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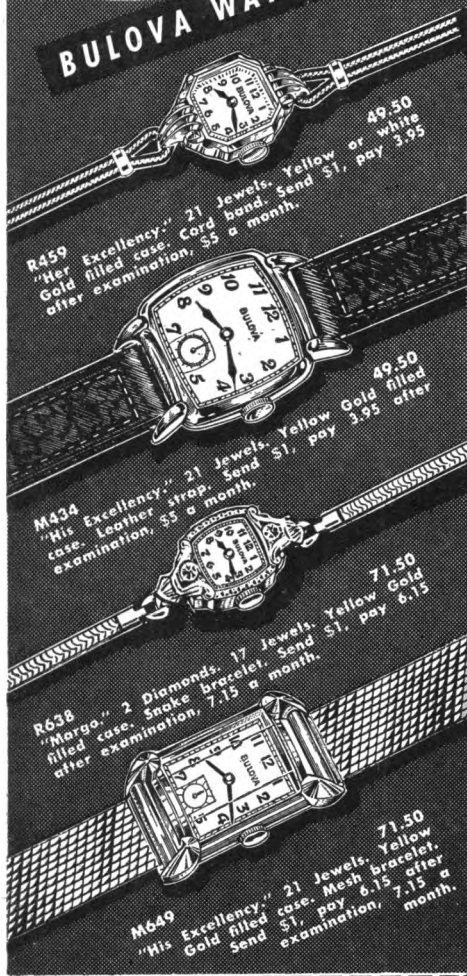


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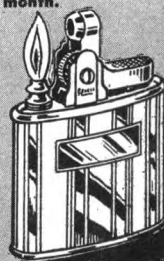
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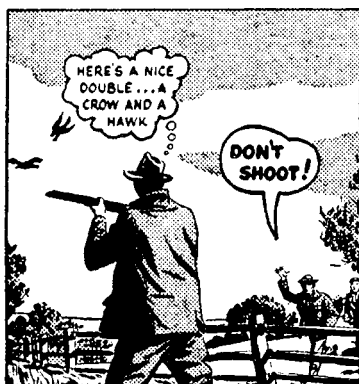
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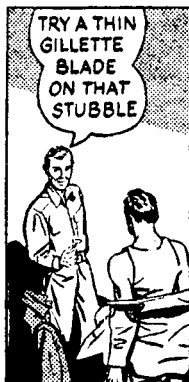
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April, 1949

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*Cover painted for Adventure by Peter Stevens
Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor*

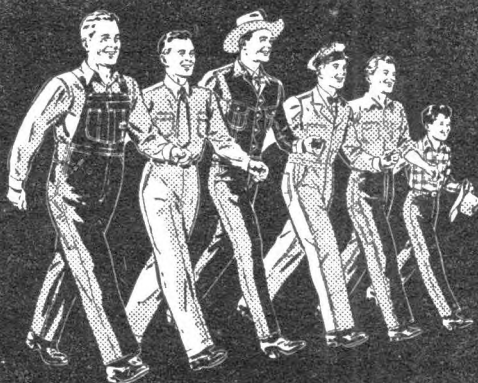
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Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Jack Brewer, a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, please communicate with C. Ray Robinson, 728 Barracks St., New Orleans, La. He is a close friend and his whereabouts became unknown to me since he sailed out of New Orleans on a merchant ship about two years ago. He is about 6' 3" tall, weighs 190 pounds, 23 years old, black, curly hair. Does some writing, likes to quote poetry, especially Kipling, and sings Irish songs well. Doesn't mind a good scrap once in a while.

Please help me locate my father, Grover McKenna. Worked for Standard Oil Co. mostly in Montana and Wyoming. Last seen 1935. He would now be about 55. Pfc. E. D. McKenna, R.A. 36902275, 63 Cml BD&M Co., APO 757, c/o PM, N.Y.

I would like to hear from anyone having information on present address of Fred Matheny, formerly of U. S. Army. When last heard from he was living with a sister in West Virginia. Please write Thomas J. Mulhern, 336 E. 166 St., Bronx, New York.

Clarence J. Carlton, 114 N. Sanchez St., Ocala, Fla., seeks whereabouts of his son Clarence J. Carlton, Jr. Last heard from in Boston, Mass., 1941.

Anybody knowing the whereabouts of a man known as Indian Shorty who lives in or around Cottonwood, Calif., please contact Stanley E. Ehrman, 1042 Daisy Ave., Long Beach, Calif.

I would like to locate Edward McMenamin, once known as Collins in the fight ring. He is about 5'6", red hair, and was last heard of in Baltimore and Pittsburgh. Please write R. Essick, 6629 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Would be pleased to contact Charles J. Arch. Worked with him at Indio, Calif., during the latter part of World War I. Write E. H. Douglas, 533 Towne Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

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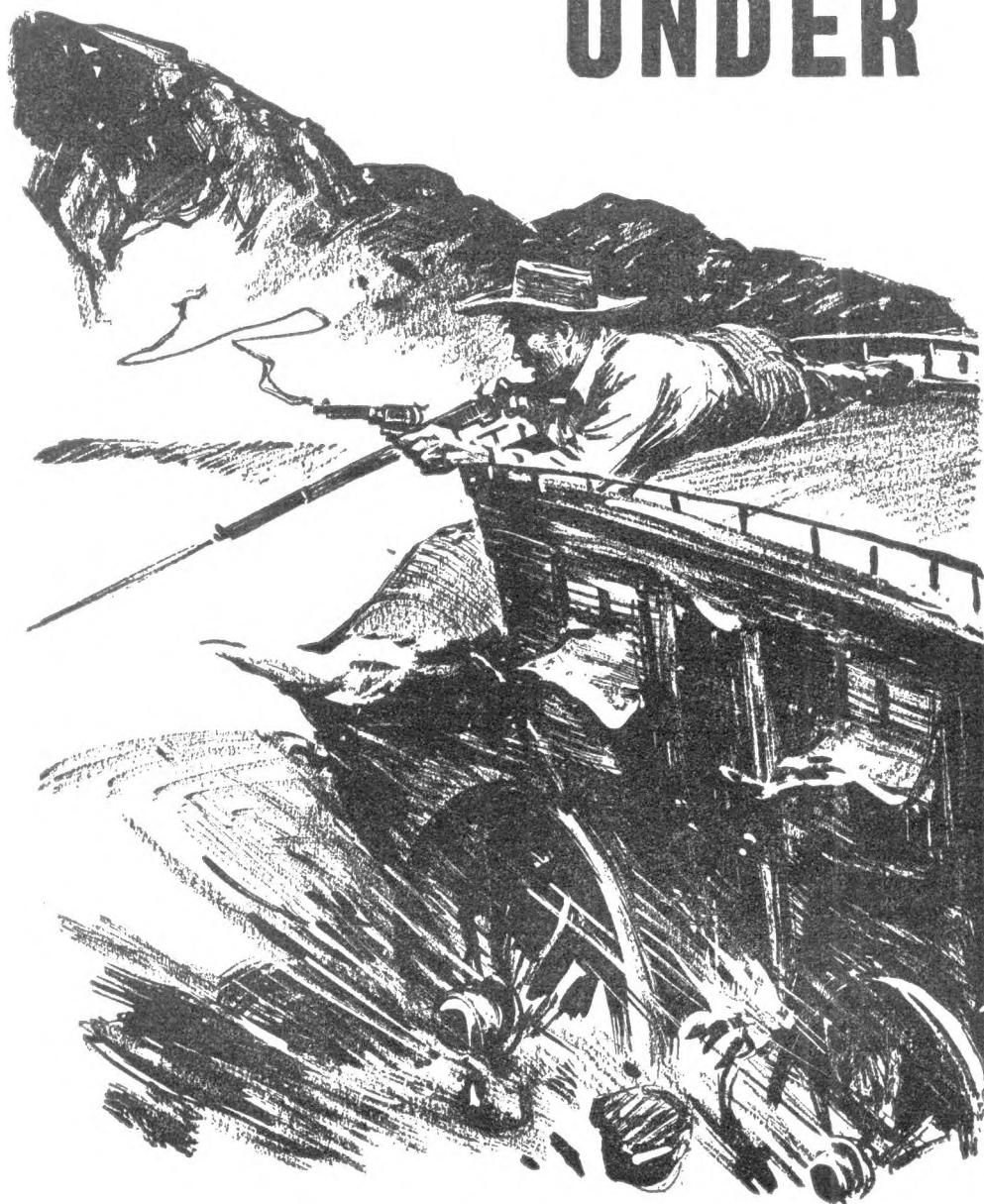
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THUNDER DOWN UNDER



Stretched out on the wildly pitching roof, Johnny returned the fire.

By JULES ARCHER

AS THEY approached the blazing forest, Johnny Queed gave the frightened horses their heads, checking the reins gradually, a careful trifle at a time. He was taking no chances on the heavy coach overrunning the team. Horses—like passengers—could be replaced. But it might take a full year to get a new coach all the way from Connecticut

to Australia. There wouldn't be a hope of competing with Cobb & Company by that time, even if he could work up a new stake on the Ballarat goldfields.

He slowed the team to a halt about two hundred yards from the nearest flaming trees. Untying the belt that held him in the driver's seat, he stretched his gaunt length upward on the buckboard and



ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

studied the cinder-filled countryside thoughtfully. A strong wind was whipping the bushfire from arce to acre.

"Mr. Queed!"

Johnny turned around slowly and looked down. His surprised green eyes met the violet stare of his only woman passenger, Lydia Drake. He hadn't expected the lady editor of the *Melbourne News* to know his name. All he knew about her was that she was an extraordinarily good-looking woman of about twenty-seven who, according to the editorials in the *News*, considered Americans "unprincipled idlers, who live on scenes of anarchy and excitement."

That observation had irked Johnny when he'd read it. He had been one of the 8,000 California forty-niners who had joined thousands of English, Irish, Scotch, German and French miners in the rush across the Pacific in '51 to the Ballarat goldfields. In the six months he'd spent digging up enough yellow stuff to set up an opposition stagecoach run to Cobb & Company, he hadn't noticed that Americans got any more drunk than anybody else.

Now he cocked a skeptical eyebrow and said, "Yes, ma'am?"

"I think we'd better turn around and go back." Her voice was cool and firm—too self-assured to belong to the pretty upturned Australian face in the coach window. "There's no point in risking lives by trying to get through. No one's time is that valuable—not even mine."

Annoyed, Johnny Queed looked away without replying. She was undoubtedly right. But she was a woman, and she was telling him what he ought to do at the reins of his own coach and six. He studied the road ahead dubiously. Either way, he stood a rich chance of being the butt of laughter in Cobb & Company offices.

This was the return trip of his very first run, one day after hanging out the proud shingle: *Johnny Queed Coach Office—We Get You There*. If he tried to get through, and the coach went up in flames, all that would be left of the new coach line would be a shingle and store. If he didn't, the Cobb drivers would see to it that all the colony of Victoria enjoyed the humorous anti-climax of his emphatic slogan.

Another voice hailed him from the

coach. It was a booming, hardy voice, and Johnny recognized it as belonging to Bluey Coldstone, a white-bearded Aussie digger who'd struck it rich at Ararat.

"Hell, mate," Bluey grinned up at him out of the window, "you don't want to pay no mind to a female! Cabbage-Tree Ned never feared no bushfire. I rid through worst ones than this'n with him at the ribbons—nary a singed tail on a horse, neither!"

Cabbage-Tree Ned Devine, a burly Aussie who always wore a wide-brimmed cabbage-tree hat, was one of the crack drivers for Cobb & Company. It was one thing, Johnny reflected uneasily, for a veteran like Cabbage-Tree Ned to get through. It was something else again for Johnny Queed, who had once driven for Wells Fargo—but only for a year, before the gold bug had lured him to California.

"Haven't made up my mind yet," Johnny said, frowning.

Lydia Drake stepped out of the coach. Dressed in a stiff blue crinoline, she looked out of place on the dusty road. She walked firmly to the buckboard, her chin raised. "Now, look here, Mr. Queed, I think you'd better be sensible—even if you are an American. The *Melbourne News* has a great deal of influence in the colony—and you won't be getting many passengers if I'm forced to report that you're willing to risk letting them die in a bushfire!"

"Aaahhh!" With a snort of disgust Bluey Coldstone swung down beside her, agile despite his years. "Females! Look here, mate, let's see if you've got any red blood in yer bucket. Bet you five hundred pounds in gold to a shilling you can't pour me into a Melbourne pub afore sundown!"



JOHNNY QUEED rubbed his jaw and did some shrewd calculations. Six hundred pounds—or three thousand dollars—would buy a new coach. Two coaches, two routes, doubled profits. "Wouldn't care to make that six hundred pounds to a shilling, would you?"

Bluey Coldstone's beard wagged in a part-toothed grin. He nodded his head emphatically, shooting a sly glance of triumph at Lydia Drake. "Too right I would! Gold's no bloody good to a bloke what's as thirsty as I am!" He doubled

with laughter. "Six hundred it is!"

"All aboard," said Johnny Queed laconically.

The girl's cheeks turned the color of the burning forest. She fixed flashing eyes on the lean man in the box seat. "You can't force passengers to ride through a bushfire! You haven't even asked any of the others whether they want to turn back or go on!"

"When you booked on my coach," Johnny said, "you read the sign—'We Get You There.' If you don't want to get there, you can suit yourself, and so can anybody else. But this coach is going on to Melbourne."

"You can't leave me here! Why, it's forty miles back to Ballarat! I demand, Mr. Queed, that you take me back to Ballarat!"

"All right," Johnny said easily. "Just sit down and take it easy. I'll pick you up on the run tomorrow morning. Won't charge you extra, either." He strapped himself in and picked up the reins.

Lydia Drake stared at him and swallowed hard. Then without another word she lifted her skirt and stepped back into the carriage, shrinking away from the helping hand offered by the vastly amused Blucey Coldstone.

Johnny waited until he heard the coach door close, then snapped the long, flexible coachman's whip. The spirited brumbies between the shafts bolted with an alacrity that crashed his spine against the back of the box seat. He let the reins slack to give them their heads, encouraging them to greater speed with skillful flicks of the whip that produced more cracking noises than contact with horseflesh.

The team galloped down a forest track, which was all the road really amounted to, between gum trees in flame. On either side of the flying coach, less than fifty yards distant, charred giants of the outback crashed to the forest floor with jarring thunder. The air was seared with flying ash, leaping sparks and choking clouds of smoke. The intense heat was suffocating.

Johnny laid on the whip, praying silently that the horses would by some miracle stick to the track. At times it was almost impossible to see five feet ahead through the smoke. He could tell from the pull of

the reins that the lead horses were galloping in panic. If a flame-wrapped tree fell across the track, a bolt would be almost certain. The horses would go down in a horrible heap, and the coach would splinter into a burning rain . . .

Johnny wet his lips, and felt the perspiration break out all over his face. His jaw worked anxiously as he felt the coach sway perilously on two wheels, a foot away from burning trees, as the team swerved blindly along a sharp curve in the track. He heard a sharp noise at his left shoulder, and glanced around quickly.

A burning branch had landed on top of the coach. Holding the reins with one hand, he reached back as far as the tie-in leather belt would let him strain, and gripped the fiery branch with his bare palm. He flung it away swiftly, then beat his hand along the roof of the coach to smother any flames that had caught.

It was a job holding the team together as they galloped through the inferno. He didn't dare check the reins too tightly, for fear of breaking their urgent speed, or causing the panicky lead horses to shy suddenly. Beneath him, the coach swayed violently on its thick leather "springs" like a full-rigger in a raging storm.

Tears welled in his grit-stung eyes. On either side of the wide forest track, flames leaped through hot grass with incredible speed, roared from helpless tree to tree, galloped from acre to acre. Red tongues leaped out toward the madly dashing stagecoach. Half-suffocated, his face black with soot and ash, it seemed to Johnny Queed that the earth had become a gigantic blast furnace.

It flashed through his worried mind that he owed an apology to Lydia Drake, as well as to all the passengers he had rashly taken into this replica of hell. His jaw tightened. The best apology he could make to the helpless, suffering people behind him was to get them through this holocaust safely.

Through the churning billows of smoke he saw the tall, agonized tree ahead begin to bend slowly toward the road, the red cancer eating into its base. Johnny stared for a split second in paralyzed fascination. Then with a hoarse cry of desperation, he lashed out with his whip. It cracked across the broad backs with the

jagged thunder of shellburst. Suddenly maddened, the brumbies bolted with frenzied speed down the track, racing against seconds and the giant cone of fire angling down slowly from the sky.

A blast of intense heat enveloped Johnny Queed. The world suddenly became more intensely bright than the sun could ever paint it. The crackling, snapping noises became a frightening roar. Choking with agony and fear, Johnny worked the whip madly, frenziedly.

The flaming tree crashed across the road with a shuddering noise that made the coach bounce in its flight. Johnny closed his eyes and swallowed, giving silent utterance to one of his highly infrequent prayers. The rear of the coach had cleared the burning branches by a little less than six feet.

He was almost too tired to care that ahead the landscape looked suddenly peaceful. Keeping the speed of the team and the speed of the coach in careful balance, he let the horses relax their heart-breaking pace very gradually. Then he ran shaking fingers through his singed black hair, and relaxed.

When the stagecoach finally pulled up in Melbourne, he wanted to look quite unconcerned, as though he had never had any doubts about his ability to out-race a bush-fire with the skill of Cabbage-Tree Ned.

CHAPTER II

NO GUNS—NO TROUBLE



THE first to dismount, when he brought the team to a halt in front of the tiny store on Flinders Street, was Lydia Drake. Looking down, as he unstrapped himself, Johnny suppressed a grin. The formerly impeccable editor of the *News* looked as though she'd just participated in a minstrel show—and a rowdy one at that. She also looked quite mad.

"You haven't heard the last of this. Mr. Queed," she said with ominous restraint. "If I were you, I'd try to sell out to Cobb & Company—while you still have a business to sell!"

He watched her go, and smiled ruefully as he mopped his face and neck with a red bandanna. A gnarled hand suddenly fell

on his knee, and he looked around. Bluey Coldstone grinned up at him from behind square-trimmed white whiskers. The old miner tossed up a small but heavy chamois bag. Johnny caught it with one hand, squinting up at the fast-setting late afternoon sun.

"Cabbage-Tree Ned couldn't do rid that any better hisself," Bluey asserted warmly. "I guess you American fellers ain't such bad jackaroos, at that." He studied Johnny slyly. Then he said, "Tell you what I'll do, mate. Toss you fer that six hundred—double or nothing. Give it a go?"

Twelve hundred, Johnny thought swiftly. Three coaches, three routes, triple profits. "Toss your penny," he said. "Tails."

With a pleased grin Bluey reached into his shirt pocket and withdrew a large copper piece. Keeping his smiling, shrewd old eyes fixed on Johnny Queed's face, he flipped the penny high in the air. His mouth fell open in surprise as Johnny suddenly reached out a long arm and caught it in flight.

"This wouldn't have two heads, would it?" Johnny asked dryly before he examined the coin. Then he flipped it over in his palm and a hard smile touched his lips. He tossed the coin back to Bluey Coldstone who grinned at him sheepishly.

"Ye're all right, mate," the old miner laughed. "Ye find men with guts, and men with brains, but ye don't often find 'em under the same hat. Come along to the pub—I'll stand as many as ye can fit down and keep down."

Johnny shook his head. "Can't. Got to get me some sleep—Ballarat again, first thing in the morning." He waved farewell to the white-bearded prospector and the last of the dismounting passengers. Then he leaped down from the buckboard, tethered the lead horses, and went into the store.

A handsome, broad-shouldered man with a trim blond mustache was sitting leisurely in one of the store's six chairs. Beside him, sitting straddle-wise in another, was a big man Johnny recognized instantly as Cabbage-Tree Ned Devine. Beneath his enormous hat, the Aussie's face was hard, lined and strong-jawed, but amiable.

The good-looking man rose and extended his hand. "Johnny Queed? I'm Freeman Cobb. Didn't know whether you'd try to get back this afternoon. I hear there's a pretty bad bushfire this side of Ballarat." He let his eyes wander over Johnny's singed clothes and smiled. "I guess what I hear is correct."

Johnny shook hands laconically. "What's on your mind, Mr. Cobb?"

"Several things," Freeman Cobb said mildly. "First, how'd you like to sell out? Give you twice what you paid for your coach and six, and a job driving for Cobb & Company besides."

"No," Johnny said. "What else?" Unbuckling his gun belt and putting it aside, he sat on an edge of his desk and rolled a cigarette in one hand, Aussie-style.

"That," Cobb indicated the gun-belt. "You're new in this business, so I don't suppose you know why our drivers don't make their runs armed. Ned Devine here can tell you about it. I brought him along because I figured you'd take his word, if you wouldn't take mine. You've been in the Colony long enough to know Ned doesn't give anybody a wrong steer."

"I'm listening," Johnny said.

Cabbage-Tree Ned pushed back his hat and ran his hand over his thick face in a tired way. "Bushrangers, mate," he said in a bored tone. "They know we don't carry guns. Frankie Gardiner and his gang has held up coaches thirty-six times. But they never killed nobody. If they hear that any drivers are starting to pack guns, they're gonna start shooting from ambush. Drivers gonna be killed. That's why no guns on the coaches, Queed."

Johnny thought awhile before answering. "Thirty-six holdups," he said, letting smoke screen through his lips. "I think maybe if we all carried guns, there wouldn't be any holdups."

Cabbage-Tree Ned looked at him sourly. Then he sighed. "Look, mate, there are twelve Cobb drivers—six Aussies, six Americans. You anxious to be responsible for any of us getting shot off the seat? Maybe we got some ideas about that."

"There's another thing, too," Freeman Cobb added softly. "My three partners and I are Americans. You know how we got started—resigning from Wells Fargo to set up our own company. It wasn't easy,

Queed—there's a lot of opposition to Americans in the Colony. Now that we have made a go of it, do you want the Melbourne *News* to start yelling for our scalps for introducing violence and gunplay into Victoria?"

They had a point there, Johnny couldn't help admitting to himself. Then he grinned inwardly, remembering Lydia Drake's face as she had stalked off, a beautiful if ominous symbol of ill-will to all Americans in Australia. And he remembered her warning about selling out—while he still had a business left to sell.

"Thanks for the advice," Johnny said gravely. "I'll think about it." He stood up to indicate the interview was over.

At the door Freeman Cobb turned and smiled. "Oh, one thing I almost forgot to mention. I thought you'd like to know. Starting tomorrow, we're cutting our single fares to Ballarat to three and a half pounds."

Johnny stiffened. "That so?" he said quietly. "Interesting—because mine's going down to three pounds."

"Really?" The square-shouldered man was unperturbed. "In that case I suppose we'd better make ours two pounds."

Johnny banged his fist hard on the desk. "One pound!"

Freeman Cobb laughed. "I think we can afford to lose money better and longer than you can, Queed. Until you're ready to sell out, Cobb & Company will offer free transportation to and from Ballarat—or whichever goldfield you happen to be serving."

"That won't stop me, Cobb," Johnny said grimly.

"Well," the other man said easily, "maybe we'd better make sure. So we'll throw in free beer and food at a half-way stop."

Cabbage-Tree Ned guffawed and shook his big head.



