law or gospel, they existed by the right of the strong arm. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Independence of thought and action bred intolerance of restrictions which their brothers of the settlements endured.

I am under the impression that the most of this country was settled under the "squatter's rights" interpretation of the homestead laws. A man came, saw and settled. No one disputed his claim—there was room to spare. In course of time a title was acquired through possession. I am not positive about this matter, but believe that such was the case.

In the pioneer days every man made his own liquor provided he hadn't the means to purchase the imported variety.

No serious effort was made to check that practise until the passage of the Loan and Revenue Bill in July, 1861. This bill created the Bureau of

Internal Revenue and placed a heavy tax on spirits, beer and tobacco. Thirteen different acts were passed during the next five years, prescribing the various taxes to be collected; and an Internal Revenue force was organized to enforce the laws made and provided.

The mountaineer resented such taxation. He raised a little corn for his own consumption. Being far from a market, he turned his surplus into whisky. He sold that whisky when he had a chance. Not having to pay the tax, he could undersell the legitimate distiller; and he did it. According to his code he acted within his rights.

When those rights were questioned he backed his opinions with a different sort of argument. He was naturally a fighting man; and be it said he fought. He is still fighting; although his field of operations has undoubtedly broadened since the passage of the eighteenth amendment.

Still intolerant of restrictions, he resents what he considers unjust interference with his health and happiness. Easily led into a fight, he has been used by schemers since the beginning.

In 1891-92 the mountaineers revolted against the working of convict labor in the coal-mines of Tennessee. The fights at Briceville and Tracy City resulted. Convict labor went out of existence in those sections.

The same class became involved in the Goebel-Taylor trouble in Kentucky. Recently they were involved in the West Virginia mine riots.

And so it goes. The so called "hill billies" are darned good people to leave alone if you are not out looking for Old Man Trouble. Once you gain their friendship, they make the most dependable friends you can acquire. They are primitive in their likes and dislikes.

They are uncouth and unlettered in many cases, but the fire of American loyalty is strong within their hearts, and deep down under their hides they are intensely patriotic. The mountain men have written history with their rifles on every field where our Flag has floated; and with all their faults they are real HE-MEN, and they have earned my admiration for their many sterling qualities.

So be it! I hope I have made myself clear. Glad to answer further questions.

What the Wiper's Job Can Lead To

HERE'S a chance to become an officer in two to three years:

Question:—"I wish to take advantage of your good nature by asking you some questions about the opportunities a young railroad machinist would have in our merchant marine. How far down in rank would I have to start to become an engineer officer?

Do any of the large steamship lines take on young men as special apprentices in the engine-room?

Also which is the best coast to ship from in case I should decide to go in the merchant marine?

I have had a high-school education and have worked mostly around machinery and am serving my time in the machinist trade at the present time. having about eighteen months yet to serve; but have the *Wanderlust* in my blood and would like to go to sea, although I suppose you think I am foolish to do so. I am about twenty years old so you know I am still very young?"—CHARLES C. JONES, Halloway, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—Personally I think the best billet for a young man without sea experience to try for, is as wiper. After one round trip as wiper you could ship as fireman; after that as oiler, or water-tender. After two years altogether you can go up for examination as third engineer. You can take an intensive course after your sea service in schools operated in connection with the Shipping Board which would put you in good shape to pass the examination. Your work as a machinist would be of considerable advantage to you, and would be an aid toward getting you a ship in the first place.

There is practically no choice between the coasts at the present time. On both, shipping is laid up in great numbers; and hundreds of men are on the beach, looking for a chance to ship.

If you can get a ship, you are not foolish by any means in trying to become a marine engineer. It is a well-paid job, and in ordinary times there is little difficulty in getting a ship. These are not ordinary times just now.

History of Gunpowder

INCIDENTALLY you get a glimpse into the spirit of the collector who loves ancient firearms for their own sake:

Question:—"As a matter of introduction I am a collector of old firearms in a modest way, for my own amusement, and my chief pleasure from them is to display them to advantage, and I am looking for information along that line.

Mr. Wiggins of Salem tells me you are the best posted man on antique arms in America, if not the world, or words to that effect, and that a letter to you would be kindly met.

What I would most like to get hold of, if there is such a thing, or ever was, is a publication treating on firearms and ammunition from the very beginning. Any suggestion or information you might give will be very acceptable. My knowledge is vague.

I understand gunpowder was made by the Chinese 5000 years before Christ, and that the Moors introduced firearms into Europe; and I also remember seeing a wood-cut showing the first gun mounted on wheels, attacking a catapult.