TWO days later a typical Melbourne drizzle pelted the plate glass beneath the rain-streaked sign: *Johnny Queed Coach Office—We Get You There*. Inside, feet crossed on the desk, Johnny glumly glanced through the morning's Melbourne *News*. It had taken only one day for Freeman Cobb's sensational an-

nouncement to spread through the Colony.

Not a soul had showed up this morning. Johnny had known no one would. He hadn't even bothered to harness the team at the stable and bring the stagecoach around to Flinders Street. For a while he had toyed with the idea of running to Ballarat and back empty, but then he asked himself, "What for?" And Freeman Cobb was right—Johnny couldn't compete with well-financed cut-throat competition. Bluey Coldstone's six hundred pounds' worth of gold would be gone before Freeman Cobb blinked an eye.

He sighed dismally, flipped past the big Cobb & Company ad in the *News*, wincing, and turned to the editorial page. Then he sighed again. Lydia Drake was a woman of her word. This was the second editorial, in two days, attacking the reckless irresponsibility of the new Johnny Queed coach line—an *American firm*, Lydia italicized emphatically—in risking passengers' lives needlessly. How long would decent Australians have to wait, Lydia demanded indignantly, for Governor Latrobe to pass laws restraining men like Johnny Queed from jeopardizing the lives of Australians?

Before he had read the first editorial, Johnny had been inclined to visit the *News* office and make an honest apology. The truth was, he would have admitted, he had no idea a plunge through an Aussie bushfire would be as dangerous as it had turned out. And once having sped into it, he had had no alternative but to keep on.

But if he made that apology now, Lydia Drake would look down that attractive nose of hers triumphantly. Maybe she wouldn't say it, but she'd silently be applying the Aussie epithet of scorn—"Crawler!" She'd believe he was eating crow to get her to call off her editorials and let him alone.

The hell, Johnny thought grimly, with that. Lydia Drake could write what she pleased about him. He was licked, anyhow—but not by her. It was ironic that in a far-off country like Australia, where resentment against Americans ran high, the factor to put him out of business should be—a fellow American. Dog eat dog.

His eyes happened to fall casually on the *News* dateline, and he smiled bitterly. It was July 4, 1854.

Later that afternoon he awoke from a doze with a start. He listened intently and heard it again. Shots, and getting closer. Then he heard the pounding of hooves, and jumped out of his chair. He opened the door and went outside, in time to see the first of the riders gallop past, gun raised in the air, firing. Then it seemed as though Flinders Street was filled with horsemen, laughing and shouting, blazing with sixguns in all directions, though mostly skyward. One of them reined his horse in front of Johnny Queed and bent down from the saddle, horny hand outstretched.

"Hiya, Johnny, you lanky sourpuss!" The man was laughing, a short, squat man with red cheeks and a bushy white mustache. He was drunk. Johnny recognized him—Pete Banks, one of the American miners he'd worked beside at Ballarat.

"Hi, Pete," Johnny said. "What's all the shooting?"

"Fourth of Ju-ly celebration!" Pete Banks let out an Indian war whoop and let a bullet rip at the clouds over Melbourne. "Come on, Johnny, get in on the fun! Gonna set a good example to the Aussies—show 'em the good old American way to greet the King of England on the Fourth of Ju-ly!"

Johnny Queed looked grimly past the squat man's horse. All drunk, every man jack of them. This was going to be a Fourth of July Melbourne would never forget—or forgive. The first brawls were already breaking out in front of the pub across the street. Johnny ran back inside the store and grabbed his gun-belt.

When he emerged again, Pete Banks was galloping down the street toward the *News* building, which seemed a focal point for most of the riders. Johnny started to follow on foot, but paused as his attention was arrested by the brawl across the street. A beefy miner with a square face was clutching the neckband of a little whiskered man. The man was Bluey Coldstone.

"Say it!" the big man was snarling drunkenly. "Down with all the——kings! Say it, you pint-sized billy-goat!"

"Take yer bloody hands off me!" Bluey snapped, struggling to free himself. "Ye're a fine specimen of American you are!"

The man hit him. Bluey smashed back

against the door of the pub and fell to one knee. Eyes heavy with hate, he glared at the beefy miner.

The big man laughed, and suddenly found himself jerked around to face a lanky stranger with frosty green eyes.

"Get moving," Johnny Queed said sharply.

The big man stared at him, swaying. "American, ain't you?" he snapped. "Well, this here lousy little Aussie—"

Johnny Queed brought up his right arm like the lash of a coach-whip. It snapped beneath the beefy miner's chin, threw him back on his heels. With an outraged bellow, the big man's hand dropped to his holster. It stopped there when he saw that Johnny Queed's huge, heavy .44 Colt Dragon was already out and leveled.

"I said to get moving."

Rubbing his jaw morosely, the big man swung onto a horse and rode off slowly, with a long look backward. Johnny Queed kept his gun pointed until the horseman had melted into the crowd of riders surging through Flinders Street.



"THANKS, mate," said Bluey Coldstone at his elbow. The old miner's eyes were cold and hard. Then wagging his beard at the mounted rioters, he said bitterly, "Just takes a few rotten apples, don't it?" He pressed Johnny's shoulder and turned away.

Johnny Queed put his gun back in the holster and moved down Flinders Street in long, quick strides. Most of the horsemen had gathered in front of the *News* building. As he passed the large Cobb & Company offices, he saw Freeman Cobb standing on the steps in front, watching, hands tucked inside his belt, a narrow cigar in his mouth. Cobb's handsome face looked concerned.

"What are they up to?" Johnny asked him.

The broad-shouldered man shook his head. "Bad business. Some hotheads out in the diggings stirred 'em up about those editorials in the *News*. Insult to the American flag, and all that, on the sacred Fourth. I'm afraid—"

Johnny cut him short. "Coming?" he asked tersely. "You've got a bigger stake in what happens than I have. Cobb &

Company won't stay in business long if the Aussies think these drunks represent—"

"They won't," Freeman Cobb said calmly. "You're crazy, Queed. You can't do anything to stop them. They'll tear you to pieces." He smiled at Johnny cynically. "Not worried about Lydia Drake, are you? After those editorials? Don't be ungrateful—this demonstration is all in your behalf, isn't it?"

The muscles worked in Johnny Queed's jaws. Wetting his lips, he moved on rapidly, breaking into a run. As he drew near the *News* building, he saw that most of the miners were dismounted, standing by their horses and listening to a harangue from the steps of the *News* plant. The orator was a short, squat man with red cheeks and a bushy white mustache—Pete Banks. Gunfire and whoops from the crowd punctuated his telling points.

"... been making us dance, by damn," Pete Banks was yelling, "so now let's make this smart-aleck editor dance fer a change! And I mean dance! Got yer music for him, boys?"

The answer was a volley of shots and loud war-whoops. Laughing boisterously, Pete Banks turned and fired three shots into the lock on the door. Some miners started up the steps behind him.

The door suddenly opened and Lydia Drake walked out onto the steps. She stood there a moment, her lovely head coldly surveying the sea of men's faces beneath her, the last rays of the pale sun rouging her white cheeks. Pete Banks stared at her, and then he whistled. A chorus of whistles and bursts of laughter broke out.

"Step aside, lady," Pete Banks said. "We got business with the editor of this here so-called newspaper."

"I'm the editor," Lydia said. "What do you want?"

The squat little man gazed at her in disbelief. "A she-editor!" he gasped. "Well, that beats the hell out of me!" He slapped his thigh with a loud guffaw.

"She or he," a voice yelled, "it don't matter none! We came here to teach the editor a lesson, didn't we? Come on, she-editor—dance! Fling up those purty legs and dance for us terrible Americans! We're gonna let you celebrate the Fourth with us!"



Pete Banks' gun was torn from his grasp, and a lean arm pushed against his chest, tumbling him back over the rail.

"That's the ticket!" another voice boomed. "Let's give 'er the tune, boys—the good old Yankee Doodle tune!"

A shot rang out, and stone chipped a step away from Lydia Drake's dress hem. Its echo was drowned in the noise of sporadic shots that followed, all splintering the steps around her. Pete Banks laughed, pointed his own gun in front of the white-faced girl, and fired.

He gasped as the gun was torn from his grasp, and a lean arm pushed against his chest, tumbling him back over the rail of the steps. Johnny Queed stepped in front of Lydia Drake and gazed out at the miners in front of the building.

Someone yelled, "It's Johnny Queed! Hi, Johnny!" The chorus of recognition grew. The miner with the booming voice yelled, "Hey, Johnny, when you gonna stop jeopardizin' Australian lives, like the she-editor says?" Whoops of laughter greeted this sally. Another, less friendly

voice roared, "Better come back to the diggings with us low Americans, Johnny Queed! When Cobb and the she-editor get through with you, you ain't gonna coach nobody no place!"

"You fellows think San Francisco's a great place?" Johnny said quietly, but loudly enough so that his voice carried.

"Best in the world!" burst from several throats at once.

"How would you like it if a couple of hundred Aussies rode in to San Francisco, shot up the town, flung bullets at the feet of a defenseless young woman, and celebrated the King's birthday with a shebang that kept every American indoors, scared to go out in his own city?"

"I'd like to see 'em try it!" one man roared huskily. "I'd like to . . ." His voice, blurred with whiskey, suddenly trailed off. He fell silent, and there was no noise among the crowd except a suddenly distinct sound of shuffling feet.

"You've had your fun, men," Johnny said. "Go back to the diggings and think it over. Think how much you've helped yourself, and me, and all the other Americans in Australia, by what you've done tonight. And if you don't like what the editor of the *News* puts in her paper about us, don't read it, or start your own."

"Ah, the hell with that!" a drunken voice suddenly shouted. "Get out of the way, Queed! We're gonna do what we came to!"

Johnny Queed stood still, iron-faced. There was an awkward silence, then a few whispering sounds. Abruptly, a few miners mounted their horses and rode off slowly. The rest of the men hesitated. Then one by one, the spaces between them widened as more rode off toward the far end of town. Pete Banks was the last to go. His last look back toward Johnny was filled with sad reproach.

Lydia Drake, standing stiffly erect with fists curled, swayed slightly. Johnny leaped to the top of the steps, but she held him off, bracing herself on the iron railing. He regarded her gravely, understanding the strain she had been under.

"I'd appreciate it, ma'am," he said in a low voice, "if you didn't make too much of this in your paper. It won't help none to rile things up more than they are."

"Thank you for coming to my assis-

tance, Mr. Queed," the pale girl said in a strained, cool voice. "Your courage will be reported honestly in a full account of this in tomorrow's edition."

"That isn't what I said, ma'am."

"I shall also print the fact that you requested me to suppress the news of this outrageous incident. Is there any further statement you care to make, Mr. Queed?"

Johnny looked at her unblinkingly for a moment. Then he said, "No, ma'am." He turned away and walked slowly down the steps.

CHAPTER III

TWELVE PICKED MEN



THERE was a general uneasiness on Flinders Street all the next day. Looking through the window of his office, Johnny saw very few women pass. The town was unusually quiet. Men walked by in pairs or threes, conversing in low tones. Johnny noticed that rarely was an Aussie shoulder-to-shoulder with an American. Most who passed by the window turned their heads to look at Johnny.

The morning *News* on his desk carried a black banner headline: *AMERICANS RIOT IN MELBOURNE*. There was a big story which was, Johnny had to admit grimly, accurate. The last paragraph carried a factual account of Johnny's request that the editor of the *News* soft-pedal a report of the affair.

Johnny Queed wasn't a drinking man. But later in the afternoon he went across the street to the pub, and elbowed his way to the bar. Almost all the men in the pub were Australians. They nodded to him gravely and, Johnny hardly noticed or cared, with respect. He was on his third whiskey when a man burst through the swinging doors of the pub. "Coach held up again!" he shouted.

Men crowded around him for the news. Johnny hung back at the bar, listening. The bearer of tidings poured forth the story with an Aussie yarnspinner's relish. Cabbage-Tree Ned had been at the ribbons, and among the passengers coming in from Ballarat had been two partners—an Aussie and an American—who'd struck it rich and were bringing in a big bagful.

Frank Gardiner and his gang had stuck up the coach forty miles out of Melbourne.

One of the partners—the Aussie—had pulled a six-gun when one the holdup men had grabbed his gold. He'd been shot in the chest—still living, but it looked bad. Another passenger had been robbed of a thousand pounds in cash, carried in his wallet.

"By God!" one of the Aussies in the pub cried. "How long are we going to stand for this sort of thing? That could just as well happen to any one of us!"

"It's up to the bloody Governor!" another one protested. "His soldiers are supposed to patrol the roads!"

"They couldn't catch fleas," a third voice mocked.

"I say it's the duty of Cobb & Company!" the first man insisted angrily. "We pay a good fare, and we're entitled to protection! Why, it's a joke! All Frank Gardiner and his larrikins have to do is wave a gun, and the coach just pulls up and lets them rob the passengers blind!"

"I still say it's up to the Governor's soldiers!" the second man insisted. "They're supposed to be patrolling the roads—but how often do you see 'em? I'm back and forth twixt here and Ballarat twice a week—ain't seen 'em on the highway more than twice this year!"

"Fair go, mate!" a stout Aussie protested. "You know the bloody Governor's had his hands full with the bunch at Eureka! Why, since the order came to stop them blokes from workin' their claims, it's been a bloody civil war out there. *That's* where the troops are—most of 'em, anyhow—and that's why the Governor ain't had 'em to spare for patrol work!"

"That's the Governor's bloody worry—not ours!" the first man shouted, banging his fist on the bar. "I say if he can't give us the troops to protect the coach, then it's up to *us* to do something about Frank Gardiner and his bushrangers!"

Johnny Queed downed his third whiskey and sprang up on the bar before the surprised publican could object. "The Johnny Queed Coach Line starts running again tomorrow morning," he announced tightly. "Fare to Ballarat—four pounds, flat. No free beer, no free grub, no nothing. Just a promise—the coach don't stop

for nobody or nothing. We get you there—*safe*."

"That sounds good, Queed," one Aussie nodded. "But what makes you so sure Gardiner's gang won't bail *you* up?"

"This," Johnny said. And he patted the .44 Colt in his holster.



BEFORE the sun was up, a large crowd was milling around the store on Flinders Street, under the sign which bore fresh paint. It now read: *Johnny Queed Coach Office—We Get You There Safe. Our Driver Is Armed. No Stops.*

"Here he comes!" a voice called out.

Johnny brought the coach and six to a neat halt in front of the store. He sprang down from the buckboard, opened the coach door and stood in front of it, taking pound notes from passengers as they climbed in. When the coach was filled, there were still three men left. Johnny hesitated.

"Hell," said one of the three. "We can ride on top."

Johnny shook his head. "Can't let you risk it. You can tumble in on the floor, if you don't care and the others don't mind."

"O.K.," the man said amiably. He got in, followed by the next man. The third, a short whiskered man, stopped and flourished a .30-30 rifle. It was Bluey Coldstone.

"I'm ridin' on the buckboard with ye, Johnny," he said with a scowl. "Davie Eckland—the Aussie the Gardiner gang shot—was a good cobbler of mine. Besides . . . I ain't fergittin' who it was stuck up fer me the other day."

Johnny studied him a moment. "O.K.," he said shortly.

Bluey clambered to the buckboard, wheezing. Johnny straightened the reins and flung them up to him. He closed the coach door. As he did, he was aware of footsteps approaching from the shadowy recess of the store, and he turned. Even in the dim, sunless morning there was no mistaking the cabbage-tree hat. And approaching at Ned Devine's side, almost lost in the shadow of his bulk, was the unexpected figure of Lydia Drake.

"I thought I made myself clear, mate." Cabbage-Tree Ned's voice was a hoarse rumble. "No guns on the buckboard."

Johnny rolled a cigarette, then met the big man's gaze with level green eyes. "Why don't you ask Davie Eckland what he thinks?" he said casually. "If he's still living."

"Any bloody fool who pulls a gun on Frankie Gardiner's gang deserves what he asks for," Cabbage-Tree Ned said slowly. "That goes for bloody fools on the box-seat, too."

"My funeral," Johnny said.

"No, it ain't, mate. It's every coach driver's funeral—and you're the bloke that's opening the coffins. Hand over your gun, Queed—I'll look after it till you get back. And tell Bluey up there to pass down that cannon."

"You can have 'em—if you're big enough to take 'em."

Lydia Drake quickly placed herself in front of the burly man and put her hand against his chest. "No, Ned!" she said sharply. "That's not the way!" She turned to face Johnny Queed. "I'm giving you fair warning, Mr. Queed. If one passenger, or one coach driver, is killed as a result of your goading bushrangers to desperate tactics, I shall personally demand from Governor Latrobe that you be deported from the colony!"

"That's a fair warning, ma'am," Johnny nodded. Then swinging easily up on the box-seat, and taking the reins from Bluey, he grinned down wryly. "And you can quote me . . ."

They were near the "glue-pots" of the Black Forest, where the going was tough, when the first shot rang out. Johnny's lips tightened. There was no one in sight. He slipped his .44 into his right hand and cocked it, holding the reins with his left.

"Ambush!" Bluey whispered hoarsely. "Somebody tipped off Frankie Gardiner! They ain't gonna show, Johnny!"

Johnny passed over the reins. "Drive like hell," he said tersely. "And keep your head low." He took the rifle out of Bluey's hands, transferring the Colt to his left hand. Then he pulled himself up carefully to the wildly pitching roof of the coach, stretching out full length, bracing his elbows.

He saw a second puff of smoke before he heard the bullet splinter into the wood a foot from his hip. Fixing on the puff he fired a volley of shots with the Colt, spat-

tering a mountain ash. A chorus of bullets coughed a hundred yards from the plunging coach on the right of the track. Smoke plumed above boulders.

Johnny aimed the rifle, lifting his body to one side away from the roof to minimize the wild swaying, and a powerful, throbbing crash bellowed through the bush as he returned the fire. He worked the bolt quickly and tore off a second shot. Six-guns chorused a reply, and a few sporadic shots came from the left of the track. Johnny clenched his jaw as he felt slugs pound close to him.

Something hot tore into the calf of his leg at the same time he heard the cry of pain. He dragged himself swiftly back to the buckboard. Bluey was bending low over the reins—too low. The reins had slipped from his fingers. The team was flying, heads free, maddened by the shots. Johnny reached out, grabbed the reins and took the whip from Bluey's relaxed fingers. He snapped the curling whip hard over the sweating horses.

He could still hear the shots, but they were more distant now. Behind him. Tight-mouthed, Johnny put two more miles to their rear before he risked bringing the team to a gradual halt. Two of the passengers helped take Bluey down gently off the buckboard. But their tender handling didn't matter to the whiskered old miner.

He was dead.



"I SENT for you, Mr. Queed," said the bulbous-nosed man in the carved chair with the tall back, "to see if we can't avoid an unpleasant international incident. In view of the cordial relations between His Majesty's Government and the United States, I hesitate to take so drastic a step as deporting an American citizen from the Colony of Victoria."

Johnny Queed, fingers kneading the wide brim of his hat, stood stiffly in the vast room, staring out a tall window. His eyes looked vacant, as though the careful words of Governor Latrobe were not being directed toward him.

"The problem of coping with bushrangers," the Governor continued sharply, "is the province of His Majesty's troops, and not of private citizens. We cannot

tolerate lawlessness on anyone's part, and it certainly does not help matters when the individual provoking a state of riotous anarchy is not even an Australian citizen. I should tell you, Mr. Queed, that I am being subjected to heavy pressure to deport you—and not merely from Austrians."

"Perhaps," Johnny said sarcastically, "Miss Drake and Mr. Cobb have a better solution for stopping stagecoach hold-ups? Or are you as content as they seem to be, Governor, to let Frankie Gardiner and his men rule the country between here and the goldfields?"

Governor Latrobe colored and rose from his chair. "Our troops—those we can spare—will continue to patrol the highways, and every effort will be made to afford protection for coaches. We are, unfortunately, at the present time faced with an unusual situation at Eureka, as you may be aware. Miners there are defying Government orders to desist working claims, even to the extent of erecting barricades against my soldiers. Until the Eureka rebellion is crushed, therefore, you coach people will have to be patient—"

"Patient! Governor, it isn't us—it's your own people who demand, and deserve, protection on the highways! Instead of reading editorials, why don't you go down to the Melbourne pubs and listen to what the *Aussies* think about this miserable situation?"

"That's enough, Mr. Queed! From this moment on, the carrying of firearms by any coach driver will be an unlawful offense, carrying a heavy penalty. In your case, Mr. Queed, the penalty will be immediate deportation. Is that clear?"

"It is," Johnny said.

Leaving the Governor's Mansion, he made his way along Collins Street and up the dusty sidewalk into Flinders Street. Without slacking his pace, he approached the arched colonnade of the Cobb & Company building. He went through the door, up a wide flight of stairs, and through a door marked: *Freeman Cobb—Private*.

"I ought to slam you through the window," Johnny Queed said quietly. "I didn't expect any below the belt, Cobb."

The handsome man behind the wide mulga-wood desk regarded him coldly, a

white finger tracing his mustache. "You asked for it, Queed. You can't say you weren't warned. When do you leave?"

"I don't. But you win your point. No guns on the buckboard. Official order." Johnny sat on the edge of the desk and leaned forward. "I'll put my cards on the table, Cobb. Now we're back where we started, and you can price-cut me out of business. But I'll make you a square proposition."

"I won't take advantage of you, Queed—I'll stick by my offer. Double the price of your outfit, and a job driving for me. What do you say?"

"I say there's room for both of us, Cobb. Call off your price war against me, and I'll take care of your biggest headache."

"What's that?"

"Frankie Gardiner and his gang."

Freeman Cobb stared at him in amazement. "You out of your mind? You just finished telling me—"

"No firearms on the box seat. I aim to obey the law."

"Look, Queed, you know as well as I do that means no guns inside the coach, either, if that's what's on your mind."

"No guns," Johnny said. "Well?"

Freeman Cobb stood up and put a thin cigar in his mouth. He lighted it deliberately, took a deep puff, and stood awhile looking out the window of his office. Then he smiled slightly and extended his hand. "I'd rather have you taking over some of my passengers than Frankie Gardiner," he laughed. "A bargain, Queed—but damned if I know how you're going to do it without bullets."

"Read tomorrow's *News*." Johnny smiled tightly.

That, he reflected grimly as he made his way down the street from the Cobb building to the *News* office, was a pretty big cart before the horse. There was no reason to expect any enthusiastic cooperation from Lydia Drake. He wasn't disappointed.

Her face, he noticed with a flicker of annoyance, seemed almost as lovely when it was sullen as in repose. Watching her as he related in a matter-of-fact tone what had transpired in the Governor's Mansion, he felt an impulse to grip her by the shoulders and shake the coldness out of her

eyes. He didn't know quite why he felt that way, or why he liked to look at her face, even when her violet eyes flashed angrily at him.

"So you see, ma'am," he finished laconically, "you didn't succeed in getting me out of the Colony, but you got what you wanted, anyhow. No more guns on the coaches. That being the case, I guess you won't mind running this here advertisement for me."

She stared at him suspiciously. Her cool finger-tips were like a shock as they touched his, taking the wrinkled sheet of paper he held out to her. Lydia Drake dropped her eyes to the penciled message he had laboriously printed:

NOTICE TO FRIENDS OF
THE LATE BLUEY COLDSTONE &
DAVIE ECKLAND

I WANT A DOZEN MEN TO RIDE IN MY COACH—WITHOUT GUNS—WHEN I TAKE TEN THOUSAND POUNDS IN CASH TO BALLARAT ON JULY 12TH, 6:00 A.M. I WON'T HAVE A GUN EITHER.

JOHNNY QUEED

A puzzled, skeptical line creased her smooth brow. She glanced at him sharply. "What are you up to, Mr. Queed?"

"Up to? I don't know what you mean, ma'am. Seems to me that's a mighty peaceful-sounding ad. No guns."

She drew an exasperated breath. "No," she said sarcastically. "But you're only telling the world—and Frankie Gardiner—that the coach will be carrying ten thousand pounds on July 12th. Are you trying to *invite* a hold-up, Mr. Queed?"

He gave her a shocked look. "Why, that would be crazy, now, wouldn't it? And me without a gun aboard the coach?"

"Then why advertise it?" she demanded sharply. "And why ask friend of the two men murdered by Gardiner's gang to go with you?"

"That's why I'm putting in that notice, ma'am," he said patiently. "Since we can't carry guns, I figure I'd kind of like to have some picked men riding with me." Johnny suddenly looked annoyed. "Now, look here, Miss Drake, seems to me I've heard that a newspaper is supposed to take ads from anybody who'll pay for 'em, even if the editor hates the man who—"

"I don't hate you!" Lydia Drake replied quickly in an aggravated voice. Then she colored and turned away. Without looking at him, she said coldly, "We'll run your ad, Mr. Queed."

"Thank you, ma'am." As he moved off, Johnny put on his hat and said, "Haven't seen you wear that blue crinoline since that day I drove you through the bush-fire. Guess I ruined it for you. I'd be mighty obliged if you'd add it on my bill."

She didn't answer.

CHAPTER IV

BAIT FOR A BUSHRANGER



THE morning dawned cold and dark. Johnny Queed brought the coach and six around an hour earlier than usual. He rolled a smoke and sat on the box seat, waiting for the twelve Australians who had agreed to make the trip. There was a nervous icy tremor in his stomach, and his hands felt damply cold.

He thought about a lot of things. Mainly about the consequences, if things didn't work out as he hoped. An end to his ambitions for a coach company as big as Freeman Cobb's, some day. Maybe, eventually, even as big as Wells Fargo in the States. It meant deportation, in disgrace and failure, out of a land he was beginning to love deeply. It meant never feuding with—or seeing—Lydia Drake again.

Johnny's eyebrows lifted sharply as he became aware of two figures moving toward him in the morning mist. As they came closer, he saw the brilliant uniforms. Johnny smiled bitterly. Would the British never learn? No wonder they couldn't get close enough to Frankie Gardiner and his gang to get even a good look.

"Mr. Queed?" one of the soldiers asked politely.

Johnny nodded, the muscles in his cheeks tensing.

"The Governor's orders, sir. Would you mind stepping down?"

With a deep sigh Johnny leaped off the buckboard. The soldier who had spoken to him approached, and ran his hands over Johnny's body, feeling for weapons. Then he stepped back with a nod.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "Our or-

ders are to search all passengers boarding the coach this morning as well."

"Suit yourself," Johnny shrugged. "But you're wasting your time. Won't be any guns aboard."

"Just following out orders, sir."

The Australians began arriving, singly and in pairs. They submitted to the soldiers' inspection with ironic smiles and no little humor. "My bloody oath!" one swore. "You don't have to tickle, do you, mate?" Another said dryly, "Hope you blokes are taking the same precautions with Frankie Gardiner and his lads."

When the twelfth Australian had been inspected, and all were aboard the coach, the polite soldier signaled to Johnny on the box seat. "You may proceed," he nodded.

Johnny grinned and let his whip whistle through the air. At the crackling noise, the team started a dash up Flinders Street. Johnny kept their heads up for six miles, holding a leisurely pace along the level stretch out of Melbourne. The morning mist was clearing, but the air was still brisk and raw.

Johnny drew the team to a halt a few yards from a muddy-looking river, and jumped down from the buckboard. He opened the coach door and leaned in. One of the Australians lifted his feet as Johnny's hands tugged at a heavy horse-blanket. The fabric came away, revealing a wooden box.

"All right, men," Johnny said, his green eyes staring from one to the other. "I reckon we'd all better get set now. Anybody change his mind?"

"You asked for friends of Bluey and Davie," said one of the Aussies. "You've got them."

Johnny made his second stop the Melbourne side of the Black Forest. Heavy Victoria rains, he noted, had done their usual thorough job of muddying the track, making the going hard in the soft clay that stretched through the Black Forest. This was the reason why Frankie Gardiner did most of his work in this region. Johnny's plan called for chain-smoking from this point on. Each of the men in the coach had a dozen or more smokes already rolled, waiting for Johnny Queed's signal. He gave it now, pounding three times on the coach roof, and lighting up himself.

Then his flick of the whip sent the coach careening forward along the sticky track, a small spray of mud in its wake. He felt his waist, to make sure the tie-in belt was firmly notched. His cool green eyes swung sharply from left to right as the team labored over rolling uplands, swinging him from side to side.

The wind tugged sparks from the end of the cigarette dangling loosely from his mouth. He felt stiff and tense, waiting for the unpredictable end of his plan to materialize. Johnny felt pretty sure Frankie Gardiner would rise to the bait—even if he recognized it as a challenge. Maybe *because* it was a challenge. And with no guns on board the coach, what did he have to fear? Johnny was reasonably sure the bushranger wouldn't ambush them. He'd show . . .

As though magically summoned by his thoughts, the distant pounding of hoof-beats suddenly reached his ears. Johnny rapped twice on the coach roof in warning, and flung the lash hard across the backs of the brumbies. As the team gathered speed, the coach swayed perilously, almost zig-zagging in the wake of flying horseshoes.

Johnny saw them coming, riding hard out of the east. There were about fifteen of them, he judged swiftly. A tall figure on a large white horse, his face obscured by a triangle of red cloth, led the riders, who galloped behind him in a loose V. Johnny swung the whip in a mad series of cracking lashes, and reached into his inner coat pocket.

The ground was a bit dryer now, and the team was racing with sweating fury, goaded by the relentless bite of Johnny's whip. The bushrangers had guns out, firing into the air as they bore down upon the coach, unmistakably warning Johnny Queed to bail up the team. They were converging upon the dirt highway at an angle, not yet spread out in the inevitable encirclement.

Perspiration running into the corners of his eyes, Johnny made his whip talk in a final frenzy. Then he banged with his fist three times on the coach roof. Slipping the reins through his tie-in belt, he gingerly held up one of the two candle-like objects in his hand, touching a pendant white cord to his lighted cigarette.

He waited a brief second, then hurled the stick with all his might at the onracing bushrangers. He followed it quickly with a second stick, gasped in excitement, then watched eagerly as more sticks with sizzling cords flew out the coach window, volley after volley. Johnny picked up the reins and lashed the gunfire-maddened horses to a runaway frenzy. A hot swish of lead swept past his neck, and he heard the ping of another bullet as it glanced off the baggage rail next to him . . .

Suddenly the whole countryside seemed to explode. The ground rocked violently beneath the coach, and the sky danced in Johnny's wind-stung eyes. A second thunderous blast, a third, a fourth, another and another—hot shafts of wind overtook him, almost tearing him off the box seat, the tie-in belt cutting his stomach.

The badly frightened horses fairly flew along the winding track. Johnny shot a quick look over his shoulder. Great boulders of white and black smoke smothered the landscape, and the air was thick with a fierce rain of earth and rocks.

Slowly and carefully, Johnny checked

the reins. It took almost half a mile before he could ease the team into a safe stop. Then he turned the sweat-lathered brumbies around and drove back along the track at a slow trot. Near the great eruptions of smoke, Johnny pulled the coach up and jumped down. The men in the coach joined him on the ground, watching with grim faces.


"Poor bastards," one of the men said tightly. "Didn't have sense enough to know when they were playing with dynamite."

"Poor bastards my foot!" another Aussie snorted vigorously. "They didn't shed any tears over Bluey and Davie."



THERE was no word from the Governor's Mansion. Johnny didn't expect any. He'd kept his word—no firearms. And the Governor couldn't, without laying himself open to wide disapproval, charge him with any crime against a gang which had been declared "enemies of the Colony," which had murdered two inno-

(Continued on page 130)



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THE YEAR OF



Mei-Mei lay face-down on the matting. Chun saw her first, and choked and sprang back—then Raff lurched into the room and sent the nibbling rats scattering.

THE RAT

By
GEORGE C. APPELL



ILLUSTRATED BY
MONROE EISENBERG

TRAVIS RAFF, coming back to consciousness in the house on the high hill overlooking Dauching, dared not, for a moment, open his eyes. For if he opened his eyes he would look at his watch; and if he looked at the time he'd feel impelled to rise, however shakily, and make a show of seeming well, which he was not. So he lay in the damp afternoon darkness, waiting for evening and Mei-Mei, his wife, who would prepare his supper on the charcoal brazier in the corner. She'd been doing that, since the attacks started; she'd told her father that Raff had trouble digesting ordinary food which, God knew, was the truth.

Outside, the raw monsoon rains were rustling through the spectral mists, and from somewhere in the wet, gray distance, Raff could hear the Yellow River booming between its banks. From below, in the glimmering cobbled streets of the walled city, other sounds rose—the sharp clack of peddlers' sticks, demanding attention to wares; the shuck-slap of coolie feet trotting between ricksha shafts, pulling homeward fat merchants and languid scholars for the first of the celebrations that would mark the New Year. And always, under and around and over everything, was the rushing whisper of seekful rats darting into the dryness of compounds and buildings and roofs. One of them scuttled behind the wall a foot from Raff's cot, and he opened his eyes.

In the breath of a wishful moment, he pretended that he was back on the coast, waiting for a ship in which to cross the Pacific for home, alone. Then the sound of scampering claws drew him to a sitting position, and he saw Chun, the Number Two.

Chun inclined his chin. "*Syandzai nin hau ma, syansheng?*"

"How am I now?" Raff repeated, speaking musical Mandarin. "*Bujrdau—I don't know.*" The pains were gone; his stomach felt light, his legs were easy and his head was deliciously empty of sensation. He swung his feet to the floor

matting, and Chun glided forward on whispering slippers and offered a robe.



THE brassy echo of a gong shuddered through the frail house: the old man, demanding his tea.

Raff stood up and put on the robe. "How long have you waited, Chun?"

"Since last evening, when you collapsed."

"Who sent you—my wife?"

Chun shook his head. "My master." He coughed. "To protect you from rats."

Suspicion sprang across Raff's mind . . . They're watching me, already they're watching me, waiting for me to . . . "I trust I slept well." He found a cigarette in the robe's deep pocket.

"Like the dead, *syansheng*."

Raff looked swiftly at the houseboy as matchlight burst between them. He had been thinking often of death, lately, and death and the New Year do not walk easily together.

He inhaled lightly, afraid of the initial impact of nicotine after the last attack. He'd retched, his bowels had broken apart, and they'd carried him to bed, babbling.

He exhaled. "You may bring me some wine."

"As you wish, *syansheng*." Chun bowed and went out, and Raff was alone in the gloomy room. Alone except for Yu-hwa, the parrot, who even now was cocking a hard eye on him, head tilted.

He walked unsteadily to the cage and peered at the parrot. "Come, feathered Jade Flower—smile! The Year of the Rat approaches, and you must be glad." He bent and blew smoke into the cage, and the parrot side-stepped along its bar, head twitching in annoyance.

Raff had never felt more alone in his life. He was alone in the western reaches of a foreign land with a father-in-law who hated him and a wife who suspected him; and he was alone, too, with his thoughts, with his yearnings, with his ambitions. They couldn't be shared, no more than they could be understood by these people who, however charming at the University on the coast, reverted behind four thousand years of custom when at home. And hadn't it been Mei-Mei's idea to travel half the length of the Hwang Ho to

assist her father in ushering in the New Year? It most certainly had not been Raff's.

He walked across the room, steadier now, and lighted the tapers in the corner. His image took shape in the mirror, and he regarded it with disgust. "Like a damned drunk," he said in English, and presently started to dress. He sneered at his scrambled, tawny hair; he scowled at the sickly-slumbrous eyes, and tried to open them wider. He looked twenty years different from the man who only three years before had arrived at the University to teach English; he'd been trim, then, and handsome in what the students called an American manner. So Mei-Mei had thought, and said. She'd been strikingly lovely—back on the coast. "Wait until Father meets you, Travis. He won't like you, because you're a westerner, but you'll make him like you, won't you?"

Raff smirked at his reflection as he finished dressing. He opened the clothes cabinet to find a scarf, and his hand struck the green, pasteboard box with the single word *Poison* printed on it in red. It was one of the many presents Mei-Mei had brought to her father, and in Raff's opinion, it was the only practical one. It was guaranteed to kill rats.

He eyed the brazier, as he wound the scarf. On each side of it was a cup, his on the left, Mei-Mei's on the right. Hers was an ancestral piece with the delicate tracery of writhing dragons on it; his was plain. He ticked a fingernail against hers, and the soft ting! made him smile. Despite his present troubles, there were still things to smile at.

"*Jangfu*?"

He whirled at the sound, guilt in his eyes. He passed a hand across them, then shook his head. "She arrives, my wife."

Mei-Mei closed the door behind her and approached him with the mannered, well-bred precision of a cat. And when she smiled, her teeth were feline-clean and just as firm. "You are better, Chun reports."

He gazed at her wide eyes, her straight nose; at her green-and-gold brocaded gown with the high slit on the left hem. She was wearing tiny gold sandals. "I am better." He placed a palm on each side of her head and stroked the sleek, tightly-

combed hair. "See now, Mei-Mei, speak English. This house has ears."

Her eyes sank into his. "Is that dangerous?"

"Is it?" He broke into his own tongue: "How the hell do I know? Do you know what I think?" He wanted to tell her that her father, with all his amateurish pretensions to scientific knowledge, was contriving to effect a demise that would never be heard of beyond Dauching; that would never come to the attention of the victim's friends, or government, or profession. But he told her, instead, "I think it's nice of you to trouble yourself with the cooking. Chun or one of the other boys could handle it."

She was lighting the brazier. "Not so well as I." Her smile was a lip-quirk, and Raff felt a throb of fear go through him. She said, "*Jangfu*—husband, I mean—Chun was getting some wine, and I told him not to."

"Part of my new diet?" His fingers were trembling as they found another cigarette.

"You should not have—so much liquid, for awhile." The brazier's glow burnished her calm face.

"Very well, doctor," he mocked. He stood smoking in silence as she put the meager meal together—rice balls, a thin sauce, and tea. She served him, respectful of the silence which she recognized as the right of a person who has been dangerously ill, and at his nod, she joined him for tea. They sipped slowly, still not

speaking, and when Raff finished, she took his cup and rinsed it.



THE noises in the walls were growing on him. The sharp skitterings, the sudden stops, were jabbing his consciousness and making him irritable. He was wondering, idly, if he'd ever live to enjoy the leisure which he was earning, when a subdued fistfall rubbed the door.

Mei-Mei opened it, saw her father and stepped back. The old man waited a moment, as if expecting a denial, then came in.

He was tall and fragile-looking and had a skin like wrinkled, yellow glass. His eyes were two black lines between heavy pouches. A thin white mustache hung from each upper lip.

He turned with measured grace and acknowledged Raff's presence with a brief, curt nod. "It is to be trusted you have recovered from the state of being ill." His voice was a melodic rustle that seemed to remain inside the mouth and never pass those parchment-like lips. "It embarrasses me deeply, this unfortunate inconvenience to you."

Now it was Raff's turn. "I am humble in your dwelling. Your daughter gives me strength." He had an impulse to smile once more, and fought it . . . "I soon will wish you happiness upon the advent of the next year."

"And I shall return the wish." The Mandarin smoothed a sleeve of his black

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gown; he raised brittle fingers to his cap and pressed it more tightly to his skull. "The word 'return' is particularly important, at the New Year, for it is the time when all debts are paid, all accounts settled." The glittering black lines of his eyes lashed Raff's face. "You knew that?"

"I am aware of it, host." Raff was wrestling with possibilities, probabilities, conclusions: This man can get rid of me, this man is getting rid of me, this man thinks I want a portion of his money, which would come from his daughter. And this man is right. But if he and his daughter together are conspiring to—

"Honored guest?" The Mandarin had crossed to the parrot's cage, and was tugging the hood over the wires for the night. "Yu-hwa should sleep."

What kind of a hint is that? Sleep . . . long sleep. Eternal sleep. "The bird is a good companion. I confide in it freely."

"Ah?" The Mandarin wheeled on slippered heels, rope-skinned hands held high in the light of the tapers, lacquered nails catching the weak glow. "Confidence is good for the soul." He smiled; he reminded Raff of a wizened bob-cat.

"Sometimes," Raff admitted. He glared back at the other. "It depends upon whom you take into your confidence."

The smile widened. "Does it?" He bowed first to Raff, then to his daughter, and left the room.

Mei-Mei moved for the first time since her father had come in. She crossed to the cot and laid a palm against Raff's forehead and held it there for ten beats of the heart. "You have no fever, but you are warm."

She stood back. She folded her hands across her breasts and dipped her head sideways and stood that way, regarding him.

"Mei-Mei." Raff seemed to have

reached a decision. His eyes were troubled, his forehead trenched. "Mei-Mei—I don't wish to see ghosts that are not to be seen, nor do I wish to alarm you. However—should anything occur to me which would—ah—delay our journey back—" He let that sink in—"it would be best if I signed over to you my property, now." She was puzzled, and started to speak, and he cut her off: "You have deeded to me all your possessions at the University, including the white jade of the Ming carvers, and it is only honest that I do that for you."

"What do you say? What do you fear?"

He shook his head. "There's the San Francisco bank account—not much, but some. And I have a few things at the University, which of course, must become yours." He thought, There now—what more can I do to make the thing complete?

He felt sick, suddenly, and the burning nausea began; and as suddenly, receded. He lay down on the cot, and she drew a blanket over him, and touched her lips to his forehead. They were cool and soothing.

She whispered, "Chun will wait through the night. Call, should you have need."

He had difficulty finding sleep. It was an elusive, tormenting thing, that rushed away and left clear to his ears the scratchings in the walls and the drippings in the eaves; and then rushed back again to darken his brain and relax his muscles . . . Why can't she divorce me? The thought came as a reprieve. Why use this method, when she can divorce—no, she can't. Mixed marriages don't divorce, for the reason that they are mixed. Divorce, out here, consists of leaving the house, but if I ever got back to San Francisco, I'd still be married, on my side;

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and divorce would take face from the family, the old boy would never allow it . . . so this method . . . He came fully awake, perspiring.

He heard the creak of a board, beyond the door: Chun, waiting out there. Chun, listening.

Raff rose from the cot and tested the matting for noise. It made none, and he tip-toed past the cage and over to the closet and reached inside. His fingers found the box, crawled up its face and curved inside. The soot-like contents were below half, whereas only two days before, they'd been almost to the top.

He returned to the cot, dusting his fingers on the robe; he paused by the cage, wanting to confide again in Yu-hwa. Then he lay down on the cot and sought sleep, and, at last, it came.



"LIFE in University circles is palling at times," he heard the voice say. Her voice, echoing emptily from some other room. Her father's room, most likely.

He rose and went to the cage and unhooded the parrot. It blinked up at him, accusingly.

It was light outside, and the rain had stopped, though soon it would fall again, from the look of the gray scud in the skies.

"He cannot keep his house warm." The Mandarin, that time, intoning privately-held opinions. "I do not wish to break his rice-bowl, Younger Daughter, but it is time this—"

The door squeaked open and Chun came in. "Good-morning, Raff *Syansheng*."

Raff faced away from the window, ears alert to the rustling sibilance of that old voice . . . "He will never be found, up here, should anything befall." There was a lull, then: "Pan-I-Wei, now, should have been accepted in marriage."

That was it! Pan-I-Wei, eldest son of the warlord, should have been Mei-Mei's husband, and not Raff. And if anything befell Raff, this eldest son would, eventually, inherit the account in San Francisco, and the—

"Raff *Syansheng* wishes something?" Chun waited patiently at the door.

"Tea, Chun. So inform my wife."

He washed thoughtfully, considering again the possibilities, the avenues, the returns. There was no way out, that he could think of. Boats were not going down-river these days, the roads were rivers themselves, and an airplane had not yet been seen in Dauching, and was still referred to as *fei-ji*—wing machine, mystery of the east. The telegraph ended at Wankiang, three hundred miles coastward.

She came with his breakfast, and the question was in her eyes.

He answered briefly, "Better, I guess." He ate lightly, and they had tea together, she holding her ancestral cup in both hands, he raising his plain one by the bottom. He lighted his first cigarette of the day and watched her through the smoke.

"After the festivities, Mei-Mei, we should leave. Somehow, we should leave."

Her glance was quick. "So soon?"

"When the rains go down."

She was saddened. "I had hoped, since classes do not commence until February, that we might remain awhile."

He almost blurted, "And entertain Pan-I-Wei?" And said, aloud, "There's a virus, here, of some sort. I must escape it." He had an impish desire to smile, then, and she sensed it.

But she was not smiling when she asked, "Are you certain of its nature? It is intestinal, yes, but it cannot be isolated."

"Your esteemed father is a chemist of sorts. Perhaps he could tell." He bored his eyes into hers and saw puzzlement, suspicion, cognizance—fear, finally, cloud them.

She inhaled swiftly. "What do—"

Then the pain struck him. His legs were lanced by it, his head cracked under its force and his stomach was knotting mercilessly. He cried out, he gasped, he tried to roll over and arched upward instead. And sagged limply, sweating; and screamed.

She was at his head, pulling it free, prying his hands from his teeth. She helped him in his nausea, she held him as he shuddered helplessly. She popped fingers at Chun, and Chun applied an opiate to ease the racking agony, and Raff dropped into sleep as the rains came down from the scud-streaked skies.

The Mandarin came to the opened door

and stood with his arms folded, hands buried in the deep sleeves of his gown. "It came quickly," he observed, and eyed his daughter strangely.

"They all have. This is the third."

He waved Chun from sight and entered the room; he glanced once at Raff's flushed face, then bent and fingered the stained matting. "A re-agent is required."

"Father?"

He rose, palm closed. "A means to chemical reaction." He nodded at Raff. "Watch him well, daughter."

They smiled faintly at each other, and the Mandarin went out.

Raff opened his eyes, and knew that it was late afternoon, and that he was alive. The rats were quiet, for once, and he was grateful for their co-operation; from the streets below, firecrackers snapped fitfully as the first of the celebrations commenced. Soon it would be the Year of the Rat, and a new season would have begun.

He tasted his tongue and felt his pulse and tried to sit up. He couldn't, and he was waiting for Chun, for Mei-Mei, for anybody to help him, when his father-in-law came in and stood by the foot of the cot.

"You are well, not well, fairly well?"

Raff rolled his head dumbly. "I don't know . . . I don't know . . ."

The Mandarin smiled pityingly. "Do you walk in your sleep?"

"Do I—what, host?"