While I made my collection some twenty-five years ago, I haven't anything ancient, and nearly all pieces are American. And from pistols and revolvers. I did not see it for twenty years, it being in Illinois; and I find it badly depleted, some of my best specimens missing. Dates range from 1834 to 1870; but am going to start over again."—JACK HENRY, Calobasas, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—Your letter of recent date was very welcome. I am always glad to make new acquaintances among arms collectors. I know them all over the country, having met many of the larger ones at auctions of firearms. I fear that Mr. Wiggins is too extravagant in his praises. However, I am greatly interested in arms of all kinds, particularly in pistols, write about them a bit, and have some few hundreds.

In regard to displaying them, it all depends on

the amount, kind, and opportunity you have. I have my own resting on brass hooks on the wall, so that they may readily be taken down for inspection and cleaning and oiling. They should be kept in perfect condition—that is, as nearly as is possible—and personally I will not have a weapon that is not in good condition, or capable of being put in such.

No labor is too great in getting off rust, etc. For instance, I am today making a trigger and wooden grips for a tiny percussion pistol that has been through a fire and that I have renovated. I have just sent Mr. Wiggins photos of a hundred or so of mine, together with the story of two "finds" I recently made, which I have no doubt he will show you if you ask him.

Firearms can not be traced to have been used in Europe back earlier than the fourteenth century. The Chinese knew of gunpowder several centuries before Europe did. It was believed for a long time to be the invention of two monks, Constantine Amalzen or Schwarz (1280-1320) belonging to the convent of Friburg in Breisgau, but is now supposed to have been known to the Kelts and to all the Ancients.

Vossius in his "*Liber Observationum*" thinks gunpowder very ancient, from a description by Julius Africanus, who lived in the year A.D. 215. Callinicus, a Greek, learned from the Arabs how to make three different kinds of Greek fire, which secret he communicated to Constantine Pogonatus during the siege of Constantinople. One of these compositions closely resembled gunpowder.

Firearms were used by Hagiæus and the Arabs in 690, at the siege of Mecca. The secret very likely originated from India, for the Arabs call saltpeter *Thely Sini* which means Indian or Chinese snow, and the Persians call it *Nemek Tschini*, that is, Indian or Chinese salt.

There were embrasures for cannon in the great wall of China, built about 200 B.C. A manuscript written by Marcus Græcus, A.D. 846, contains a receipt for making a gunpowder, containing beside other things, six parts saltpeter, two of sulfur and two of charcoal.

In 1232 both Chinese and Tatars used gunpowder regularly in war, and it was used at the seige of Seville (1247), and the receipt for this powder and for that called "raquette" is given in the "*De Mirabilibus Mundi*" written by the Bishop Albertus Magnus of Ratisbon in 1280.

There are many books, but I would recommend: "An Illustrated History of Arms and Armour from the Earliest Period to the Present Time," by Auguste Demmin, (2,000 illustrations) published by George Bell & Sons, York St., Covent Garden, London, 1877. You may not be able to obtain it save in some public library.

The finest modern books I know of, and which I constantly consult, and would not be without, and whose author I know very well are: "Firearms in American History, Vol. I" (1910) 1600 to 1800; "Firearms in American History, Vol. II" The Revolver" (1911); "United States Single-Shot Martial Pistols" (1913); "Our Rifles" (1920) 1800 to 1920; "Our Guns" (in preparation) 1600 to 1920.

These may be obtained directly from the author, and are, I believe, $4.50 in cloth, $7 in limp leather, each. The "Martial Pistols" may be less. It is a briefer work. They are wonderfully illustrated with half-tones, and are invaluable when you have a pistol and want to find out what it is and all about it. They are by Prof. Charles Winthrop Sawyer of Boston. In the *Open Road*, August, 1920 (41 Humphreys St., Boston; 23c) is an article entitled, "The Evolution of Small Arms" by me. It is obviously brief, but seems to have pleased several of the collectors.

I should be very glad to have a list of what you have in your collection, and to see photos of the same—which I will return if desired—or to tell you anything within my knowledge about any piece that you are in doubt about.

A Business Chance in Turkey

IT'S still only something to talk about:

Question:—"Are there any possibilities for a technical man to build up some sort of business venture that may have been overlooked by the natives of Turkey or Asia Minor; *i.e.*, some national resource or source that is undeveloped and that a man with a technical education and a little money might attempt to develop?"—C. M. SCHOEPPLER, JR., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Binda:—At the present time I would hesitate in advising any one to think of establishing any business in Turkey or Asia Minor on account of the unsettled political conditions. It is hard for Americans fully to realize the extent to which this disorganization has developed. Wars have been continuous in Turkey practically since 1909, and during this time the industrial machinery has had to bear the brunt.