The old man shook his head. "As befits a leisured Chinese of some culture, I have personal pursuits." He leaned closer. "Some collect birds, others practice calligraphy, and others prefer painting. I, however, am interested in physical processes, not as an amateur herbalist but as a very amateur chemist." He leaned lower, and his voice was a scraping husk: "You have been poisoned."

Raff counted his pulse fifty times before he dared an answer. "It is polite of you to inform me." And thought, you brass-headed old devil!

The old man straightened from the cot. "Arsenic—such as can be found in rat poison. A grain and a half." He smiled. "You are lucky to be alive."

"A grain and—!" Raff struggled to a sitting position. He stared into the baleful eyes above him and wanted to shout, to

scream for help, for a way out. He wiped his sleeves across his face and trembled and tried to swallow. "My host is—is precise."

"Govern a great house as you would cook a small fish."

Raff inhaled and exhaled twice before he asked, "You believe someone is trying to poison me?"

And the old man answered, evenly, "Yes, I believe someone is trying to poison you."

Raff ticked his teeth together nervously. "I'm leaving." He knew, at last, that he would have to. "I'm getting out."

"How?" The question came indolently. "How? I'll—I'll—walk—run—if I have to!"

But the only running was that in the walls and in the eaves, the running of rats and water, of water and rats and rain-water . . .

"Rest, my guest, rest. Then later, try to walk. Chun will assist you. A good boy, Chun."

Mei-Mei helped him dress. "*Wode jangfu hai bing ma?* My husband is still sick?"

"That's better—speak English. A little sick, Mei-Mei . . . Look, I'm trying a walk. Just up and down the house once. You prepare tea, will you?"

She looked at the cups, and made a fretting motion with her hands, and re-exchanged them on the brazier. "Clumsy me—yours is always on the left." She lighted the charcoal. "Yes, try to walk . . . Chun!"

The Number Two took his elbow and led him gently through the door into the corridor. The Number One's services were retained exclusively by the old man.

They strolled down the balcony, and Raff began to feel better. The shock of the last dose was wearing off, the night air braced him, and his mind was busy with final plans. For the first time since his arrival in Dauching, the future was comprehensible. He let Chun guide him up and down the balcony for fifteen minutes before he admitted that he was tiring, and together they returned to the room.

Chun saw her first, and choked and sprang back.

Raff saw her and shouted her name. He lurched into the room and sent the nib-

bling rats scattering and gripped her shoulders where she lay face-down on the matting. He barked at Chun, and they rolled her onto her back. The broken tea-cups lay in pieces by the closet door.

Raff thumbed her eyelids, placed an ear to her breast, fingered her wrists. Then he stood up. "Chun, call your master. She's dead."

Emotion was closing his throat fitfully and he was gulping to keep it open when the Mandarin came in and viewed his daughter's body. He closed his eyes for a long moment, and when he opened them they were wet with hate.

"Guest—" he spat the word— "she made a devil's mistake."

Arrogance tinged Raff's tone as he replied. "You yourself—host—warned that somebody was trying to poison me. Somebody—perhaps—who would take the son of a warlord as second husband." He drew in a heavy breath. "Mei-Mei drank from the wrong cup."

The old man's eyes darted nervously around the room. They came to frightened Chun. "You—thing!—a hardwood coffin immediately. Her yet precious body will not be desecrated by the gnawing of filthy rats!"



THEY had taken her away, and the door was closed. Her broken cup had been picked up and carefully carried out on a small satin pillow. It was an ancestral piece, and must be put together again.

Raff reached for the hood over the parrot's cage, and paused a moment to offer a toast with the *shausingjyou*—the cup of mourning—sent to him by the old man.

"Good night, Jade Flower. You will awake to the Year of the Rat." He drank deeply. "As my confidant, I must tell you that I almost overdid that last dose—imagine giving myself a grain and a half! Clumsy of me, Jade Flower. And speaking of jade—I now have some of the ancient white variety left me by my dear, departed . . . departed." He felt dizzy, the room blurred. He finished the cup and turned to put it on the table.

Then he saw the Mandarin standing by the brazier. "Did you say 'last dose,' guest? I myself just gave you the last dose—three grains."

Pain scorched Raff's stomach, his legs, his head. His knees collapsed and he fell to his hands, head hanging helplessly. A vise was crushing his abdomen, his chest. He shrieked.

The old man smiled. "Did you expect me to believe—guest—that my daughter would drink from any cup but her own?" He took the green pasteboard box from the closet and nodded sadly over it, the last present in life from his daughter.

The man on the floor was writhing, kicking, twisting. His screams were shorter and higher; he was strangling.

Gray shapes flickered from the walls, recoiled at the noise and the movement, sensed no danger, and scuttered closer.

Raff felt the first fang-rip slice his cheek; he opened his throat to shriek again, but other fangs were at his throat.

Below in the streets of Dauching, his dying noises were never heard by the holiday crowds in festival mood, trooping to pay debts and settle accounts before the Year of the Rat would begin, and bring with it a new season.

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PURSEFUL OF SILVER

By
JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS

THE three men in the large skiff toiled in a darkness relieved only by starlight, by the high riding light of the purse-seiner, by the spangled phosphorescence of thousands of sardines in the seine. The flashing silver bodies cast a weird glow along the 85-foot side of the *Catalina Clipper* and on the glistening faces of the men. Grunting and swearing, they tried to heave up the cork-float line so that it could be secured to the thwarts to support the outer edge of the net.

Drawing alongside in the small skiff, Cal Keating clambered in and made the painter fast. Tall and powerfully built, his short-sleeved, open work shirt revealed the muscular strength of his freckled arms and chest. California sunlight had burned his hair to a pale salmon pink, and had freckled his homely, forceful face until it appeared as patched as the old dungarees he wore.

"Any market for whales, Skipper?" gasped Ben Tucker, bracing his rotund body against the drag of the net. "I think we got a couple."

Keating didn't smile. The years of sacrifice that he and Helen and their three boys had undergone to buy the purse-seiner, the months of bad luck and disaster that had followed her purchase, had temporarily drained the humor out of him.



ILLUSTRATED BY
V. E. PYLES



The shark blundered into the seine and went into a raging fury, beating the water into foaming swirls with its tail.

Gravely his eyes followed the silver crescent of the submerged cork-float line between the skiff and the boat. Darting silver streaks crossed over the line—thousands of sardines escaping. It took a great weight of fish struggling to slip through the meshes to drag a net down like this!

His lips grew tight. He needed every sardine he could stow in the hatches! Needed them both to pay mounting debts and to restore the confidence of his eleven-man crew. Their shares had been slim, and a crew as good as his wouldn't sail long on a hard-luck boat.

"Good 'set' this time, Tuck," Keating said, grasping the net. "I think we have the whole school."

With his added strength, they dragged the heavy seine aboard and secured it to the thwarts.



ON THE upper deck appeared the gaunt and shadowy figure of Gunnar Gunderson.

The windlass rasped and ground harshly as Gunderson turned it, winding steel cable on the drum to close the purse of the net. The seine was fifteen hundred feet long at the cork-line, and smaller at the bottom, where a lead-weighted line held it down. Hanging like an inverted bag, its cable slipped through rings to close the "purse," as a bag is closed by a drawstring.

Keating asked Jim McClaren to secure balloons to the cork-line for additional support. The fisherman immediately put off in the small skiff, heaving up the net with a boat-hook, bending on lines to make the basketball-sized floats fast.

"We got something we don't want." And it wasn't Ben Tucker's usual jovial voice speaking. "Maybe sea-lions," he added uneasily.

Sardines seldom milled as they milled now unless the purse was closed and the floodlights on. Thousands of fish were rising, darting in crazed circles, stirring up sea-fire until the water sparkled like a tinsel shower. Now and then a large silver body materialized from the depths, and a sea-lion appeared briefly as it leapt over the net, leaving behind a luminous trail of phosphorus as it disappeared. And either because of this milling or the weight

of fish in the closing seine, the skiff was heeling sharply, heeling in quick jerks.

"Show a leg, Rossi!" Keating shouted at the short, stocky fisherman who was unlashng the long, hinged pole from the portside rigging. "Give us the stick—quick!"

"Who bent on this line?" sputtered Rossi. "What the hell!"

But in a moment Salvatore Rossi freed the stick and started lowering it. Once the long pole was lashed across the skiff, it would be supported like the outrigger on a South Sea Islander's canoe.

Keating reached up to grasp it when he saw an enormous silver body rising. The shark's straight gash of a mouth and vicious teeth were briefly visible and then it submerged again, only its fin cleaving the sea. McClaren dropped the net, pushing down the cork-line with the boat-hook. But there wasn't sufficient clearance. The shark blundered into the seine and instantly went into a raging fury, beating the water into foaming swirls with its tail.

The large skiff canted violently from the line drag, hurling the three men out as it went over. Tucker and the other fisherman began swimming with terrified haste toward the boat, but Keating decided the overturned skiff was closer. Milling sardines slowed his frantic crawl. Before he reached the skiff, someone on the purse-seiner screamed.

Keating turned. The sea rippled and boiled, but it was a moment before he spied the arching path of sparks below. The shark had seen him! Cal Keating's arms felt like lead sinkers as he tried to drive himself the few remaining feet.

And then, with a sick feeling of despair, he saw another great body rising from the depths. Another shark! He knew now why the fish milled. Twice before, when commanding cannery-company boats, he'd been unlucky enough to catch a shark. But never two!

Nothing, he thought, could save him now.

But he overlooked the fishermen on the boat. One of them cast the brail between him and the shark. Keating heard it strike, and turned in time to see the giant dip net sinking. It sank just as the scavenger rolled, in a part-turn, as if to attack.

In the confusion that followed, Keating didn't know whether the shark's charge carried it through the hoop or whether it became entangled in the net. But the braile thrashed wildly, and in the turmoil the long handle struck his head. The flashing sardines appeared to multiply to incredible numbers before his blurred eyes. And when his vision cleared slightly, two sharks whirled in mad gyrations some fifty feet below.

Too shaken to pull himself up, he clung weakly to the overturned boat, trying to get enough air. And even that support seemed suddenly to desert him. The skiff began plunging, pulled down by a drag on the seine, then it bobbed up, only to dip under renewed tension. Keating knew what caused it, and there was chill panic in him.

The sharks were trying to fight free of the net!

The skiff dipped deeply once more, thwarts creaking from strain. The cork-line sank until even the balloon floats were submerged. The sea rippled, glistening silver, as sardines took advantage of the lowered line to escape. Abruptly the skiff rose, but it was more than the buoyancy of captured air that brought it up. There was a firefly tracery through the sea, bright, crisscrossing paths that vanished into darkness.

No seine now imprisoned the sardines! It was gone, ripped from the line by the sharks. Keating clung to the motionless skiff, too numb from this fresh disaster to think or feel.

Jim McClaren rowed up and helped him into the small skiff. "Tough luck, Skipper." And he sounded as if he meant it.

"A sixteen-thousand-dollar net gone," Keating said dully.

"Maybe it's only ripped." And the rangy fisherman glanced along the line of corks. "But I can't see any sign of it."

Keating shook his head. "The sharks tore it away, Mac."



A SHORT while later, when the cork-line was hoisted, Keating confirmed his misfortune. There was scarcely enough net left to save for patching. Speechless with misery, Keating gave no order, but it was unnecessary. He had a good crew and they knew what should be done. They brought up the cork-line and laid it out in neat rows on the square turntable that occupied the stern of the boat. The large skiff was hoisted by the winch and stowed on the turntable, serving to cradle the small skiff when it was later brought aboard.

Keating went topside, changed into dry clothing, and set his course on the automatic pilot. After placing McClaren on watch, he stepped from the port door, planted a big boot on the thwart he used as seat when at the forward controls, and stared with brooding eyes across a sea like black marble. Here and there bobbed the riding lights of purse-seiners. Carpenteria was a dull glimmer astern, and the shoreline was dark save for two headlights moving swiftly below the low coastal range.

"Sixteen years as fisherman and captain of cannery boats," Keating muttered, and pounded the rail with his fist. "Sixteen years of fighting to own a boat. After that, damned if I'll let this scuttle me!"

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But *how* could he prolong the fight? Helen and the boys would stoutly face further self-denial—but that wouldn't buy another seine. And without one, he couldn't fish . . . couldn't repay back loans to Peterson. Hope of more help from Peterson was dim.

Peterson, manager of the Terminal Island Cannery Company, had been as generous as his authority allowed. He'd granted a loan for a new engine when Keating bought his boat. Loaned several thousands to repair the bow after the *Clipper* had the misfortune to collide with a nearly-submerged derelict. Staked him for repairs to his seine after it was damaged by sea-lions. Peterson had even supplied oil so that he could continue fishing during weeks when no catch had exceeded thirty tons of sardines. No; Peterson couldn't do much more. He'd already loaned Keating more than he would any other purse-seiner skipper, simply because of his past record for consistently large yearly catches.

But even if Peterson could be persuaded, would his men stand by him after this fresh disaster? He doubted it. They might not envy him his responsibilities, his years of sacrifice, but they might be envious because he owned the boat. There could be a core of resentment because of that. For he'd fished with most of his crew and they were still fishermen. But he owned a boat—a boat Peterson could take at any time he demanded immediate payment of past debts.

Well, the men could be faced now! Must be, in fact, if he were to plot a course through the rocks and shoals ahead.

At a determined gait, he strode down the slant of the raised forward deck. Voices were raised in the galley, and he heard his name spoken, but there was sudden silence when he entered.

Keating glanced at the fishermen at the long table, troubled lines in his homely, freckled face. Their eyes seemed sympathetic, but maybe they'd be around tomorrow, one by one, to make excuses and pack their gear.

"Discussing me?" Keating's laugh wasn't very cheerful. "Go ahead! I'm the prize Jonah of all time!"

"Stop bragging!" cried Ben Tucker. The plump fisherman bustled over for

a cup, filled it from the big pot, and beamed as he set it before Keating. "Think you're the first skipper to lose a seine?"

Keating let the silence linger, ashamed that his hand shook as he poured cream. He felt a little better when the hot liquid sent its warmth through him.

Scanning the expectant faces, he said slowly, "How many of you are sticking?"

The men stared blankly.

"Sticking?" Ben Tucker asked.

He looked at his men. He'd picked his crew carefully; there wasn't a man he'd willingly replace. Now he didn't wish even to guess which men would leave him, but he wouldn't much blame those who did.

"I haven't another sixteen thousand for a net," Keating said. "Don't even know where I can get it."

"That's what we were talking about," Tucker admitted. "But you'll get the money. You always do."

Keating smiled wryly. "Where, Tuck?"

Tucker shrugged and laughed. "From the cannery. They can't operate without sardines. And if Peterson won't loan you the money, another cannery will."

"He'd slap a lien on my boat the minute I tried it!"

"Ed Peterson can't get his money back unless you can fish."

"He can get it by forcing me to sell the *Clipper*," Keating said grimly.

Salvatore Rossi's black mustache bristled and there was a flush in his broad, brown face. He thrust out his lips, making an insulting sound.

"That for Mr. Peterson if he is so crazy in the head!" He beat his broad chest. "With a fisherman like me, like Tuck, like what we got on this boat; and with a skipper like Keat . . . if we can't get sardines, where will Peterson get them? What the hell!"

Despite his anxiety, Keating laughed.

"Rossi's right," Tucker agreed. "Peterson will see that you get a seine, Keat."

"With the money he's got tied up in this boat, he's got to," Rossi insisted.

"He doesn't have to," Keating stated flatly. "We haven't supplied him with enough sardines to keep the plant operating a day since I bought the *Clipper*, and he's in pretty deep already. If he says no, how many of you will stick with me until I can figure out something else?"

"Why don't we get off that rock after we hit it?" Tucker asked.

"Sure," said Rossi. "What the hell!"



ED PETERSON was on the wharf, talking to another skipper, when the *Catalina Clipper* swung toward the Terminal Island Cannery. A large, heavily built man in a neat blue-serge suit, the pleasant expression of his flat face was somewhat compromised by a square and stubborn jaw. He realized what had happened when he saw the skiff resting on the cork-line rather than on layers of seine, for he left the other captain, boarding the *Clipper* as soon as her lines were secured.

Keating met him on the bridge, and briefly told him how he'd lost the net. Peterson made no comment for a while, staring down at the oil slicks on the water with an abstracted expression.

"You did damned well when you commanded one of our boats, Keat," he said finally. "But you've had nothing but trouble since buying your own. You're digging yourself in deeper and deeper all the time."

"I'll dig myself out, Pete, if you'll loan me enough for another net."

Peterson shook his head. "Can't do it. Want to come in to the office and see how you stand on the books?"

"I've got an idea," Keating said grimly.

Peterson deliberated. "Strictly off the record, I'd say your boat had a better skipper, better crew, and better chances for good hauls than any other purse-seiner at Terminal Island. But it isn't working out."

"I have a good crew, all right. But I won't keep my men unless I can get another net mighty soon."

"I was coming to that. Our *Little Dipper* is laid up because we can't find the right captain. We'd like you, Keat. To make it easy, we'll buy your boat for what you paid and cancel your debts. Those cancelled loans will be your profit; boat costs are still rising."

"And some day one of your vice-presidents comes aboard," Keating said bitterly, "and I'm not enough impressed with his importance, or he doesn't like my superstructure, and I'm out of a job. I'm back fishing on shares where I started."

"Could happen," Peterson said evenly, "but it's not likely."

"It won't happen," Keating went on with warmth, "because I'm keeping the *Clipper*! When I'm clear of debt, I'll be able to stow away some money so that when my boys are ready to buy their boats, I can help them. They're not going to deny themselves practically every damned thing they want for sixteen years to buy a boat!"

"I know how you feel, Keat. I have two boys myself. But piling up debts won't help them. Think it over." And Peterson added quietly, "But remember—if you're getting other loans, you agreed to give us priority on both catches and payment."

Keating thought it over—for the length of time it took him to get ashore. He marched into another cannery, asked for the manager, and when he appeared, tried to persuade him to assume the Terminal Island Cannery Company's loans and grant him an additional amount for a new seine. The manager needed sardines, but not at that price. "Couldn't do it," he said.

Keating tried the other canneries with no better success. Then he visited canneries in San Diego and Wilmington, in Santa Barbara and Monterey. But he seldom progressed beyond mention of his back debts before managers began shaking their heads.

Every time he returned to the *Clipper*, he winced inwardly at finding some of his crew aboard. He always expected them to tell him they'd decided to transfer to another boat that was fishing rather than lying idle. But the men never did. They seemed to enjoy their enforced idleness, lounging all day in the galley drinking coffee, eating and telling yarns. Keating didn't have the heart to tell them that the bills for provisions were taking the last of his bank account.

Trying loan sharks next, he was appalled by the legal dodges they found to hoist their interest rates. He always left simmering with anger, but without any help.

And then one day Ben Tucker came aboard and found Keating sunk in despair. He beamed as he handed Keating a lawyer's business card.

"You might see this guy, Keat. Understand he has a client who wants to place some money out at interest."

"Does he want half my catch and a half interest in my boat?" Keating growled.

Tucker shrugged. "Why not ask the lawyer?"

"I will," Keating snapped.

And it was not until he was riding up in an elevator in a San Pedro building that he realized he still wore his ragged work shirt and patched dungarees, and had no cap. He felt even less at ease when the lawyer's secretary showed him into Bushnell Young's office. The lawyer was an immaculately dressed elderly man, with blue eyes that twinkled humorously behind gold-rimmed spectacles. Rising, he shook Keating's hand.

"I understand you have money to invest," Keating blurted.

"Perhaps." The lawyer smiled. "But who are you? Why do you need a loan?"

Keating sat down and earnestly spoke his troubles. It didn't occur to him to brighten the picture.

"I admire your frankness," the lawyer said, when he finished.

"Why hide anything?" asked Keating. "Anyone on Cannery Row will tell you my troubles if I don't."

The lawyer's lips parted, but Keating went on hastily, "That's purse-seining, Mr. Young. Either you have trouble, or you have more trouble."

"Well, my clients—"

Trying to forestall a refusal, Keating rushed on, "With just plain trouble, you do all right. You may take forty to eighty tons in a night. Or, occasionally fill your hatches."

"As I was saying, my clients—"

"Fill your hatches," Keating shouted, "and you have a hundred and forty tons. Forty a ton at present prices. Fifty-six hundred dollars in a single set, sometimes, and thirty-seven percent to the boat. A few hauls like that and I can repay—"

"I will—" began the lawyer again.

"What's more," Keating interrupted, "I have a hand-picked crew. All experienced fishermen, men I rounded up because they work well together. There's not a better crew—"

"Mr. Keating—"

"—anywhere in Southern California," Keating went on hurriedly. "Before you refuse the loan, there's something else to consider . . ."

The lawyer stopped trying to speak. He leaned back with weary resignation through Keating's long parade of arguments. At last the skipper stopped, staring with hopeful anxiety at Bushnell Young.

"Now let me speak," said the lawyer dryly. "For the past half hour I've been trying to tell you I'll grant the loan."

"What!" Keating felt dazed. "For how much?"

"Up to twenty thousand, at six per cent. Interest payable at the end of the year, if you wish to extend the loan for a second year."

"That's *too* good!" Keating cried suspiciously. "What strings?"

"No strings. Your personal note."

"Do you understand that the cannery has prior claim?"

"So you told me."

"Mister, I don't get this! Who *are* your clients?"

"That," said the lawyer, somewhat testily, "I refuse to tell you. I'm merely authorized to invest my clients' money. If they wish to identify themselves later, they will. Do you want the loan, Mr. Keating, or don't you?"

Keating hesitated, and at length said slowly, "I'll take it. . . . But with clients who loan money like this, you'd better watch out they don't become violent."



THE day the new seine was delivered, Keating called the fishermen to rig it up with the cork-line along the upper edge and the lead line along the bottom. It was a tiresome job, requiring the handling of hundreds of feet of heavy mesh, but for the first time in Keating's experience the fishermen seemed to enjoy the work. They even sang snatches of song as they toiled, Ben Tucker beamed and patted his mates from time to time, and Salvatore Rossi occasionally stopped to admire the net and exclaim, "She's a damn pretty seine, boys. We catch fish now, what the hell!"

But the new net brought no immediate improvement in Cal Keating's fortunes. It was not rigged up with corks and lead and stowed aboard until two days before

full moon. Since there would be moonlight that night until the sun rose, and sardines could be seen only when the sea was dark, no purse-seiners would be sailing until the third day after full moon.

On that night there were several hours of darkness and the *Catalina Clipper* sailed in search of fish. But she found only a sprinkling of sardines, not worth the trouble of setting a net. Three more nights passed before a small school was sighted off Ventura.

Two other purse-seiners were making sets on the same school, and one skipper was very aggressive. As his boat approached the *Clipper* without any indication of giving way, Keating veered from his course. By the time he'd completed his shortened circle to reach the skiff dragging off net from the stern of the boat, he realized angrily that he'd taken only the tail-end of the school.

Ben Tucker came up to the bridge to protest. "What'd you let Les Sunderhall bluff you out for, Keat?"

"Can't risk having my net fouled!"

Tucker laughed. "Neither can Sunderhall! I can remember when you forced skippers like him to give way or take the consequences."

"I was skipper of a cannery boat then. I didn't have to worry."

"Except for your job," Tucker amended. "And you didn't seem to worry much about that . . . Not getting overcautious, Keat?"

"If you had a stake in this game, you'd be cautious, too," Keating snapped.

He was sorry the moment he'd spoken. Tucker started to speak. Then, with visible effort, he forced himself to smile.

"Maybe I had that coming, Keat. But I hate to see you given the short end by a guy like Sunderhall. Bet we don't take over twenty tons." And Tucker left.

He was nearly right. They took twenty-three tons to the cannery, for it was their only chance to make a set that night.

Their poor catches continued. And Keating, fearing for the safety of his precious net, was thrice forced to give part of a school to more aggressive skippers.

On the third occasion, it was again Sunderhall who drove him off-course after he'd started to set his net. And that skipper, after filling his hatches, signalled Keating later that morning to come alongside to take the remaining sardines from his net. This was customary practice among purse-seiners; Keating himself had often given his surplus catch to other boats. But it stung to accept from the *Bold Venture's* seine the remainder of a haul that would have filled both hatches. Keating knew from his crew's sullen silence as they brailed the fish that his men felt angry and humiliated.

The only other time they were able to set their net before the next full moon, they had a "Christmas tree," closing the seine on a school of anchovies. Keating could of course detect the differing splashing sounds of sardines and anchovies, but something had frightened the anchovies and thousands were entangled in the net, lighting up the meshes. They had to be hand-picked from the seine to prevent the milling of sardines when the next set was made.

It was shortly after the five-day layup

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for full moon that Keating discovered a large school of sardines off Santa Barbara. It was past dawn when he first found it, and he could only vaguely sense its size by the number of cormorants and seagulls flying over it, and by the ruffled rippling of the water. It moved rapidly southward, for he overtook it twenty-five miles south of Santa Barbara the following night. However, there were three other purse-seiners on the grounds, and he got only a small "cut" at the school. The other boats, likewise cramped and unable to maneuver freely, did no better.

Keating never left anything to chance. The thirty-ton catch the second night was only a promise of what he might do if he could find the same school once more. From what he knew of sardines' habits and the rate of movement of this school, he planned his departure carefully so that he would meet it just after dark off Hueneme.

He had been slowly paying off his obligations to Peterson. A good set on the school would fill his hatches and go a long way toward clearing the debt. Once Peterson was paid, he could start paying for the seine. That loan made him distinctly uneasy because he felt there was something behind it he did not understand.

But most of all Keating felt the need of a big haul to quiet a growing dissatisfaction among his men.



AN HOUR before he expected to see the school, Keating was awakened by the man on watch. He dressed and went on deck. The breeze was light and cool. The crescent moon was low, but the dead-calm sea still shimmered like quicksilver. He stood for a while staring across the bright water toward the coastal range, before going below to the galley.

Tucker and Rossi and the cook were already there. They greeted him amiably enough, but he sensed something withdrawn in their expressions. He was losing his men, in some way he did not understand. Perhaps a few good catches would change that.

Half of the crew had drifted in and were drinking coffee and making sandwiches when the mastman's faint bellow

came aloft: "Sardines . . . on . . . the . . . starboard . . . bow!"

Fishermen crowded out onto the after-deck. The small skiff was raised by the winch and after being lowered, was securely moored. Then the large skiff went rasping harshly over the roller overhanging the stern. Three fishermen dropped into it and the end of the cork-float line was passed down to them and made fast. The skiff was towed for perhaps a mile before the *Clipper* drew alongside the outer point of a bow of luminous water, livid with the moon-glow flashes of thousands of small fish. It was the moving front of the school. Keating throttled the engines to a murmuring rumble, listening critically to the splashing. Sardines, for certain, and the only nearby boat was situated too far to the south to interfere with a set.

"Cast off!" he bellowed.

The large skiff was freed. Its weight began peeling off layer after layer from the mound on the turntable, dragging the seine over the rollers. They ground raspingly as the *Clipper* gained speed. Keating relieved McClaren at the wheel. Excitement quickened in him. It was like times past when he'd made a set on a good school.

Temporarily he forgot that it was his boat, and the weight of responsibility slipped from his shoulders.

Rapidly he rounded the eastern end of the school, the rollers grinding their raucous song, the engines making the boat vibrate. The riding light of the other purse-seiner still moved northward, but Keating thought nothing of it until he was three-quarters of the way around the school. By then the other skipper should have seen their skiff, but he still held his course.

Keating sounded a warning with the whistle. When the other captain paid no heed, sudden anger blazed up in him. The boat appeared to be trying to cut out part of the school, cutting it out within the circle of his net. Still forgetful that it was his boat and his net, Keating's teeth clenched and he felt the pull of his stiffening jaw muscles.

Twice more he sounded his whistle, but the other boat obstinately refused to give way.

"All right, Mister," he muttered. "You asked for it!"

There was a flash before his eyes as he recognized the vague outline of the *Bold Venture* against the star-powdered sky; he found it hard to focus. His hands went rigid on the wheel, and he made no slightest deviation. Sunderhall likewise held course and speed, his skiff now trailing astern.

Ben Tucker came running. "Don't you see that riding light? Keat, for God's sake—watch what you're doing!"

Keating didn't turn. "I'm watching," he said with icy fury. "If that gol-blasted son of Satan doesn't get clear, I'll part his hull!"

Tucker started, glanced quickly at the skipper.

"Keat, you can't! That's Sunderhall, and he's as stubborn as—"

"Pipe down!" snapped Keating. "I'm captain!"

"But, Keat—"

"Pipe down, I said!"

They were coming perilously close. Keating made no effort to reduce speed, made no deviation in his course. But he did jerk the whistle cord. The rumble of the engines, the grating of the rollers were lost beneath the long, penetrating blasts.

Ben Tucker gave Keating an odd, searching glance. Then, saying nothing, he grasped the grab-rail to give himself better support when the shock of the collision came.

Not until then did the *Bold Venture* begin her turn. It seemed too late to avoid a collision. In his wrath, Keating didn't care. But they did miss Sunderhall's stern as she fled from contact. They rocked her skiff, passed so close that Keating could have cast a wrench onto her turntable.

Ben Tucker expelled his breath in a sharp gasp. His hands shook as he wiped his streaming face. "Wonder I didn't pop some rivets, you gave me such a scare," he whispered hoarsely. "But it was worth it to get our old skipper back again."

Shakily, leaning against the bulkhead for support, Tucker left.

It was not until he closed the circle by drawing alongside their skiff that Keating

remembered it was his own boat, purchased with the sweat of sixteen years of toil, that he had risked. His knees felt weak when this realization came, then slowly steadied again as the result of his aggressiveness was borne home to him at last.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said, and chuckled.



TUCKER had already put off in the small skiff when Keating reached it. He waved and called jubilantly, "I'll take care of the balloons, Skipper."

Keating made his way aft. The circle of net was alive with darting, flopping fish and the distinctive sound of their splashing was reassuring. Many swam over the submerged cork-line. After tying on the first balloon float, Tucker scooped up a fish and tossed it to Keating. Seeing that it was a sardine, he tossed it back, and moved forward to free the stick. The large skiff was beginning to heel as the three men in it heaved aboard the edge of the seine.

Everything went smoothly, as Keating had somehow believed it would. The seine was pursed up without incident. Balloons soon supported the cork-line. And presently, when the stick was lashed athwart the large skiff, the three fishermen in it made their way along the pole to help on deck. Floodlights went on. The turntable was reversed, so that the layers of seine could be stowed in the order they would be drawn off next time a set was made.

Shortening the seine was a long and strenuous job. A sling was passed around the inner edge of the net, and the winch hoisted it to the boom. Another line was passed around the mesh to the rail, the first section was lowered and another length brought aboard. Successive layers of net were flattened out by eight men standing in a row on the turntable and working in unison.

When the net was sufficiently shortened to concentrate the sardines within a small space, the brail was dipped into the seine like a giant butterfly net, and the three men handling it placed the hoop on the edge of one of the hatches. Clank-

(Continued on page 128)

A True Tale of the



ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

HEADHUNTERS OF LUZON



*The raiders had been horribly successful
—in the clearing they had surprised a
band of hunters of a neighboring tribe.*

RAINY season in the Islands. The provincial capital of Cabanatuan on the principal island of Luzon steamed in a steady monotonous down-pour.

I lay on my pallet in my humble quarters on the second floor above a Chinese merchant's cluttered shop and tried vainly to sleep. The unvaried, humdrum rattle of the rain on the corrugated iron roof over my head thundered in my ears with a nerve-wracking beat. Taut nerves, a usual adjunct to the tropical rainy season, drawn to bowstring tightness finally drove me from my bunk to pacing the room.

I had been up all the night before on an

opium case in the local *lupanar* district and the squalling and screaming of the *putas* we were forced to jail still beat against my eardrums.

The siesta hour was just beginning. From below, in the Chinaman's quarters, a moving-about with much grunting and groaning heralded his preparation for his afternoon nap. Almost simultaneously the sickening medicinal odor of burning opium began trickling up into my room through the split bamboo flooring. Fat old Sam Lung was making sure he would sleep!

I made my way to the crude window giving onto the street and gulped in the muggy, rain-dank air. The street was a

By JOHN D. FAWCETT

river. It was deserted as befits the siesta hour, except for a small forlorn, flea-bitten pup sitting dejectedly in the exact center of the quagmired thoroughfare. He was dispiritedly watching a tiny maiden of perhaps ten or eleven summers make her dainty way among the puddles. The little girl was as naked as the day she was born but was very carefully carrying a huge umbrella and keeping her brown little body as dry as the proverbial bug in the rug.

I was debating with myself whether to heave one of my boots at the dog when a great clattering in the street drew me back to the window.



A NATIVE *carromata*, pulled by a bedraggled and spavined pony, was rattling through the puddled thoroughfare. The driver was incredibly black and kinky haired. His body gleamed brightly in the streaming rain as he cursed and yelled at his decrepit animal. Now and then he would stop his yelling and peer through the driving rain at the line of shops along the street. On spying the building I was in he nodded to himself with a satisfied air and pulled up the steaming pony with a skidding, mud-splashing flourish.

Seeing me in the window he bowed low and nearly tumbled from his *carromata*. In a loud voice he addressed the world in general and me in particular.

"*Señor!*" said he. "I, Pedro Del Mundo, do come in this misty weather from the office of the great *señor Jefe de Policia* of the so-great Constabulary seeking one *Señor Teniente Spigot*. For him I have the what-you-call-message!"

Fawcett! Spigot! What the hell! I was too miserable to argue.

"I am the *Teniente Spigot*," I told the man with the what-you-call-message.

He burst into a torrent of guttural dialect from which I gathered I was to report at once to Inspector Rickards, my senior inspector, at provincial headquarters for special duty.

"*Sique!*" said my messenger.

"At once?"

"*Sique!*" he repeated seriously, so I bade him wait as I gingerly eased myself into my damp uniform. I drew on my raincoat and hurried down the stairs from

my quarters, stopping only long enough to yell a threat in to old Sam Lung as to what was going to happen to him when I raided him for opium—as soon as the weather cleared! I climbed into the native cart and we were off in a cloud of muddy spray.

The wet and bespattered sentry in front of provincial headquarters saluted half-heartedly as my conveyance pulled up in front of the building in a sloppy three-point landing.

"Nice day!" he muttered, but as I turned to glare he slouched along his post wooden-faced. I paid off my driver and entered the senior inspector's office shaking off rain like a wet pooch.

Inspector Rickards was dozing in his chair as I entered but he came to life with a roar as I shed water about his office.

"Dammit all! Must you bring the weather inside?"

I apologized and reported for duty. Tersely he outlined my forthcoming mission.

The Igorottes, a tribe of pagan blacks inhabiting the wild mountainous portions of the island to the east were doing a little private head-hunting among themselves and now and then dropping into neighboring villages occupied by the Negritos, another wild tribe, to gather a few choice heads to decorate their huts.

The Igorottes' practice of taking heads dated from time immemorial, but since the Constabulary had taken over the policing of the islands the practice had been discontinued except in rare and isolated instances. Reports were now trickling in, however, that head-hunting in the wild fastnesses of the Nueva Ecija mountains was again listed among the favorite outdoor sports of the rugged and crafty Igorottes.

I was instructed to take a detachment of twenty, eighteen privates and two non-commissioned officers, together with *cargadores* and supplies and make a sortie into the Nueva Ecijas, to put a stop to our friends' pastime and bring in for trial the offending natives.

I was to start at once. In fact, even now my men were preparing for the journey in their barracks above the Constabulary offices. My top sergeant, Jose Reyes,

was getting the *cargadores* together and loading them out by the time I had finished going over my instructions with my superior. Together we planned the route of march.



OUR destination was the village of Niacnabato (the Town of the Black Rocks) deep in a valley in the wildest portion of the Nueva Ecija range. This village, which I had visited on a previous patrol, was reported to be the rendezvous of the chief offenders in the head-taking activities and was ruled over by an unusually cruel and crafty *cabacillo* (headman) named Agus. I had had dealings with this old scamp before and knew we were in for grief of some kind by even having to stop in his village. He had no love whatsoever for the Constabulary, no love for any kind of authority, for that matter. His feelings were fully reciprocated by us.

Sergeant Reyes, who knew the district like a book, laid out our route of march on a crude map. Niacnabato lay at a distance of about 100 miles—five days' hike from Cabanatuan. It was late in the afternoon when all preparations for the hike were made but with the usual inconsistency of departmental orders we had been instructed to leave "at once," so we streamed out of the town on the first leg of our march into the steaming rain with evening hard on our heels.

Night found us camping some several miles from Cabanatuan in the flat grass country with the rain still pouring. We bedded down in a small native church on the outskirts of a tiny village and cooked our rice and coffee. By the light of the

tiny cooking fire we studied the line of march and tried to figure out a way to approach the village of our destination without too much warning and fanfare. The wild drum telegraph of the mountain country is a peculiarly efficient instrument for relaying information.

Sergeant Jose Reyes finally figured out an approach that would keep us well away from any habitations or settlements. It was farther than the direct line of march but the chance of appearing unannounced was worth the extra march.

I depended a great deal on Sergeant Reyes' suggestion for an approach to Niacnabato. He had campaigned up and down the country for many years and knew the natives as one of them. He had that faculty of thinking as a native would think and an accomplishment like that is worth plenty in any punitive campaign. Reyes was a *mestizo*—that is to say, a part blood. He was very light-complexioned and exceptionally handsome as is not uncommon among the *mestizos*. As near as he could figure out his lineage he was a quarter German, a quarter Spanish, and one-half native Filipino. Such a combination usually gives a handsome, above-the-average specimen of manhood or womanhood, with an innate degree of intelligence far above the normal. He had a working knowledge of several languages and dialects, of native taboos and totems, and was a valuable addition to my command. On top of all this he was a likable sort with a pleasing, open-faced personality and a jaunty devil-may-care attitude toward external things and events that stood him in good stead in several tight spots we had been in together since he joined my com-



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mand. Together with the usual close-knit bond between commanding officer and first sergeant we were also friends with a mutual liking and respect for each other.

I speak at length of Jose Reyes (we called him Joe King, the American translation of his name) because from here on out this tale is really a tale of Joe King. I was merely a spectator—like the kid in the bleachers at a ball game . . .



EARLY evening of the sixth day out of Cabanatuan.

Slowly we plodded up the rise of a long hogback. Deepening shadows blotted out the rocky depths of the gorges dropping down with sickening suddenness on either side of the narrow ridge we were travelling.

Bujo, or vining bamboo, ran rampant under our feet. We tangled up, slipped, fell, cursed, untangled, rose—and fell again! Nice going.

The rain had finally stopped. For the last two days the tropic sun had beat down, raising a miasmic steam from the soaked earth. Mud squooshed about both outside and in our *alpargatos* (native sandals).

Our circuitous route into the Nueva Ecijas had been a success so far as entering the territory unheralded was concerned. Each night the drum telegraph had rolled over and about us. One of the native constables, who could understand the jumbled thumping assured us that our party had not been mentioned—and we surely would have been the chief subject for gossip had our presence been known.

And now we were approaching our objective.

Just the other side of the main range, in a deep valley, lay Niacnabato.

The main trails into the village lay from the valley approaches. By coming up on its blind side, so to speak, via the hard going of the wild mountain route, we had avoided any lookouts that may have been watching the regular trails. A surprise entrance into the village might catch *anything* in progress or in preparation.

Night was dropping down with its usual tropic suddenness as we reached the ridge and drew up for a breather. Before us lay the Valley of the Black Rocks!

Some half mile away—and many hun-

dreds of feet below us, in a tropical dream-land of bamboo and flowering vegetation, we could dimly discern the clearing and outlines of the thatched-hut village.

Tiny cooking fires on their hard-packed mud bases in the huts gleamed like flickering fireflies through the open-work sides of the raised native dwellings. A pleasant odor of wood smoke floated up the wind.

A peaceful, restful scene—like the calmness and beauty of a sleeping tiger.

Below us a hollow log native drum stutted to life as the bush drummers began their evening gossiping. The lonesome throbbing sound reverberated from wall to wall of the valley, and sighed away into the distance.

Cautiously, with an eye peeled for loose rocks that might start a slide, we eased our way down the precipitous mountain-side toward the village. Because of the dangerous work of descending in the darkness, we took all of an hour before we reached comparatively level ground, some three hundred yards from the edge of the village.

The half-wild dogs, always as numerous as flies about the native towns, were the first to discover our approach. They set up a yapping and snarling that would have awakened the dead. We were making no effort at concealment now. The fact was that we were making more noise than necessary—talking at the top of our lungs and stumbling through the short *cogon* grass like drunken elephants.

In the compound, torches flared as the natives tumbled from their huts into the clearing. The native drum stilled with the suddenness of the crack of doom. As we made a straggling entry into the compound it jerked into stammering again. The constable, versed in drum talk, grinned at me and nodded.

"Now we're officially here!" he muttered under his breath.



THE villagers were all agog. Although we were made welcome with much bowing and palaver there was a decided undercurrent of uneasiness and furtiveness in their manner. The men, clad only in the native G-strings, swarmed about us as we prepared to camp in the municipal hut, all talking at once about this, that

and the other thing. Oddly enough, though, not a question was asked as to the reason for our sudden visit.

As the *cargadores* unloaded their supplies in the temporary camp, and firewood details hustled about getting the supper wood, Old Agus the headman tottered from his hut to greet us. He was bowed with the weight of years, skinny and wrinkled, with evil, piercing eyes. To see him making his unsteady way across the compound one felt a great compassion for his aged frailty; but after a look into his cruel, ominous visage this compassion fled and a person was immediately on his guard. He was an ornery and cantankerous old devil; at the bottom of most of the devilry afoot in the Nueva Ecijas. Knowing this was one thing—but proving it was another.

Now he advanced to a position in front of where I stood directing preparations for the night, and smiled toothlessly.

"Greetings, *mi teniente!*" he croaked. "The *teniente* is welcome to Niacnabato. Perhaps he is on a routine patrol, no?"

"Perhaps," I volunteered.

The old man clucked to himself.

"Patrols are wearisome," he continued, "but after a good night's rest you will be refreshed and ready to face the trail without dread."

"Ah! But we are what you call extra weary. We will probably have to rest several days—or even weeks—in your village before we again try the trail!" I was watching his face closely. The poker-face set of his visage did not change at this information but his eyes seemed to crackle as he bowed low and waved an encompassing arm at his village.

"The village is yours, *mi constable!* May you rest well!" and he tottered away, followed by several of the younger bucks of his tribe. A powwow was in order!

Sergeant King joined me, and as the cooking fires flamed to life we took a quick look-see about the compound.

The Igorotte headhunters did not shrink their victims heads and mummify them as do the headhunters of Africa and South America. Instead they carefully scrape the skulls free of all flesh and muscle, polish them and mount them on poles about their huts. Niacnabato was well decorated!

We examined several of the grinning skulls surreptitiously as we strolled about the huts. Some were obviously old, very old, pitted and yellowed by the sun and rain of years.

Others, however, were suspiciously well preserved and polished.



WE returned to our camp house and had supper, and then the men wandered off in groups and alone to mix with the villagers. As I sat smoking in front of our temporary barracks the scene was one of peace and hominess.

The cooking fires were winking out, and the villagers, filled with steamed mountain rice and vegetables, lolled in front of their huts. A few mosquito smudges blanketed the surroundings with a pleasant, smoky odor.

A villager approached, grunted, squatted on his haunches by my side, and silently we watched the evening activity.

And then SHE passed!

I use the word SHE advisedly. SHE was a native woman—but *what* a native!

Whereas the Igorottes were usually short and squat and sturdily built, with unusually stout underpinnings, this girl was tall and lissome. The Igorottes were also in a range of color from quite dark to quite black. She was a light copper color. In contrast to the loose-lipped tribal characteristics she was molded of feature like the proverbial Greek Goddesses, and as she made her way with swinging graceful stride through the compound and involuntary ejaculation of admiration rose to my lips. She was dressed in the usual native fashion, in a wide skirt and with her breasts free and unbound. Her feet were bare and dainty.

The villager hunkered at my side chuckled under his breath. I looked at him inquiringly.

"The *babayer* surprises the constable?" he asked amused.

"The lady does surprise me," I admitted. "She is so unlike your splendid tribe!"

"She is the daughter of one who married a high-caste Spaniard. When the Spaniard died of the cholera the mother of that one did bring her back to the village. Here she still resides—she is the

duena of the *tienda*. And in her store she sells most excellent *anise del mono*, along with other things!" He withdrew into silence.

A half-caste! That accounted for her fair skin and handsome features. Like my sergeant she was a *mestiza*. She passed into the shadows in the far reaches of the compound and I dismissed her and her "excellent *anise del mono*" from my mind. We were up here after headhunters, and beautiful half-caste girls and excellent monkey gin did not fit into that picture, as I saw it.

I was just crawling into my blankets when Sergeant King returned from his sortie about the village. He squatted on the floor where I lay.

"I am sorry if I woke the *teniente*," he apologized.

"I was just lying down to sleep, Sergeant. Did you procure any information of worth?"

"The natives are reticent, sir. They shy from leading questions but we shall soon find one who is garrulous and loose of tongue. I have spent the evening in the native *tienda*, eating sweetcakes and listening to the gossip but it is the gossip of old women—silly and meaningless." He hesitated a moment. "Did *mi teniente* see HER?" The HER was capitalized!

I chuckled. "I most certainly did. A splendid looking woman!"

He rattled on breathlessly: "Here in Niacnabato I find a woman like her! Her name is Juliana and she tends the tiny native store left her by her mother. In her hair she twines the blossom of the flowering *Ilang-Ilang* instead of oiling it with the odoriferous oil of the cocoanut. She is part of the Spanish blood like I. She is wonderful . . . wonderful!" He shook his head, sighed deeply. "So beautiful she is . . ."

"No doubt," I said dryly. "But now perhaps it is to sleep."

"Yes, sir!" he said, and rose. "Good-night, *Teniente*."

I muttered a goodnight and rolled over. Dammit all! Here I was after headhunters with their hands dripping blood and my sergeant was after a girl who wore flowering *Ilang-Ilang* in her hair. A hell of a combination. I finally dropped off to sleep.



MORNING dawned damp and drizzly.

I took a small patrol and visited some of the nearer settlements making a routine inspection. I left Sergeant King in charge of the detachment in Niacnabato.