Under normal conditions or conditions approaching anywhere near normal, I would say there are any number of possibilities for a technical man with a little capital to build up a business venture with a fair chance of success. Turkey has always imported most of her necessaries, and there has been very little material manufactured within her own boundary. However, conditions are bound to improve; and the following suggestions may be of value to you, if you wish to consider this market and wait until he political horizon has been cleared.

During the last ten years there have been many fires in Constantinople, Saloniki and other cities of the old Turkish Empire, resulting in the destruction of a large part of these cities. For example, a fire in Stamboul (the Turkish section of Constantinople) on August 26, 1908, destroyed 1,500 houses; one on July 24, 1911, destroyed 2,463 houses; on the next day, July 25, another fire occurred burning a couple more thousand; on June 13, 1918, 8,000 houses were burned. In Pera (the European section of Constantinople) on July 26, 1915, 14,000 buildings were burned; and at Kassim Pacha, not far from the last named place, on July 21, 1919, a serious fire destroyed a great number of buildings. In August, 1919, most of the suburb of Kouroutcheshme was destroyed. On the Asiatic side of Constantinople at Scutari, on August 15, 1921, nearly 2,000 houses were burned.

None of the above mentioned houses have ever been rebuilt. It would therefore seem to me that Turkey would offer a tremendous field for the construction of both galvanized-iron and wooden dwellings, similar to our "knock-down" houses. I

think also that the Government authorities would welcome anybody prepared to develop such an industry, and would grant facilities in the way of acquiring building-ground wherever colonization on a large scale should be contemplated.

There is another industry which is lacking in the Near East, and that is the development of cold-storage facilities. The field for cold-storage plants is practically unlimited, and a man familiar with this industry, having a little capital, might very well develop a successful business in the leading cities such as Constantinople, Saloniki, Smyrna, Beirut, etc.

Before the war I was traveling in Asia Minor and came across a root which grew wild and in large quantities, which the natives ground into a powder and made a paste of. This was used for all purposes in which we use our glue or paste. I brought samples back to this country and had it tested by the chemist at Harvard University. The preliminary report was very satisfactory, and I felt that there would be an extensive field for this product in making paste used by the shoe manufacturer, paper-box manufacturers, etc. However, the war intervened, and I lost all samples, etc.

I have forgotten the name of this root; but I have no doubt that our consul-general in Constantinople could obtain samples if desired. To a man already on the field and understanding chemistry, this would be a good opportunity to develop an industry that seems to have been overlooked by most foreigners.

The above are only a few suggestions that might prove of interest. As I said before, conditions are too uncertain in that part of the world to advise anybody to invest his time and money, unless he has had an opportunity personally to investigate the field.

We have in New York an office of the American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant, where you can obtain additional information and suggestions. Dr. E. E. Pratt, executive secretary, is in charge, and if you will mention my name to him I am sure that he will help in any way possible.

Fishing Off Bermuda

THEY'RE there, though not as a sporting proposition:

Question:—"I have in contemplation a trip to Bermuda this Fall for a stay of possibly two weeks. While on the island it is my desire to spend most of my time fishing.

I write to inquire if you can give me some information as to the fish to be caught, the outfit necessary in the way of rod, line, etc.; also, whom to apply to for the necessary equipment such as boats, etc."—H. Mac Kay, Jr., New York.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Bermuda is not precisely a fisherman's paradise, although the waters teem with fish. For professional fishermen, who fish all night out on the reefs or set fish-traps, there are lots of heavy fish to be caught; but a clergyman visiting here last Winter, daily trolling with a rod and spinner down the channels, only caught one fish that I heard of, and that a small one.

Most of the sport fishing done here would scarcely appeal to a rod-and-line sportsman A couple of fellows take a sailboat or rowboat, anchor off some islet or rocky head in perhaps twenty or thirty feet of water, and use hand-lines on the bottom. It isn't fishing as I understand the term; it's letting fish hook themselves and yanking 'em out—unless the line breaks or the fish's mouth carries away.

However, as I remarked there are plenty of fish around here: rockfish, amberfish—running upward of eighty pounds often—porgies—not the porgy you know, but a stout, fat fellow of excellent flavor—snapper, salmon-rockfish, sailor's choice, gwelly and many more, including the delicious angelfish.