As was customary several of the native constables joined the villagers in the fields and worked alongside of them in the rice transplanting. This fraternizing had proved its worth many times before by the information so obtained, but the villagers of Niacnabato were very cautious. According to the report Sergeant King gave me on my return from patrol, the natives seemed afraid to talk except of the most trivial incidents. Any mention of raiding caused them to shut up like clams. Our work was cut out for us!

In the interim the affair of the *tienda*-keeper and my top sergeant proceeded apace. Every minute he could spare away from his duties, he loafed about the *tienda* consuming sweetcakes and warm San Miguel *cervesa* heroically. Sergeant King had fallen mightily for the statuesque *tiendera*—and, as far as I could see, the feeling was reciprocated.

As long as he did his duties and did not shirk any responsibilities his love affair was none of my business but I couldn't help but see that the villagers were frowning on his attentions. They watched the pair like hungry hawks.

Sergeant King and the *tiendera* committed no overt act, but as he continually hung about her tiny store they became more enamored by the moment. The girl's *amah* hovered over the two like the sword of doom, but now and then she must wait on customers and the fair Juliana and Joe King made the most of such opportunities.

Days had passed into weeks, the weeks were fast lengthening into a month, and still our operations had come to naught!

Headhunting raids in the Nueva Ecijas had ceased. We kept up a routine patrol of the district—keeping informers with their ears open—but nothing happened.

By now, in one way and another, we had learned that a few of the wilder and young bucks of Niacnabato, advised and directed by wily old Chief Agus, were the main offenders in the headhunting raids.

Offended villages had reciprocated in kind, but the instigator of the whole messy business was the old headman!

This information was most reliable—but proving it was another thing again. The more peaceful villagers had seen the wrath of the headman wreaked on his enemies before. You could have pulled their tongues out by the roots before you could have dragged them into court to testify against the old devil and his followers. It behooved us to catch them red-handed—and this was impossible with the raids suspended.

We knew the names and had identified all of the young bucks who were wont to participate in the forays. We kept a close tab on them, watching for signs of the forming of another raiding party, but nothing seemed to disturb the even tenor of their ways.

I began to get a case of nerves. I reached the point where I could hardly get along with myself.

Old Agus had been staying pretty close to his hut ever since our arrival. I had called on him a few times concerning matters of routine inconsequentials, and each time he had been polite but distant; answering my questions in monosyllables. Our continued occupation of his village he ignored as a matter of little concern or beneath his dignity to notice.

I knew the old wildcat, though, and knew it would be but a question of time before he would pull something off right under our noses, so to speak, to show his followers his contempt for the Insular Government's police. It was just a question of sitting tight and waiting for the break.



IT was evening. Exactly a month to the day had passed since we first took up quarters in the town of Niacnabato. A month of futile investigation, fruitless patrols, heartbreaking waiting. I sat with a writing board on my knees in the doorway of our quarters and watched the dismal rain march endlessly through the compound. My report, that I was preparing for my C.O. back in Cabanatuan, could have been summed up in two terse words: "Nothing doing!"

Sergeant King, as usual, had been down at the *tienda* visiting his lady love; now as I saw him making his way back to quarters through the squalling drizzle I snorted to myself. Love! In a stinking, wet, bedraggled, steaming country like this! Bah!

Sergeant King seemed to be hurrying more than usual, and at the same time trying to convey to any interested watchers that this was his usual nonchalant stroll. He turned into the quarters and literally skidded to a stop in front of me. He was breathless with excitement.

"*Teniente!*" He saluted hurriedly and somewhat sloppily. "I have the news—the so-great news, sir! My *dulce amiga*, who is not in sympathy with the hunters of heads and wishes to see the practice stamped out for the good of her village, tells me that on the morrow—at the dawning—a secret expedition does form to raid some unnamed village to the north to flaunt before us the power of old Chief Agus and our own stupidity! This news is of a certainty!"

I was cautious. "Perhaps it is but the prattle of old women, Sergeant."



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"Not so, *Teniente!* Our watchers report the raiders of the villages heretofore have one by one visited the old chief's hut this evening. The expected foray is at hand!"

This satisfied me. I laid aside my report—hoping to be able to add to it before the following evening something more readable than a report of failure.

I planned a course of action with my sergeant making excited suggestions as I went along.

The "break" was at hand. It was up to us to take advantage of it.

Wet, steamy morning again!

Immediately following early breakfast my sergeant presented himself at the *tienda* and loafed about. Several of the natives were loafing in the hut also.

I approached the door and called Sergeant King to attention.

"You, Sergeant, will remain in charge of the detail in the camp. I am taking a small patrol and visiting Antipolo"—naming a town south Niacnabato.

Sergeant King saluted smartly and repeated his instructions. As I left I noticed from the corner of my eye one of the loafing natives slip away from the *tienda* in the direction of the chief's hut. Fine! We were going on a patrol, presumably a routine affair, to the south—the raiding party was undoubtedly well on the trail—to the north.

So far so good.

I called my patrol—ten men—together, and we marched out of the town to the south. From the bush along the trail, four more of my soldiers joined our ranks. They had made their way unobtrusively from the town some hours before.

The native raiding party, as near as we could estimate, would contain about ten men so that gave us an edge in case of an encounter—and if it was humanly possible I hoped that encounter would come before long.

Lookouts covering our exit reported that we had not been followed from the village. Our supposedly routine patrol had been taken at face value.

Immediately I ordered my men to about face and retrace their steps, circling the village at the double. The raiding band had quite a start on us, but we knew they would advance cautiously.



WE sped down lush-grown jungle trail in pursuit of the raiders. One of my natives, an excellent tracker, assured me we were on the right track and showed me signs of the passing of a recent band of men.

The sun rode high in the sky. Noon! We had pocketed cold snacks but the men voted against stopping for refreshment. The trail was getting warm. Several times in the last half hour we had crossed tiny streams, and now we were able to find the wet bare foot tracks of the party ahead on the rocks of the opposite bank. When you can find them your quarry is close.

Silently now we crept through the dank undergrowth, single-file.

Suddenly we all froze into immobility. Some few hundred yards ahead, hidden from view by tangled thickets, a great hubbub arose—hoarse shouts, grunts, an unholy din!

With a wave of my hand I deployed my men into skirmish line. Unheard above the racket ahead, rifle safeties clicked up and down my line of men. Cautiously, inch by inch, we began a tortuous advance through matted *cogon* and bamboo.

The uproar ahead faded into a muttering—and at the same instant I found myself working out of the thicket into a natural clearing on the bank of a stream. The sight that met my eyes was one never to forget.

The raiders had been horribly successful! In the clearing ahead they had surprised a band of five hunters of a neighboring tribe. The surprise had evidently been complete as the entire band from Niacnabato were on their feet unharmed. The hunters had not fared so well. They had been cut down with spears. One lay on the ground writhing with a long arrow protruding from his back, from under a shoulder blade. As I watched spellbound one of the bloodthirsty bucks of the raiders leaned over the dying man with his bolo and neatly severed the head from his body. The others of the party were similarly engaged in taking the heads of the remaining hunters. I cast a quick look about at my men. True to their jungle skirmish training I could see them stealthily encircling the clearing.

The raiders were so engrossed in their grim and grisly business that when I stepped into the clearing with a snarled command on my lips and my sawed off shotgun at the ready they could do nothing but stare. As my men, following my lead, closed in, they dropped their arms and stood uncertainly. It was ludicrously easy. Taking a few of the heads as evidence, we started back for Niacnabato. The bodies of the victims we left, as they would have done, to be cleaned up by the scavengers of the brush, the wild hogs.

Evening cooking fires were again flickering like lightning-bugs as my expedition, with the prisoners herded before us, marched into the village—from the north. The village came alive like a nest of mad-dened ants.

This had been anticipated, however, and according to previous plan, Sergeant King had his few remaining men stationed at strategic points about the compound. They were soon augmented by the men from my own detail who were not occupied in actually guarding the glowering prisoners.

Old Chief Agus came toddling from his hut as I halted my prisoners in the center of the compound and dumped the gory evidence on the ground.

"Do you recognize these prisoners as men of your village, Chief Agus?" I asked.

"Aye!" he answered uncomfortably.

"Know you anything about this expedition of theirs which will lead to naught by an ingnominius execution?" I asked him then.

His eyes glittered evilly. "No, *mi constable!*" His eyes flicked over the prisoners, one by one, and I knew then that any case I may have hoped to get against the old chief through their testimony was a lost cause. "They, themselves will tell you that this terrible deed was done without my knowledge—as I would not have sanctioned such actions!"

"Aye!" muttered the sullen captives in chorus. Death for murder was bad—but seemingly not so bad as the vengeance that would be wreaked on them by their chief should they embroil him in their trouble.

With my men watching carefully for any attempt at release of the prisoners we

passed the night and with the morning we abandoned our camp and prepared to return to Cabanatuan.



THE natives were out in force as we marched from the village. Sergeant King had been so busy all night that he had been able to have but a few quick words with the *tiendera*. They seemed to have some understanding, however. I noticed as we marched from the compound, with our prisoners shackled together in the center of the column, that a look of complete understanding flashed between them. Sergeant King and Juliana were planning something.

I also noticed something else that escaped Sergeant King's attention. Old Chief Agus was also watching his young raiders being marched away. But his evil eyes were not on the bucks that were marching away to their doom. Instead he was speculatively eyeing the beautiful Juliana—and the look in his eyes was not nice to see!

I meant to mention this to King but in the haste and flurry of departure it slipped my mind and the ensuing days on the march we were so busy that I completely forgot the whole disturbing business.

We reached Cabanatuan without undue difficulty and turned our prisoners over to the government for trial. For the first time in weeks we were able to really relax.

That is we could have relaxed had Sergeant King allowed. But when I had guessed at a secret understanding between him and his lady love I had guessed all too right! Within two weeks Juliana was to run away from her village and make her way to Cabanatuan where she and my sergeant were to marry—and raise a whole flock of little *mestizos* and *mestizas*, I suppose!

It was near the day of her expected coming. Sergeant King was as nervous as a cat on a griddle. He paced up and down—in and out—round and about the barracks. He watched the road—he worried me nearly to distraction. I finally got him settled down in a chair tilted against the barracks, on the shady side, where he could watch the road.

(Continued on page 127)

BRUTE FORCE



Quinn charged down the boat, cursing in fury. He palmed a handful of Peter's sweater and jerked him clear of the boards. "By God, you'll do what I tell you, or I'll fling you to the sharks!"

By
LESLIE T. WHITE



ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES DYE

FOR ten days now the brig *Hopewell* had wallowed in the doldrums. Though there was not sufficient motion in the stagnant air to clear the pipe smoke from a man's face, the long, greasy swells rolled the ship until it seemed the sticks would come out of her. Under the furnace flame of the sun, the rigging had grown dangerously slack, the pitch bub-

bled out of the deck seams, and the hull had blistered open so that the pumps had to be kept going. Even darkness brought no relief, for the clammy heat closed in until the very act of breathing became a tiring feat. The noise was nerve-shattering. The rudder pintles groaned in their gudgeons, the masts retched sickeningly with each surge, and the blocks slatted

against the spars. There was neither rest nor escape, and the tension on board tightened with each passing hour. It required a sweating effort for a man to even move out of the sun, yet the work went on. The *Hopewell* had always been a taut ship; now she was a hellship!

Anxiously watching the signs, Peter Bender, the second mate, knew a storm was coming. It was plainly indicated in the giant oil-slick rollers, in the haloed sun and the saturated air. But another kind of storm was equally imminent; Bender could read it in the sullen resentment of the men, in their stiff-legged gait and blood-shot eyes. It was a question which fury would break first, and Bender prayed that neither would let go in his watch.

His position was extremely delicate, for he was a stranger, respected, he had reason to know, by neither the master nor the hands. He did not belong on this old tramp by any standard, having spent the last eight years as mate of a tea clipper. But a broken leg had stranded him in Java, and with berths growing scarce for a man in his late forties, he had been glad enough at the time to sign on the *Hopewell*, when she had put into port with her own second fever-crazed.

Too late, he had realized his mistake. It was the old story; different ships, different long splices. Captain Blane was a bully-master of the old school, who believed that discipline could only be maintained by pin, fist and boot. He had as tough a foc'sle of riff-raff as the crimps could supply, and he wanted his mates to be buckos. Pete Bender was a competent seaman and navigator, but he was no rough-and-tumble hard-case, and because he was not, Blane despised him.



UNDER the circumstances, it was inevitable that the hands should hate their officers, but in addition, their particular resentment against Bender stemmed from the personal animosity of Quinn, the boatswain. Quinn, a former foc'sle bully, who was built along the general lines of a hogshhead, had aspired to the rank of second mate, and the men joined him in taking it out on Bender. So far, Pete Bender had avoided the issue. Just short of outright appeasement, he

had tried to steer a middle course that would prevent an open break. He was a slight, graying man, made even more so by his sojourn on the beach, and he wasn't eager to pit his waning strength against a man fifteen years his junior.

This tenth afternoon was the worst of them all, and Bender was grateful when the bell clanged six times to tell him that he had only another hour on watch. The maddening swells had increased and the saffron tinge in the sky portended trouble. Since it was unbearable 'tween decks, the watch below was sprawled in the shade of the slatting mains'l. An awning had been rigged over the quarterdeck, where Captain Blane and Mister Torry, the mate, lounged out of the direct rays of the sun.

As Peter took a last look aloft to make certain everything was secure, he saw that a reef earing on the main tops'l yard had come adrift. It was not important unless the weather changed, but he didn't want Torry to come on duty and spot it. The mate had a sarcastic tongue, and a pica-yune disposition.

Peter glanced around for an idle hand, and saw Quinn moving out of the shadow of the poop. He would have preferred another man, but as the bos'n was closest, Peter called to him.

"Quinn, go aloft and secure that star-board earing on the main tops'l."

Quinn continued on his way, although Peter was sure the order had been heard. He raised his voice slightly.

"Quinn!"

The bos'n stopped short and glowered at him. "Hell, can't you wait until this damn sun goes down?"

Pete Bender hesitated. This was just the sort of thing he had hoped to avoid. Under ordinary circumstances, such insubordination would have been intolerable, and he was not at all sure he should let it pass now. But the alternate meant trouble, and with the tension so high, he decided that for the moment, it would be the lesser of two evils to ignore it. Later, when the conditions were different, he'd have it out with Quinn.

He started to turn away, when Blane's cold voice stopped him.

"Mister Bender! Did I hear you give that man an order?"

Peter winced, and looking up, saw the

master leaning over the quarterdeck railing.

"It wasn't important, sir," he said lamely.

Blane scowled. "Any command given aboard this vessel is important!" He turned towards the mate, who was loafing on the taffrail, smoking a last pipe before going on watch.

"Mister Torry!" barked Captain Blane. "Will you be good enough to instruct Mister Bender how to enforce a command?"

Peter's insides shrivelled into a hard knot. He braced himself against the agonizing roll of the brig and against what he knew was to come. It turned him a little sick to see the cool manner with which Torry knocked the dottle out of his pipe and came down the ladder.

Quinn, too, knew what to expect, for beatings had become commonplace on the *Hopewell*, yet he stood his ground, like a confused and defiant ox. Magically, the men had grouped themselves into a huddle near the mainmast, their eyes following Torry as he calmly lifted a belaying pin from the rail and started across the deck. The mate was a big, gaunt man, not as heavy as the bos'n, yet with the reputation of having never been bested in a fight.

His approach was slow and inexorable. Quinn's courage failed him, and he sought to back away.

"It's the heat, sir!" he babbled. "I'm sick..."

Torry didn't speak. He slashed the bos'n across the top of the head. It sounded as if he had struck a ripe melon. Quinn dropped to his hands and knees, his head hanging between his arms. Torry bent

over and hit him again. Quinn's left arm collapsed, his shoulder struck the deck and he rolled onto his back, unconscious. His head wagged from side to side with the torturous surge of the ship.

Torry straightened and swung his cold eyes on the knot of men.

"Here! Two of you sluice this carrion down!"

From their expressions, Peter thought sure the storm would break, but it didn't. Before the chill ruthlessness of the mate, they dropped their eyes. Two of them detached themselves from the herd, lowered buckets overside and emptied the contents over the unconscious bos'n.

On the second dose, Quinn sputtered and raised up on his elbows. Before his head was cleared, Torry planted a kick in his ribs that reverberated like a bass drum. Quinn moaned in pain, but the mate was a master with the boots, and literally kicked the man to his unsteady feet.

"Carry out your order!"

Quinn managed one venomous glance at Bender before he muttered: "Aye, aye, sir!" and stumbled towards the shrouds.



THROUGH it all, Blane had leaned his elbows on the rail, his black beard lending a saturnine cast to his otherwise bland countenance. As the mate crossed to the bulwark to replace the pin, Blane nodded his approval.

"Thank you, Mister Torry. Now if you will take the deck, I'll speak with Mister Bender in my cabin." He swung on his heel and sauntered aft.

"I'm sorry that was necessary," Peter said wearily to Torry. He didn't feel it



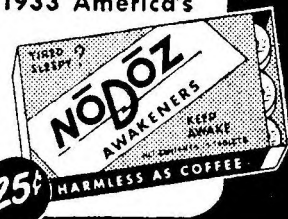
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had been necessary at all, but he was out-cast enough without quarrelling with the mate.

Torry spat. "If you want to get any work out of these scurvy blacklegs, you got to beat it out of them," he observed dryly, unmindful that every man on deck could hear him. "Well, the Old Man's waiting for you, mister."

Peter mounted the ladder self-consciously, miserable in the knowledge that the mate and the men watched him with equal contempt. At the moment, he despised himself, for he knew, as well as they, the code of the windjammers—that the second was the officer supposed to mete out corporal punishment when called for. On the bigger, better ships, such as Pete Bender had served on the last few years, discipline was an accepted thing, but on these old, undermanned tramps, the mates were expected to maintain it by brute force. Paradoxically enough, the men themselves took it for granted and regarded as a coward the officer who treated them as humans.

When Peter entered the master's cabin, he found Blane sprawled in his chair, his derby resting on the back of his head, his beard partially concealing his unbuttoned collar.

"What in the devil's wrong with you, mister?" he demanded. "You afraid of these men?"

"No, sir."

"Then why'd you let that packet rat refuse an order?"

Peter squirmed. During his seven weeks aboard the *Hopewell*, he had seen enough of Blane's tactics to know that any explanation he offered now would be misunderstood. But as the question had been bluntly put to him, he'd have to try.

"Well, sir, this heat has got the men's nerves frayed to the breaking point. I didn't feel it sufficiently important to crowd them to a point of mutiny."

At the word *mutiny*, Captain Blane stiffened in his chair. He glared at the little second a few minutes, then burst into raucous laughter. "You crowd this gang of cutthroats to mutiny? *You!*"

Peter felt the flush creep up to his hair line. "Even a rat will fly in your face if crowded too close, sir," he said defensively.

The laughter stopped so abruptly it

seemed to leave a vacuum in the stuffy cabin.

"Are you telling me how to run my ship, mister?"

"No, sir. I'm trying to explain why, under the circumstances, I chose to ignore Quinn's insolence."

Blane relaxed and stretched his stumpy legs under the table. He squinted at Pete Bender a long time.

"Bender," he mused at last, "you got a good record as a seaman an' a navigator, but either you been around them fancy, lady-carryin' clippers too long, or you're too old. Now I'll give you one more chance: either you run your watch properly, or I'll dump you at the next port o' call. These aren't men; they're brutes; the lowest scum the crimps could haul out of the gutters. They understand only one law—*brute force!* The only possible danger of mutiny comes when these animals lose their fear of the officers."

Peter bit his lower lip. He realized this was a lecture, not a discussion, yet he couldn't quite forget his own days in the foc'sle. He would have preferred to substitute the word *respect* for the word *fear* in the captain's tirade.

"I hope you're right, sir," he said respectfully.

Blane bristled. "As long as I'm in command, I'm *right!*" he barked. "That's all, mister!"

Peter limped off to his own cabin. Either the heat or his nerves had developed a twitch in his injured leg, and it hurt him to keep constantly shifting his weight onto it. The little cuddy was hot as an oven, but at the moment, Peter couldn't bear the thought of going on deck. He stared out the port, hoping for a cloud in the sky, but the sky was a dead thing, save for the flaming gong of sun in the west.

He stripped down to his underwear and lay spread-eagled on the narrow pipe-berth. The straw mattress stank of mildew, and the hull acted as a sounding-board for the ghastly noises of the ship. As Peter lay tossing miserably, he offered up the first prayer he had offered in years—a prayer for wind. A breeze, he felt sure, would cleanse the atmosphere on board the ship.

CHAPTER II

HELL ON THE HIGH SEAS



PETER awakened to shouts and the stamp of feet, and thought his prayer had been answered. But then he heard the shot, and realized with horror which storm had broken. Pausing only long enough to pull on pants and sweater, he headed for the deck.

Heart pounding, he ran down the companionway and jumped over the weatherboard into a seaman's nightmare—a *mutiny*! The drama of it stunned him into pause. Spotlit by the ringed moon was Torry, struggling in the center of a mob of seamen, like a big stag brought to bay by hounds. Although cut and bleeding already, he lashed about him with a clubbed pistol, thundering defiance.

Peter muzzled his own terror as best he could and started across the deck. Too late he saw the Portuguese sneak up behind the mate with a fire-axe in his hands. Peter tried to shout a warning, but the axe rose and fell before the words cleared his throat. Torry vanished abruptly beneath milling sea boots.

"Here's the bloody second!" shouted a man, and they swarmed over Peter. He struck out with his fists and endeavored to get his back against the bulwarks, but a thrown belaying pin caught him on the head, and he went down.

He was still conscious, yet the blow had paralyzed him so that neither fists nor boots gave him pain. He just lay limp, kicked this way and that, like a dead cat. Only the sudden arrival of Captain Blane saved him from the mate's fate.

Peter saw it all with frightful clarity. Blane came roaring out of his cabin with the courage of a fool, his flannel nightgown flapping around his corpulent frame and the tassel of his cap waving like an ensign. Obviously, the mutineers had expected him to do just that, for Quinn, with Torry's pistol cocked in his hand, had flattened himself against the bulkhead just outside the entrance. He let the master pass, then when Blane paused to stare at the body of the mate, Quinn stepped up behind him and blew his brains out.

Peter must have fainted then, for the

next thing he knew, the ship was heeled over and wind moaned in the rigging. All his nautical instincts warned him to get the canvas off her. But a glance at the men told him they had gotten into the captain's liquor chest, and for Peter, silence seemed the better part of valor. He lay in the scuppers, and held his breath.

Too late, Quinn recognized the danger. He bellowed at the men to shorten sail, only to be greeted with drunken jeers. In a frenzy, he tried to drive them aloft. He was laying about with boot and pin when the storm hit.

Peter heard it coming, with the roar of an express train crossing a wooden trestle. The *Hopewell* was caught flat-footed under full canvas. She shuddered from the impact, then went over on her beam-ends. The moon was blotted out, and the shrieks of terror were lost in the shrieking of the wind.

Peter found himself standing on the bulwarks, waist deep in swirling water, the deck as perpendicular as a bulkhead. He glimpsed Quinn and Fosmer, the Norwegian, hacking at the windward shrouds, then a falling spar hit him, and he passed out.

For a long time after that, Peter's moments of lucidity were brief and sporadic. He heard Quinn shouting to get a boat over. Peter started crawling across the deck, now miraculously righted because the sticks were gone. Somebody picked him up and heaved him overside into the long-boat. The fall blacked Peter out again, and when he came to, it was to hear the Portuguese call attention to the fact that the brig was going down.

Peter opened one eye, surprised to find it was daylight—a dun-colored, threatening haze. Though the full weight of the storm had passed, the wind was strong, and the seas were steep and confused.

The men were all staring to windward, yet because he was lying in the bottom of the boat, Peter couldn't see over the gunwales. He counted the occupants—ten besides himself. What had happened to the other sixteen he could only guess, and he wondered what strange impulse had moved them to include him in the long-boat.

The men cursed and sighed in unison and turned back into the long-boat, so

Peter realized that the *Hopewell* had gone. He sighed too, and closed his eyes.

"*Puxa!* That is that!" grunted the Portuguese. "W'at now, Boats?"

Quinn growled like a chained dog. "Now you ask me! We'da saved the brig if you drunken scum hadda done what I told you!"

"We didn't trade one bloody tyrant fer another!" Peter recognized the voice of "Limey," a Liverpool packet rat. "You h'aint no skipper w'at we . . ."

The sentence was terminated by the sound of a blow, then a body toppled into the bottom and lay across Peter's legs. The boat rocked and Quinn jumped to his feet.

"If there's any more argument about who's runnin' this show, let's hear it now!" he challenged.

"'Azy, Boats, 'azy!" drawled Fosmer. "Run de show, an' velcome, but vat Portagee asks, ve all vonder—vat now?"

"We'll make fer an island," Quinn grumbled.

"But what island?" persisted a big Rhode Island man named Fainer.

"How the hell should I know!" snapped Quinn. "These seas are full of 'em. If you mangy curs had brought along food an' water, instead of lappin' up Blane's rum, we'd have nothin' to worry about."

"If we're short o' grub, why'd we tote that crummy second, Boats?" asked the Portuguese. "He's one more mouth to feed. Throw him to the sharks, *nao?*"

"I brung him to navigate us! I'm a seaman, not no damn stargazer. Hey, you Frenchy—douse 'im with water an' see if he's still alive."



WHEN the water sloshed his face, Peter sat up, choking. The Limey was still lying on his legs, and the oars were inboard. Apparently they hadn't been afloat long enough to get organized. The men were grouped around, watching him. The Portuguese, dark and impish, was perched on the stem. Fosmer, bullet-headed and blond, lolled amidships on one side of Peter, and Frenchy, with his scarred fox-face, hovered above him, seemingly ready to bash Peter's head with the bucket in his hand.

But it was Quinn who drew Peter's

attention. Planted in the sternsheets, the boatswain loomed larger and more formidable than ever. Except for a torn singlet, he was naked above the waist, and his great, hairy arms, with their epaulets of red hair on the shoulders, put Peter in mind of tentacles.

"Now," growled Quinn, when he caught Peter's eye, "things have changed. You're goin' to take your orders from me, *Mister Bender.*"

Peter propped his back against a thwart and tried to keep his eyes steady. His body ached in every muscle, but his mind was clear enough.

"You hear me?" bellowed the boatswain. "You're goin' to navigate this boat to the nearest island!"

Peter cleared his throat. "Quinn," he said as evenly as he could, "nothing has changed the fact that I'm the senior officer present. At best you're only a bos'n; at worst, you're a murderer and a mutineer! I'll take no orders from you!"

Peter heard the hissing intake of breath from the men as Quinn charged down the boat, cursing in fury. He palmed a handful of Peter's sweater and jerked him clear of the boards.

"By God, you'll do what I tell you, or I'll fling you to the sharks!"

The constriction of his clothing nearly strangled Pete Bender, but he managed to shake his head.

"You can't fetch land without me!" he gasped. "You know it and the men know it."

Quinn hesitated an instant before his fist crashed into Peter's mouth, yet in that fraction of time, Peter realized that he had scored his point. Then followed the beating, cruel and thorough, until Quinn's long-held hatred had been vented, and he at last heaved Peter to the boards.

"You'll navigate before I'm through with you," panted Quinn.

Too badly injured to reply, Peter lay inert, striving to hang onto his consciousness because he feared the consequences of oblivion. The antics of the tossing boat made him violently seasick yet he tried to focus his attention on what was being said.

"*Ola!* Feed 'im to the shark!" urged the Portuguese. "He ain't no good to us, *amigo*, an' he know too much!"

"No, no," reasoned the Norwegian. "A navigator ve may need yet."

"*Puxa!* Who ask you, Squarehead? Keep the big mouth shut!"

There was a stir in the boat, then Quinn's strident voice thundered:

"Drop that oar an' sit down, Fosmer. You, Portagee—put that damned knife away. Both of you leave this rat to me. I'll starve him into doin' what we want."

Fainer backed him up. "Boats is right, lads. We got troubles enough without fightin' among ourselves. Let Quinn take care of the second; he's been achin' for the chance these seven weeks. How about grub, Boats?"

"We ain't got much," Quinn admitted. "There's mebbe enough salt horse an' biscuit to last a couple of days, an' the water'll hold that long if we're careful. But we ain't far from some island, so we'll make out."

"By Gar! I see bodies floatin' aroun'!" muttered Frenchy. "Let's get the hell out o' here!"

"Fair enough," agreed Quinn. "Now, lads, Portagee'll be second in command, an' we'll divide into two watches."

They chose sides, after the fashion of small boys at play, picking favorites first and leaving the less popular men to the last. After that, there was a general shifting of personnel, and Peter was dumped unceremoniously in the bows. A mast was stepped, a small lugsail hoisted, then with Quinn at the tiller and Frenchy at the sheets, the long-boat squared away on a broad reach.

With steerageway, the sickening roll was replaced by an easy pitching motion. Their course was easterly, and Peter could

have told them they were heading *away* from the only island in the vicinity, but as that would have been tantamount to suicide, he held his peace. But he tried to keep a rough dead-reckoning of their course and speed against the time when, as he hoped, the responsibility would be transferred to him.

As the sun neared its zenith, the wind slackened so that the heat seared them. The men began to edge together in the shade of the small sail until Quinn had to drive them away in order to maintain the trim of the boat.

But for Peter, huddled in the bows, there was no relief. He covered the top of his head with his arm, and gave himself over to an evaluation of his predicament. While he had partially convinced at least Quinn and Fosmer that it was imperative to have a navigator, he was forced to admit this was predicated largely on the illiterate man's dread of the unknown. At best, it was a tenuous hold, especially if he continued to refuse to function in that capacity. On the other hand, to take them to an island would be fatal, for as the Portuguese had so succinctly phrased it, he knew too much.

Nor was Pete Bender at all certain that he could raise land. In the mutineers' precipitous flight from the *Hopewell*, they had brought neither charts nor instruments. From memory, Peter recalled that there were a group of small islands a hundred and some odd miles to the eastward, but he remembered also that there were cross currents capable of setting a boat off course as much as forty miles in twenty-four hours.

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slim indeed, of steering south into the steamer lanes, but on reflection, he discarded the idea. In the first place, the coincidence of a steamer happening along at just the right time and place was absurdly remote, and if such a thing did occur, he was convinced that the men would kill him before they were picked up. Without his testimony, no one would doubt their story of being innocent victims of the storm.

It was a cud for long chewing, and Peter was too weary and sick to cope with it. He drifted off into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER III

THE BEAUTIFUL ISLAND



WHAT awakened him was the clatter of the pannikin, as Quinn doled out a little of their precious water to each man. Peter moved his cramped body into another position, and the motion caught the Portuguese's eye as he was raising the pannikin to his mouth. He smacked his lips and leered at Peter.

"*Ola, caboclo!* These is good! 'Ow about it, meester—you like wan nize cool drink, *nao?*?"

Peter's mouth fairly shrivelled with desire, but he did not speak. Quinn took the container away from the Portuguese and carefully refilled it, holding the pannikin so that Peter could not help but see the water.

"Ready to talk sense, Bender?"

Peter's throat was parched, but he maintained what small dignity was left to him by turning away. Quinn cursed him, but the men only chuckled. When the meat and sea biscuits were rationed out, the performance was repeated, yet though Peter was hungry, he didn't feel so badly about missing the fod. Salty beef and dry biscuits would only engender a thirst that a single pannikin of water would not assuage.

With darkness, the men sank into a sodden apathy, until by midnight, when the watches changed, only the Portuguese at the tiller was awake—the Portuguese and Pete Bender. The former huddled in a sphinx-like stupor aft, so Peter went

cautiously about his business of survival.

With his clasp knife, he made two small nicks on the gunwale—each nick representing what he judged to be ten miles made good. Calculating the probable drift to leeward, the set of the current, and their average speed, he scratched an approximate position. But it was the roughest sort of guesswork, for he had no way of knowing how far the storm had blown the *Hopewell* from her last-known position. Still, it was better than nothing.

That done, he sorted out the contents of his pockets. A clasp knife, a few coins and a fathom of marlin. Disappointed, he tried to recall the tricks he had picked up from the natives of these islands who went far out to sea with even less equipment than he had now.

Satisfied that the Portuguese was not watching him, he worked onto his knees and began to lick the dew from the thwart and gunwales nearest to him. It was not much, to be sure, but Pete Bender had never tasted champagne that gave him such heady pleasure.

Considerably refreshed, he scrunched down into the V formed by the bows, and with his knife, cut a sizable sliver from the thwart. He split it again, and with the marlin, fashioned himself a rough fish-hook, island-style. This completed, he began unravelling his sweater until he had enough yarn to twist into a three-stranded fish line.

The breeze had gone and the long-boat barely drifted. Peter weighted his line with a silver dollar, and gingerly eased it overside.

All he garnered that night was a few clumps of floating seaweed, yet he was not discouraged. He furtively hauled it aboard and shook it into his lap. This yielded two very small fish and four tiny crabs. Peter ate the fish whole and tucked the crabs into his pocket for future bait. Then he chewed all the moisture out of the fleshy weed, and spat out the pulp. By that time, the first gray streamers of light limned the eastern sky, so he coiled his line and curled up to rest.

It was a wail from Frenchy that awakened him about mid-day.

"Name of a name! Give me a drink!"

"Use your noggin'," Quinn argued with him. "We got to be careful of our

water. God knows how long we'll be wallowin' . . ."

"You swore there was islands here!" complained the Frenchman. "Now you talk of wallowin' in this accursed tub!"

"'Azy, Frenchy 'azy!" pleaded Foster. "Ve have not been here long yet."

"No matter. My throat's on fire. I want a drink!"

Quinn tried craftily to divert him. "Look, Frenchy, that damn second ain't had a drink since we left. He's thirstier than you are."

The men stared at Pete Bender, and he avoided their eyes. True, he was thirsty, but he doubted if he suffered as much as they. The dew and the weed and the small fish, which by a miracle of nature contained fresh water, had eased the desire, and he had refrained from useless talk which also induces thirst.

"Sacred name! I care nothing about him!" raged Frenchy. "I demand my share of water!"

"Very well," Quinn growled. "You'll get your share now. But don't come belly-aching for more at sunset when the rest of us are drinkin'. You won't get none!"

"*Puxa!*" grumbled the Portuguese as he watched Frenchy gulp the water. "Let us all our share have now!"



QUINN argued, but the others overrode him, so the pan-kin went the rounds to all, save Peter. He closed his eyes to avoid the sight, yet he couldn't help hearing the smacking of lips as the water was lapped up.

With the appetite of thirst at least partially quenched, the talk turned to other basic appetites—to food and to women. The men discussed island women, and what they would do when they landed. Peter listened, disgusted and surprised at their naiveté. They were mostly packet rats, accustomed to the North Atlantic, and it was obvious that none of them had sailed the southern seas prior to this voyage. Their beliefs were based on legend and the lurid yarns of old whalers. To them, every island was a luxurious Babylon populated exclusively by lovely brown-skinned maidens hungering for their caresses.

Peter foresaw ugly complications ahead,

and shuddered. The islands in these waters, if inhabited at all, would be peopled with natives not far removed from cannibalism; natives who, from bitter experience, had learned to protect their women from white men.

As the heat increased, he sank into a depression. The talk had worn itself out, and the men lay sprawled in the bottom like bloated corpses. Without wind, the boat rolled sideways in the trough of the seas. Quinn's angry plea to unship the oars was ignored. The sail slatted and the boom crashed back and forth, for no one had the energy to lower it. Peter could see nothing ahead but disaster, and during the long afternoon he prayed that death, when she came, would be swift and merciful.

That evening, they finished the beef and the biscuits, and despite Quinn's bitter objections, another round of water was voted by the majority. Darkness brought optimism, and all expected they would fetch an island by dawn.

Only Peter knew differently, for he was satisfied that the currents had set them far south of the island. When the others had settled down for the night, he brought out his fishing line. Baited this time with a small crab, he soon felt a tug. He set the hook and glanced furtively around. Although the nearest man was only inches away, they were sound asleep, so he cautiously handed up his catch.

It was a trigger fish, weighing about a pound. Peter leaned over the gunwales and hooked his fingers in the gills to keep the fish from splashing. With his knife, he quickly dispatched and ate it. Here was both food and drink, and when he again lowered his line, he felt stronger and less pessimistic. Before he was forced to quit that morning, he had dined amply on two more fish.

But it was an evil dawning when the men roused up and searched the bare horizon. Fainter, balanced erect on the middle thwart, shaded his bloodshot eyes with his hand.

"No damned land!" he shouted, mostly to vent his feelings, for every eye was on him. "Not an island within a hundred miles!"

The others staggered up and scanned the empty sea. The Liney swung on Quinn.

"Were's this bleedin' paradise you promised us?" he shrieked.

Quinn was silent, but Peter could have supplied the answer, for he could see where the island lay. True, he could not see the land itself, for it was far beyond the horizon, but he had learned from the natives that over each island often hovers a woolly tuft of cloud; a phenomenon caused by the variation of heat reflected by the white sand. He could see such a cloud now, perhaps thirty miles to the northward. Yet the men did not know about that bit of south sea lore, nor did they know, or in their anxiety had forgotten, that the curvature of the earth's surface limited their visible horizon to a distance of approximately three and a half miles.

Quinn climbed up beside Fainer and glowered at the restless sea. What doubts and fears plagued him, Peter could only guess. It was the Portuguese, eager to turn the resentment away from his partner in crime, who shouted:

"*Ola. Boats! Ask the second! Make the *caboclo* sing!*"

Quinn plunged down the length of the long-boat and hauled Peter from his nest in the bows. He jerked the smaller man clear of the boards and shook him violently.

"Now, damn you, Bender—*talk!*" raged the boatswain. "Tell us how to get to land, or s'help me, I'll tear the heart out of you!"

Peter waited until his head steadied and he had his senses under control. By his action, Quinn had exposed his own terror and helplessness, and Peter realized that on what he said now depended his very life.

"You've shown you're not fit to command, Quinn," he managed grimly. "But until I'm in complete control, the responsibility is still yours. I know where the island is, but I'll never tell you."

Quinn seesawed his open hand across Peter's face until the smaller man went limp. Then Quinn shook him back to consciousness and thrust his dark face close to Peter's.

"One more chance—tell us!" the bosun rasped.

"Not until I'm in command of this boat!" murmured Peter.

Quinn's next blow knocked him out.

CHAPTER IV

A BLOODY MIRACLE



PETE BENDER opened his eyes and was somewhat surprised to find himself alive. From the angle of the sun, he knew he had been unconscious most of the day. He gathered from the conversation that only the interference of some of the men had kept Quinn from killing him.

Yet he had gained one more point, for the cleavage had begun; he was slowly getting some of them on his side. Quinn and the Portuguese wanted to destroy him, which was understandable, for they were the actual murderers of Blane and Torry, but Fosmer and a few others feared to lose the one man who might be their salvation. And the argument was still going on.

Peter huddled in a little knot of agony, his bloody head cradled in his arms. With desperation growing, his fate grew more precarious. But he realized that he couldn't survive many more beatings. Even more than death, he feared that with more punishment, his courage might fail him. Then would come not only an ignominious death, but collaboration. He couldn't bear the thought of that.

The day passed like the ones before it—a searing sun and the everlasting swells that made rest impossible. That evening, they finished the last of the water.

After that, each man seemed to sink within himself. The knowledge that death was imminent separated him from the herd, and raised the question of personal survival uppermost in his mind. The swift fall of darkness accentuated the despair.

Lying inert in the bows, Pete Bender watched the mysterious forces of terror possess them. He saw the glances of suspicion each man cast at his neighbor, the growing impulse to center the blame outside himself. No one slept. They lay facing each other, nursing their grievances, seeking a scapegoat.

Not wanting to be the scapegoat, Peter made himself as inconspicuous as possible. He didn't dare fish. He managed to cool the silver dollar in the sea and slip it un-

der his tongue, which supplied a modicum of relief, but that was all.

Yet he must have drifted to sleep, for sometime during the night, he felt a tug at his sleeve. It was the Limey. The man inched his way up beside Peter until his mouth was close to Peter's ear.

"Could you really find the island, mister?" he whispered.

Peter nodded, and turned away. He felt the little Englishman slither back aft to where Fosmer lay. Then a silence descended on the craft, and Peter went back to sleep.

The next was a day of absolute calm. The air was saturated with a humidity that pressed on them like a sheet of lead. It was the day the Frenchman went crazy.

He complained all morning, cursing Quinn for getting them into their predicament until the big boatswain had to beat him into silence. Nobody interfered, yet their indifference was tinged with resentment. About noon, when the sun was at its worst, Frenchy scooped up a pannikin of sea water. Fosmer tried to stop him, but the crazed man drove him off with a knife, and so the ten of them sat back and watching him seal his fate.

The results were ghastly. The man was first violently sick, and then he began to scream. By mid-afternoon, he was out of his head, and his piteous wails would have nauseated a less apathetic audience. Even Peter, torn by the spectacle, was relieved when the victim heaved himself into the sea.

"*Bom Dias!* 'E should have done that before he drank so much fresh water!" snarled the Portuguese.

"Shut your mouth!" snapped Fosmer. "You may be next."

It was a prophetic statement, for that night someone drove a knife so expertly into the Portuguese it was not discovered until daylight, when Quinn prodded him to take the tiller.

Nobody seemed surprised, save Quinn. He crouched in the sternsheets in a stupefied silence, looking from one blank face to another as if expecting to read guilt on the killer's face. When at last he spoke, his voice cracked a trifle.

"We'll have to dump him overboard! This heat . . . this damned heat!"

They were all willing enough to be rid

of the Portuguese, so he was rolled unceremoniously over the gunwale. They neither weighted him, nor removed the knife still jutting from his side. Peter thought this a witless oversight, for the boat had drifted into one of those belts of absolute calm that lay between the trades. There was not the slightest ripple on the surface, nothing but the swells that surged below.

The Portuguese didn't sink, and he didn't leave them. He remained floating face down within a couple of fathoms of the long-boat. The survivors tried to ignore him, but failed. Through the long day he clung to them, as if fearing to go off on his own. With the passage of time, he became a symbol.

"W'y in 'ell don't 'e go 'way?" sobbed the Limey.

"He's waitin' fer you," Fainer said.

"For God's sake stop it!" shouted Quinn.

Another man died that afternoon. Peter didn't even know his name; he was just one of those nondescript creatures delivered by the crimps.

"We'll tie the anchor to this one," vowed Quinn.

In the fiery hell, the men shrivelled and aged. Peter forced himself to remain motionless. His body had long since dried out and his eyeballs felt on fire. It was no relief to close them for the sun penetrated the lids.



WHEN the western sky flamed like the open door of a blast furnace to receive the sun, the sharks came. Their black fins circled the body of the Portuguese, like little black sails rounding a marker. Then the Portuguese began to bob and dance and the water grew dark around him.

"Oh, Mother of God!" screamed the Limey, and buried his face in his hands.

The others watched because they couldn't help themselves. When it was over, Fosmer began to speak in carefully measured tones.

"Ve haff got to do somet'ing, lads. Ve're rotting to death."

"Shut up!" snarled Quinn. "Carpin' won't help."

"I von't shut up," persisted Fosmer.

"The time haff come to do somet'ing. You haff made a mess of it, Quinn."

Quinn started to his feet, but the expressions quelled him, and he sank back heavily.

"Who got drunk an' wouldn't take orders?" he countered. "Now you're in trouble, you blame me. What can I do?"

"Mister Bender could save us yet."

Quinn turned his eyes to Peter. "I doubt it. Maybe I can make him talk, though," he mused.

Peter sent up a little prayer for courage, and faced the boatswain.

"You can't!" he said. "I'll not pull your chestnuts out of the fire, bos'n!"

The expression on Quinn's face was revealing, and Peter thought his own sand had run out. But before Quinn reached him, Fosmer called:

"Quinn! Keep your hands off him!"

The big boatswain swung around, "Who the hell you givin' orders to, Squarehead? I'm runnin' this show!"

"Not no more you h'ain't!" shrilled the Limey. "We've 'ad enough o' you!"

Quinn stood braced against the ceaseless roll of the long-boat, and studied the blackened faces. He must have read his destiny in the solidity of their action. It was more than mutiny, it was a small revolution. Abdication alone would not be sufficient, and Quinn was shrewd enough to know that.

"Use your heads!" he snarled in savage desperation. "Don't go crazy now. There's got to be a boss!"

"Mister Bender can syve us! We wants 'im!"

"That's a damned lie!" Quinn shouted.

This was the moment Pete Bender had waited for. He pushed up into a sitting position.

"It's not a lie!" he said firmly.

Quinn's rage exploded. He gave a yell like a panther's scream, and went stumbling and crashing the length of the boat towards Pete. But as he tripped over the forward thwart, Fosmer hit him with the oar. He went down screaming.

Peter turned his face away. He didn't want to witness any more killings. The savage sounds beat against his ears, until a splash told him it was over.

"Mister Bender," Fosmer panted. "Vill you take over?"

Peter straightened. Quinn was gone, but the sharks still followed them. The men waited for him to speak.

"Thank you," he told them quietly. "You saved my life. I believe I can save yours. But if I do, you'll face a court of inquiry into the mutiny."

"We'll 'ave to chance that, sor!" piped the Limey. "Even 'angin's better'n fryin' in this 'ell, sor."

Peter shrugged. "That's for you to decide. As your officer, I'll do my best to get you to land. I didn't believe in brute force aboard the *Hopewell*, and I didn't believe in it here. But Quinn spoke one truth—there's got to be a boss. I wouldn't compromise with him, and I won't compromise with you. Is that clear?"

"Ve'll see you are obeyed, sir!" promised Fosmer.

"Very well," agreed Peter. "The first thing to do is get some nourishment."

He produced his fishing line, and they gaped in amazement. Baiting it with crab, he left it in the quaking hands of the Englishman, while he showed the others how to fashion rough hooks and lines. They were as eager and wondrous as children, and before he had finished, the Limey yelped:

"God 'elp me! I got a bite!"

It was a fair-sized fish, and Peter divided it amongst them, explaining that there was fresh water in the raw flesh. At first the men were dubious, later they regarded it as a miracle of his own creation. They caught several more, which were promptly devoured, and then Fosmer pulled in a long, slim fish with a suction disc attached to its head. He was about to kill it, when Peter stopped him.