The line you would use depends on what depth of water you fished. An amberfish line is as stout as codline; mullet, grunt, turbot, etc., are taken on slighter lines. Perhaps the man most likely to give you all the information available as to boats, tackle, etc., is Mr. Henry Masters, Reid Street, Hamilton, to whom you might write.

The "Eta" of Japan.

LET us not be too self-righteous; we have our own "submerged tenth," you know. And there are those who say that it is more among us than a tenth who are "submerged:"

Question:—"Will you be so kind as to tell me what is the *Eta* in Japanese life; and some details about the Ainus. Are they of Caucasian origin?

Have the proletariat any representation at all?"—Dulce Fiske Fairman, Uniontown, Penn.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—I'll try now to take up your inquiries in order, but any good book on Japanese travel or history will add much more to your store of information than I can give in a necessarily condensed account. "The Spell of Japan," by Isabel Anderson, published by the Page Company of Boston, is an inexpensive book of general interest, because of the interesting manner in which it is written; and the information in it is accurate.

The *Eta* were the outcasts or pariahs of old feudal Japan. Their origin seems to be as obscure as many other things in Japanese history and ethnology, according to highest authorities, and the origin of the name itself seems to be a matter of dispute among scholars.

Some date their gradual organization as a class from about the seventh century and count them as descendants of Ainu prisoners transported to the southern islands of the empire. Some say they are descended from the illegitimate children of the great warrior Yoritomo of the twelfth century. Others consider them descendants of the Korean captives brought to Japan in the wars of the sixteenth century. Be that as it may, they were the "food-catchers," did the slaughtering and skinning of animals, dealt in skins, did the tanning and all degrading work such as digging criminals' graves and cleaning up about the common execution grounds.

Basil Hall Chamberlain thinks that their separation as a class began somewhere about the seventh or eighth century when the introduction of Buddhism caused all those connected with the taking of life to be looked upon with horror or disdain. They lived by themselves, generally on the outskirts of the settlements, but were organized and governed by their own headsmen. Classed with

the *Eta* were the *Bantaro* or watchmen, and the *Kawara-mono* or vagrant strolling players.

The class was abolished by the Government on October 12, 1871, and a few years ago their children were admitted to the public schools on an equality with other pupils. It is natural, however, that feeling should still exist against them—stronger in rural sections of the country—but with the gradually changing and modernizing conditions throughout the empire they have their chance now to pull themselves out of their traditions.

The Ainu are Caucasian. I am inclosing a clipping that will give you a few details regarding them.

As to the representation of the proletariat, the common people have representation through the House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet. This is a body elected by the people under fairly liberal suffrage laws which are changing from year to year now to suit the demands of the more liberal class of both politicians and citizens of commercial and industrial interests.

A great deal of recent legislation in the Diet has been for the relief and betterment of the poorer class. For instance, last Spring one of the important agitations was over a "Slum Improvement Bill" for the purpose of bettering the conditions in segregated districts occupied still by the *Eta* and other outcast elements of society. The bill had plans for improving streets and dwellings in such quarters, establishing better sewerage systems and water-supply, extending medical aid, promoting morality and education, and the general betterment of the economic status of the people.

The Japanese are very wide awake to all things that will improve them as a race and are making rapid headway along the same social, industrial and political lines that occupy the attention of all civilized countries of today.

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.

U. S. S. *RONDO* Ahoy! Hello Boys. Let's get together. I've got the addresses of several of the old crew and if you will write me and give me the addresses of all of them that you have, perhaps I'll be able to give everybody the addresses that they want.—Address C. A. ("Texas") Russel, Ex. Q. M. 3 C U. S. S. *Rondo*, 810 W. Woodward St., Denison, Texas.

CAL. Please make it good and then come back or send for me.—KIT.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WINNIE, GEORGE. Ex-navy man. Last seen in Norfolk, Va., aboard S. S. *Lake St. Clair;* Langlais, Ray and Fetter, Eddie; who were working in K. P. latter part of 1918, would like to hear from you. — Address JAMES R. WASHBURN, S. M. 3 C, U. S. S. *Pruitt*, 347, Charleston, S. C.

HANNIGAN, JOE. Mang, Freddy; Parlon, Pinky; McCarthy, or any of the boys who worked for the S. P. U. at Camp Merritt, N. J., in the Summer of 1919. Please write to HOMER SEIBES BERGER, Box 131, Blauvelt, N. Y.

HICKS, MARIEN. About forty-five years of age, dark-red or auburn hair, blue eyes, wears glasses, height about five feet eight inches, weight about 160 pounds. Stationary engineer by trade. Did work in mines around Joplin, Missouri, and Baxter, Kansas. Last heard of at Joplin, Mo., in 1919. Any information will be appreciated by his niece.—Address ANNA M. BRYANT, 122 Leroy St., Los Angeles, Cal.

R. E. H. Your folks will be more than glad to hear from you; better still, to see you.—R. W. H.

DONOHEW, MRS. GERTRUDE. If you wish to communicate with your brother Harry, address—J. W. C., care of *Adventure.*

WOULD like to hear from ex-members of Battery A, 3rd Batt., commanded by Lt. Rientz, later commissioned captain. Believe Sgt. Corbett was top sgt. Members later transferred to Batt. A, 8th Bn.; then to Batt. A, 11th Bn. Most of the gang from Tenn. Would also like to hear from any one in Batt. B, 4th Bn.—Address JIM CALDWELL, 480 Pine St., San Francisco, Cal.

MITTLER, EDWARD J. Brother. Last heard from about ten years ago; then in Minneapolis, Minn. Any information will be appreciated.—Address WM. J. MITTLER, 6215 Station St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

BRASSEL, JOHN H. Formerly of Coco Walk, Panama, Canal Zone. If you see this, please write or wire me at once. Deal in South America held up for you.—Address H. H. CLARK, 777 Third St., San Bernardino, Cal.

RUSSELL, JUEL C. Age thirty-two; height five feet eleven inches; weight 140 pounds; dark hair with lock of white hair on right temple; gray eyes; complexion fair; tattoo marks on arms, U. S. A. on right, and on left arm a star. Left Marion, Ind., December 14, 1921. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address L. T. 441, care of *Adventure.*

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HAIGH, MASON C. Jimmy, write and tell me where you are. I wrote to you from Manila, P. I., to Detroit, but my letter was returned. My present address is—PVT. HENRY O. MICHEL, 5th Co., C. A. C., Fort Worden, Wash.

MELIUS, FRED. Heard from in 1904 and 1905 from Alaska and Canada, and in 1908 from Oregon; was then a traveling man. Home formerly in Iowa. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T. 440, care of *Adventure.*

BURNS, HARRY. André, write and let me know where you and Nora are. I haven't heard since you left Manila, P. I.—Address Pvt. HENRY O. MICHEL, 5th Co., C. A. C., Fort Worden, Washington.

KLEIN, BLACKIE. Last seen in New Orleans, May, 1921; may be living in Alhambra, Cal., at present. Any information will be appreciated by his old pal.—Address DICK FRANKLIN, 156 Elm St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

WOULD like to hear from any one related to the Eslicks or Pierces who settled in Webster and Polk counties, Iowa, about 1850.—Address MRS. ELIZABETH ESLICK DAVIS, Lehigh, Iowa.

DOYLE, MRS. EDDIE. Aunt. Maiden name. Josephine Fauchia. Age about sixty-two. Last heard from while cook at Hotel Montgomery, Rouses Point, N. Y., 1912. Formerly lived on Battery Street, Burlington, Vt. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CHAS. E. BEAULIEU, 15 Miller St., Plattsburg, N. Y.

The following have been inquired for in either the April 10th or April 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

ALFORD, JIMMIE LEE; Blomstergren, O. V.; Blum, Albert; Breffin, Jago; Carley, M. R.; Cawley, Charles; Cohen, Alf E.; Cross, Verde; Dickman, Sgt.; Fallon, Frank; Hannigan, Pat.; Harrison, Lee; Hintz, Harry; Hodges, Sebastian; Kavanagh, John; Levine (first name not known); Moore, Bill; Nichols, Frank; Pelley, Wm. G. A.; Roy, John or Print Wm.; Seelye, Lawrence Copeland; Simonsen, Stanley L.; Wagner, Henry A.; Weathers, Christena; Whitlatch, James Monroe; Wolff, Albert.

MISCELLANEOUS—Any one who saw the accident of the Harry Wright Amusement Co. Boat *Marion* a few miles below Helena, Ark., on the Mississippi River, April 26, 1908; Bob; Co. K., 11th Inf., U. S. A.; Descendants of Michael E. McCaffrey; Descendants of John Walsh; Dubs; Gang who served in the Ambulance Co. No. 8, Corozal, Canal Zone, 1915 to 1921; Members of Coast Guard Cutter *Apache* or *Yamacraw* who served during 1919; also members of crew of the Shipping Board Steamer *Collingsworth* who were aboard at time of salvaging of the S. S. *West Waoneke*: Relatives of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Wilkey; Tickle.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALDRIDGE, F. P.; Abrams, Wesley; Bertsch, Miss Elizabeth; Bonner, J. S.; Butterfield, E.; Barrett, Raymond; Buckley, Ray; Bollinger, C. J.; Brown, W. E.; Bushby, Ed. F.; Bailey, Dick; Benter, Jack; Balensifer, Frank A. W.; Blaicher, Chas. A.; Courtlandt, Victor; Cook, Wm. N.; Cook, Elliot D.; Connor, A. M.; Craun, G. R.; Chink; Clark, Wilfred J.; Cramer, Chas. A.; Corbett, Fred P.; Coles, Bobby; Carr, John; Carpenter, Robert S.; Coston, O. A.; Chatvaire, J.; Christian, J. K. ("Happy"); Clark, Ernest S.; De Brissac, Sr., Ricardo; de Rouffiquac, J.; Evans, B. R.; Fisher, 1st Sgt. R.; Farnsworth, Donald; Ford, Harry; Franklin, R.; Gale, Geo. A.; Grimm, H. C.; Garwood, Leo D.; Harris, Walter J.; Haskins, S. S.; Howard, Charlie; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Hughes, Frank E.; Hooker, Wm. Francis; Chief Hailstorm; Jones, John Paul; Jackson, Robert R.; Kuckaby, Wm. Francis; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Kelly, C. H.; Kennedy, Paul I.; Larisey, Jack; Lovett, Harold S.; Lafler, Harry; Lee, Wm. R., M. D.; Lonely Jock; Lauder, Harry; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonad, Tony; Mackintosh, D. T. A.; Mendelson, Aleck; Minor, John; McKee, A. L.; McNair, Henry S.; McCafferty, Chas. B.; McNickle, W. A.; Nichols, Chas. B.; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nylander, Towne J.; O'Hara, Jack; Parker, Dr. M.; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, Pvt. D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Pigeon, A. H.; Pulis, H. F.; Posner, George A.; Raines, Wm. L.; Rich, Wagoner Bob; Rogan, Chas. B.; Ryder, H. S.; Raymond, C. E.; Rundle, Merrill G.; Roberts, Walter; Rutherford Max; St. Clair, Fred; Schmidt, G.; Scott, Pvt. James F.; Smith, G. O.; Starr, Ted; Stocking, C. B.; Sloan, Chas. A.; Stewart, Ernest, J.; Spencer, Robert; Schafer, George; Tripp, Edward; Terry, Lambert; Von Gelucke, Byron; Van Tyler, Chester; Wiley, Floyd; Ward, Frank B.; Williams, Roger; Woeller, Erich; Wilson, Ray; Yames, Reuben L.

MISCELLANEOUS—Third Officer S. S. *Lake Elmdale*; WS-XV; L. T. 348; No. 439; S. 177284; W. W. T.; J. C. H.; 2480; T. W. S.; C. C. C.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address L. B. BARRETTO care of *Adventure*.

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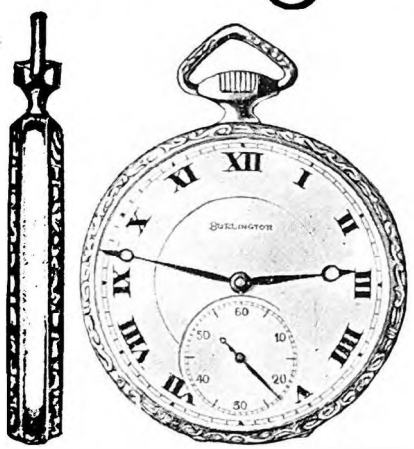

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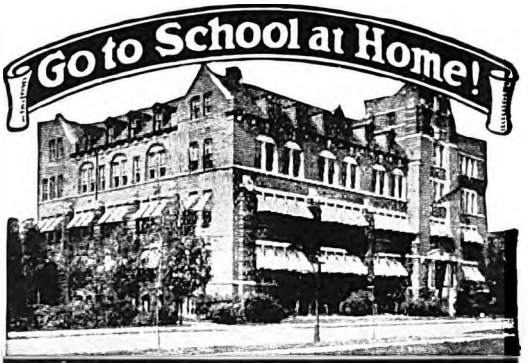

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...Structural Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Foreman's Course $2,000 to $4,000
...Business Manager $5,000 to $15,000	...Sanitary Engineer $2,000 to $5,000
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