"Don't! It's a Remora!"

"Ain't it good to eat?"

"Aye, but there's a better trick," said Peter. "Watch!"

He put his foot on the razor-edged gills and tied a piece of heavy line around the tail. That done, he tossed it overside.

"He'll work for us," he told his dumb-founded audience.

Someone laughed weakly, but a few minutes later, the line was nearly jerked from Peter's hands. He called for help, and it took three men to haul in the line. The Remora had fastened his suction disc to a large turtle.

The turtle turned the tide. There was enough food and blood to drink for all. Later that night, they caught a six-foot shark with the assistance of the Remora, but the meat tasted so strongly of ammonia it was inedible. Again, Peter's island lore stood him in good stead. He had the men cut the shark flesh into small pieces which they washed in salt water and hung around the boat to dry out.

"That will give us food for several days," said Peter.

About daylight, Fosmer asked, hopefully: "Do you think you can find an island, sir?"

"I do," said Peter. "I've watched it for two days now."

The men stared in disbelief, and in their agony, Peter felt a strange compassion. He pointed to the cloud, barely visible in the early light.

"It may be only an atoll," he told them gently. "But it's land. Now if you men will rig this sail into an awning, we'll put oars to work."

The Limey was sobbing like a child. "It's a bloody miracle!" he babbled. "A bloody miracle!"



THE miracle was that they found a British clipper anchored in the island's lagoon when they rounded the point, the following afternoon. She had

evidently been damaged in the storm, for her crew was busy with a new fore-topmast. Some of the men were for running away, but Fosmer shook his head.

"Our life is in your hands, sir!" he said to Peter.

Peter didn't answer, but as he steered through the break in the reef, he had it out with his conscience, and yet it wasn't until they were all gathered in the waist of the British ship, facing her officers, that he made his decision.

"We are the only survivors of the American brig *Hopewell*, sir," he reported to the captain. "She foundered in the storm about a week ago."

The British master nodded slowly. "Aye, we lost a topmast in the blow." He eyed Peter's battered countenance, and his face grew stern. "You didn't get beaten like that by the storm, mister?"

Peter's men seemed to shrink under his scrutiny, but Peter never wavered.

"No, sir. The bosun ran amuck, and tried to kill me, but my men stood by me. He was lost in the struggle."

The captain looked at Pete Bender a long time. "It's probably just as well," he said, with a shrug. "Discipline is necessary at sea, and the men must stand by their officers."

"That's right, sir," agreed Pete Bender in quiet dignity. "And by the same token, an officer must stand by his men."

SUNNY SIDE OF THE TRACK

SPRING is here and the stovepipe committee has switched to the sunny side of the track. So has *Railroad*, which will be used to settle any and all arguments pertaining to its subject. What's the fastest train run in the U.S.A.? Will rubber tires replace steel wheels on passenger equipment? Are railroaders as superstitious as sailors? You'll find the answers in the April issue of—

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MAGAZINE

205 E. 42nd St., New York City 17



By JIM KJELGAARD



Frenchy told me he had a good mind to put a bullet through me right there and I told him to go ahead if he thought he could get the drop.

THE SHOOTING OF FRENCHY DUMONT



ILLUSTRATED BY
PETER KUHLMORF

WHEN the hooded trapper came into his office, Constable Sloan stopped writing and looked up at the man standing before him.

He said, "Hello, Johnny."

"Hello, Sloan."

Big Johnny Magruder pushed his caribou-skin parka back, fumbled with his huge hands, and turned his eyes away. Sloan watched him keenly. No trapper left the bush in November—the height of the trapping season—and drove his dogs a hundred and forty miles for any trivial reason.

Sloan asked lightly, "How come you're in, Johnny? Did you run out of rum maybe?"

"No!" Johnny Magruder's big hands fluttered almost delicately. Then he thrust a belligerent jaw forth and blurted, "I came in to tell you that I shot Frenchy Dumont!"

Sloan leaned back in his chair, his face an unreadable mask while he studied the features of the man in front of him. He said calmly, "And just how did that come about?"

"It wasn't murder!" Johnny Magruder said. "He was coming to shoot me! I had to shoot first!"



SLOAN glanced down at the desk, his mind a bright lamp which turned a searching ray on the facts it had received and explored the brain of the man across the desk.

Johnny Magruder was still pugnacious: "There isn't any more to tell. That's the whole story."

"Oh," Sloan was deliberately casual, "I was simply trying to put things together. Remember Frenchy's partner, Pierre Talon? He died accidentally six months ago. He fell into a river. Remember?"

Johnny Magruder knitted puzzled brows. "Sure I remember. What are you driving at?"

"Nothing special."

Sloan remained impassive, unreadable—concealing his disappointment because the shot he fired had found no mark. Big Johnny Magruder was the only known witness to Pierre Talon's death. If Frenchy Dumont knew more than he had ever told about his partner's demise; if, for instance, he had been blackmailing Johnny Magruder—

Sloan said imperatively, "What started bad blood between you and Frenchy in the first place?"

Johnny Magruder stared at the floor, as though trying to collect his scattered thoughts.

Finally, "I guess it was kind of a damned fool thing, but the whole thing started over a dog."

"A dog?"

"Yes. I was down to Marriner's store

with my Patch dog, and Frenchy came in. Patch went up to him, the way he always does to everybody, and Frenchy kicked him. We had hot words."

"Can you recall those words?" Sloan asked.

"Well, not the same ones. Frenchy told me I could keep my dogs out of his way or he'd shoot them. I told him that, any time he came around loaded for my dogs, he'd better have an extra bullet for me. He said he would."

"How serious were you?"

Johnny Magruder shrugged. "We were both plenty mad, but I didn't have any ideas about ever really shooting Frenchy then."

"Were there any witnesses?"

"Marriner was there, and Tom Echols, and Bill Sheers."

"I see." Sloan made a note of the names. He twirled the pencil between his fingers, and asked, "What happened then?"

Johnny Magruder furrowed his brow painfully. "Well, I went into my trap lines and set fox and coyote traps. For a week or so there was no trouble. Then I got down in the corner by Two Bird Creek and found I'd caught a coyote. It wasn't until after I'd killed it that I saw another trap on its foot. I knew it was Frenchy's trap; the coyote had come from the west and Frenchy traps just west of me. Our lines come close together at Two Bird. The coyote had got in one of Frenchy's traps, jerked it loose, then come over and got in mine, see? I was going to take both trap and coyote back and hang them where Frenchy could find them, when all of a sudden I looked up and Frenchy was standing near. He called me a trap thief."

"Go on," Sloan urged.

"We had it hot and heavy," Johnny Magruder said frankly. "Frenchy told me he had a good mind to put a bullet through me right there and I told him to go ahead if he thought he could get the drop—I had my own gun in my hands. Then Frenchy told me never to set foot on his lines or I'd get a bullet. I told him the same went for mine and we parted."

"Did you mean to carry out your threat?"

"Yes," Johnny Magruder admitted,

"and Frenchy did too. You could see it in him, he meant to kill me if I set a foot on his lines. He was raving mad and I knew he'd do it."

"Then what happened?"

Johnny Magruder was silent while Constable Sloan's wrist watch ticked off a minute.

Then the trapper looked up.

"I tried to avoid trouble," he said, "but I didn't dare go anywhere without a rifle. I was careful not to go into Frenchy's country; I even pulled all traps set near his lines. I didn't want trouble. I still couldn't forget the way Frenchy had looked and I was sure he'd come gunning for me. Well . . ."

"Go on."

"He did come," Johnny Magruder said. "I'd just made the rounds of my lines and hadn't been a half hour at the home cabin when the dogs started fussing. I stepped to the door with my rifle in my hand—I knew Frenchy would come some time and I always packed a rifle—and I saw Frenchy coming up the trail. As soon as he saw me he ducked behind a spruce, raised his rifle, and—well, I shot first, that's all."

Sloan said gently, "It's too bad it had to happen that way, Johnny, but if it's the way you said it was I don't think you're in for any trouble. Of course I'll investigate. When can you leave?"

"Right now," Johnny Magruder said.



WHEN they came to Johnny Magruder's home cabin, Sloan stopped his team behind Johnny's. The dogs flopped into the snow. Johnny Magruder raised his dog

whip, pointed at a small spruce a hundred yards away, and looked back at Constable Sloan.

"He should be behind that tree out there."

"I'll look," Sloan said.

He walked forward, his mind clear as to just what his duty should be. Sloan came to the spruce tree, and looked behind it.

Frenchy Dumont lay on his back in the snow, his sightless eyes staring up at the sky.

Sloan walked back to Johnny Magruder. He said calmly, "Are you going to tell the whole story, Johnny?"

"What do you mean?" Johnny Magruder snapped.

"You're going in for murder anyway. Maybe you won't get the rope if you tell the whole truth. Did you kill Pierre Talon too?"

Johnny Magruder moved swiftly, turning aside and snapping his rifle up, but he was not as swift as Sloan. The constable's service revolver slid smoothly into his hand.

He shot, and Johnny Magruder's rifle spun away. Blood dripped through the parka sleeve.

Sloan, still unexcited, said, "You were too sure of your shooting, Johnny; you knew Frenchy'd be dead. If you had bothered to go look you couldn't have missed his face and eyes. Frenchy had been crying for a long, long time, and some of the tears that he didn't wipe away froze where they flowed. When Frenchy came up that trail he was snowblind and groping his way towards the nearest help he knew."

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WRITTEN BALLOT

By LESLIE BIGELOW



ILLUSTRATED BY
JOSEPH A. FARREN

IF Sergeant Leonard Passevant had not drunk a Desperation highball, he would never have said any of those things.

And what is a Desperation highball? A Desperation is an Army drink, a *pousse-café* of many layers. First you sit on your bunk in your barrack by night and watch the yellow pine walls until you cannot stand them any longer. Then you listen to the hiss of showers and the gurgle of the latrine until you cannot stand *them* any longer. Then you watch the dark spot of wet beneath the drinking fountain until you cannot stand *it* any longer.

Then add homesickness; add worry. Carefully pour in doubt of your wife. Introduce fury at a malicious superior.

Finally finish off with several dollops of one of those noble whiskies jobbed off on us during the war: in this case Old Shetland Phony, one percent genuine whisky aged 97 years in the spare stocking of an old Scots woman, after the formula of Black Angus, the Two-Headed; and 99 percent neutral spirits distilled in rusty oil dums from rotten potatoes by a syndicate of public well-wishers.

Then go forth and do surprising things . . .

Sergeant Passevant, in civilian life, leased a gas station from Continental Oil in a little Louisiana town between Alexandria and Shreveport—the oldest town in the Louisiana Purchase. There is little enough there now. The Red River deserted its channel next to the town 100 years ago; the old docking place has passed altogether into vague legend. But once the Old Spanish Trail, *El Camino Real*, passed through from Nacogdoches, in Texas, to Natchez, in Mississippi. Once the little town was a way-station to the Southwest; and runaways from every jurisdiction took a deep breath there be-

fore the plunge to Texas or to Mexico. Like New Orleans it has wrought iron; like every enterprising southern town, a college; and like the South, a grim, wet heat.

But Passevant was cheerful there, with his wife Doris. He was of the town: his great-great-grandfather had insulted the Spanish governor in French; and his gasoline station was the cleanest in town. It was and is the only station where, if your car has a fender flap over the gasoline spout, you may buy gas without having your fender scratched by a careless flop of the pouring nozzle.



IN 1942, at the close of a shortened period of basic training at Jefferson Barracks, Leonard with the other trainees was paraded before the post brass and shown-off to a visiting colonel. They were all stiff with strangeness and some fear: the commanding colonel was said to have court-martialed a soldier whom he had merely overheard object to the incessant parades.

As the inspectors moved among the ranks, they asked this man or that what he had done in civilian life. They asked Leonard, too.

"I ran a gasoline station, sir."

"Your own station?"

"Yes, sir."

"Make a pretty good thing of it?"

"Seven or eight thousand, sir."

They regarded him with satisfaction; and the local brass turned to the visiting colonel as if to say, "You see, sir, we take all kinds, and line them up, and they all come out the standard model. Note the erect posture, the wooden expression, the docile air. A good job, eh?"

All this troubled Leonard a little; he had to be careful to remember that the United States and its problems were the thing. If he could help, fine.

As a permanent party clerk, he was then sent to an Air Forces installation in western Florida, a satellite field of the Air Forces Proving Ground Command. He was lucky, and he knew it. He was safe; he might well time out the war just there. But Army life is not so simple as all that: heat, worry, and wonder; and over all the special Army feeling, of helpless imprison-

ment for an undetermined sentence in a system manifestly too big and clumsy for individual fairness or concern.

And Doris did not write. Oh, she wrote, but she did not really *write*. Did she not understand that he was lonely and troubled? No, Doris did not understand. Like a million other war wives, Doris thoroughly enjoyed her temporary and romantic widowhood. Yet Doris was not vicious, merely a brat. And by whose fault? A big question, that, whose answer scarcely matters here.

And to exasperate his troubles, all around him the Army scene. He saw staff cars used constantly for private purposes, indeed for little else; for dates and junkets. He saw thousands of gallons of aviation gas sluiced into four-engine planes so that pilots might weekend in New Orleans and log their flying time, while he could not make home on a three-day pass. He even was forced to many sour conclusions about the whole command.

The command existed to test new aircraft, aircraft appliances, and related techniques, such as radar-jamming. Instead of contracting for these tests with a private laboratory, the Army created a command of some 11,000 men, with all their gear—mess halls, PX's, motor pools, recreation centers, libraries, and all the rest.

Hence the expense of a test was fabulous. It cost at least a quarter-million to test a seat cushion; a quarter-million to test a new machine-gun mount; a quarter-million, pro-rated, to test an absolute altimeter. Fair enough, of course, at even a million, if all was precise and useful. But Leonard saw a few of the test reports. They were incomplete, inexact, and almost invariably, even when thorough, some months behind the operational need. To run this command cost at least four million a month, and for precisely what?

Oh, important figures flew in and out. Men on mysterious errands looked sage and military. The neighboring saloons and boarding houses thrived superbly; and every Saturday at barracks inspection the proper arrangement of a footlocker shelf was deeply studied. There were many rival theories of the proper place for shoelaces, and two savagely opposed schools

of thought debated the proper position of the extra pair of shoes.

And then his incredible and culminating bad luck. His commanding officer was from his own Louisiana town, Captain Wade Hampton Klucher, *Wade Hampton* after the Carolina hero, and *Klucher* by a misspelling of a mispronunciation of Cloutier. Klucher was a direct-commission lad, the spoiled child of a decayed plantation. He knew Leonard, and he had a noble sense of rank. And so it was, "Sergeant," with the rank underlined, "Sergeant, you'll have to make the formations more promptly."

"Yes, sir."

Or it was, "Sergeant, do you think this headquarters can afford to send out a letter typed like this?"

"No, sir."

Or, "Sergeant, your record does not entitle you to your pass this month."

"But—"

"That is all, Sergeant."

After the court-martial, after his discharge, Leonard laughed about it all. But then, just then!

And so the Desperation highball, a good many Desperations, in fact. And then the bus to Mountain Glade. And then the oration on the public square.

This oration was a masterwork.

Clutching a lamp post, Sergeant Leonard Passevant glared inflexibly at the horizon. He proposed to take no nonsense from it. Then he touched, with a dreamy slowness which gathered force, upon the character of the Army. With systematic zeal he explored its essence; and to each detail he affixed, with an air of thoughtful elegance, the inevitable word. The Army word. THE word.

Sergeant Passevant then passed on to women. With appropriate gestures combining the best sentiments of the ascetic fathers with the most powerful barracks definition, he explored the perfidy of women. From Eve on, the sex was lit by the light of lurid revelation; and it was clear to the awed hearers that Woman was unspeakable, and in view of her unspeakable past would always be unspeakable, with annual increments of the abominable. In this part there was a very pretty play of THE word.

Now in full career, he let his disen-

chanted eye brood upon the universe, a cindery tract of malice, concocted in each detail from all eternity to molest him, to provoke him, to trip him up, to marry him off, and then, wantonly, to insert him in a uniform. To those of delicate ear, it seemed that THE word was used best of all here.

There was much objection to the MP's taking him away. Here was outdoor entertainment which combined the best features of a fireworks display and a street fair. And even the MP's marched him off with an air of pride. This, by Jupiter! was what a soldier could say when he set his mind to it. Bring on your admirals!

But a somber Sergeant Passevant went to trial, sped there by Captain Wade Hampton Klucher.



ANY occasion of law is grim: the vocabulary is occult, the machinery is alarming, and the prospects are hideous. But an occasion of military law is grimmer still, because to the whole shattering legal horror is added the special terror of the Army itself. Sergeant Leonard Passevant was literally, quite literally, scared stiff.

With his defense counsel, Lieutenant Smith, Sergeant Passevant enters a room twenty by thirty. He is given a seat with his counsel at a table. At the other end of the room, at a similar table, sit the trial judge advocate and his assistant. Through a haze of fear Sergeant Passevant inspects these prosecutors; their fell eyes, their shark mouths, their hanging air.

Between these two tables sits the court stenographer, idly fingering a stenotype machine. What happens to Sergeant Passevant is old stuff to *him*.

At one side of the room behind a long table sit the fates. In the center sits Major Murphy, the President of the Court; at his right Captain Mengle; at his left First Lieutenant Oliviant. Three second lieutenants bring up the flanks.

Sergeant Passevant tries to read their countenances. This is old stuff to *them*, too. They whisper and laugh. Passevant knows Major Murphy: two weeks ago, at the PX, he gave him hell for not saluting. Passevant knows Captain Mengle, too. He's the adjutant of a

neighboring squadron. When a bond drive was ordered, he kept every squadron member in the area until he had signed a bond pledge—even privates drawing \$15 a month after allotments. They say Olivant is a good egg. Nobody knows anything about the second looeys.

Meanwhile suspense dries Sergeant Passevant's throat and floods his brow. To all the terror of the law is added the special terror of the Army, your absolute master, your whimsical tyrant, a nightmare of saluting, formations, troubled sleep and no mail. You can't get away, Sergeant Passevant.

Major Murphy bangs down his gavel. "The court is now in session."

The prosecutor rises, looks casually at Sergeant Passevant, and says, "The prosecution is ready to proceed with the case of the United States versus Sergeant Leonard Passevant."

The United States versus one sergeant!

The prosecutor mumbles something and then says, "Whom does the accused desire to represent him?" He looks at Passevant impatiently. Passevant stares helplessly back.

At his side, Lieutenant Smith, this officer whom he must trust, who is said to be very fair, but to whom he is hostile because he is an officer (Captain Wade Hampton Klucher is an officer)—at his side Lieutenant Smith rises to say, "The accused desires to be represented by regularly appointed defense counsel."

The accused!

Again the prosecutor looks at Sergeant Passevant. "Are you satisfied to be represented by regularly appointed counsel?"

Passevant looks at Smith, this officer who is somehow in league against him, for all that he is assigned to help him. Smith whispers, "Get up and say yes. Get up and say yes."

Sergeant Passevant gets up and says, "Yes."

Now there is some mumbo-jumbo. With Passevant's fright there mingles the same sense of approaching calamity he had when he sat on the platform at the high school graduation, while the program inexorably ground to his little speech.

Now they swear in the court reporter. Now they announce that Lieutenant Jud-

son is flying cross-country today (that is, is using government gasoline to have a date in New Orleans and get his flying pay) and is excused from court. There is more mumbo-jumbo. Now the prosecutor asks any member of the court to disqualify himself if unable to be impartial. He says he is satisfied with the court. He asks Lieutenant Smith if *he* is satisfied.

"We'll get rid of Mengle," says Smith. He rises and says, "I challenge Captain Mengle peremptorily."

Smith says to Passevant, "For one thing, Mengle is chicken. For another, there were six on the court. To convict they had to get four votes—two-thirds. Now I've cut it down to five. To convict they still have to get four votes—two-thirds. Better percentage for you."

For the first time Sergeant Passevant's fear flickers away a little. Maybe Smith knows a thing or two at that.



ETERNITY passes in a trance. Everybody rises while the court is sworn. Grim phrases fly through the room: ". . . well and truly try and determine . . . administer justice without partiality, favor, or affection . . . custom of war in like cases . . . neither will you disclose or discover the vote or opinion of any particular member of the court martial . . . due course of law. So help you God."

Sergeant Passevant begins to sit down. "Stay up, stay up," whispers Lieutenant Smith.

Riffling through papers, the prosecutor reads the charges: *In that Sergeant Leonard Loyola Passevant, ASN 1212, did, on or about 29 June 1945, at about 2200 hours, on the public Square of Mountain Glade, Florida, use violent and profane language, to wit, #, %, and !*

The prosecutor asks, "How does the accused plead to the charge and to the specification of the charge?"

Sergeant Passevant goggles at him. He turns to Lieutenant Smith, who says, "To the charge and to the specification of the charge, the accused pleads NOT GUILTY."

The prosecutor comes to the center and states that he will call as his first witness Sergeant Phillips. Into the courtroom, called by the MP bailiff, comes Sergeant

Phillips, who escorted Sergeant Passevant from the public square that night.

Phillips is sworn. The prosecutor begins, "What are your duties, Sergeant?"

Phillips is brisk; he's testified before. "Police the town, cool the boys off, keep order."

"Were you on duty the evening of 29 June?"

"I was."

"While you were on duty did you see the defendant?"

Phillips stares carefully at Passevant. "I did."

"Tell the court in your own words just what happened."

"Well, I was making a routine check of the bars, and outside the Town and Country Bar, holding on to a lamp post, I saw Sergeant Passevant."

"What was he doing?"

"He wasn't *doing* anything."

"What was he saying?"

"He acted like he was giving a speech."

"Was he talking to anyone?"

"No, he was just looking at the sky and talking."

"What did he say?"

"Well, sir, it was pretty remarkable. He—"

"Did he say # and % and !?"

"He did."

"Did he curse you?"

"No, it was like he was shaking his fist at the whole world."

"What did you do then?"

"I led him over to the office."

"What did you do then?"

"When my relief came, I had him drive Passevant to the post. Back at the post he turned Sergeant Passevant over to the—"

"Did you see what happened at the post?"

"No, sir, I didn't see it, but—"

"All we want is what *you* saw. That is all. Any questions by the defense?"

Lieutenant Smith rises and asks, "Sergeant Phillips, did Sergeant Passevant give you any trouble?"

"No sir, he was no trouble at all."

"No further questions," says Lieutenant Smith.

To Sergeant Passevant, Smith says, "No use questioning him and having him remember any more details."



SERGEANT PASSEVANT takes the stand. He is sworn in. This is his high school graduation speech, and he can't see the audience for fright. The voice of Lieutenant Smith comes through finally. "On the evening in question, had you been worrying over personal matters?" To Passevant's surprise it all comes tumbling out: worry, worry, worry; no letter from Doris.

When Smith is finished, the prosecutor questions. "Were you in Mountain Glade on the evening of 29 June?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you drinking?"

"No, sir."

"But you had been drinking?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you say what you are charged with saying?"

"I may have said it, sir."

"Your memory is not good of that evening."

"No, sir."

"No further questions."

Now the prosecutor makes a brief speech. He reminds the court that testimony has established that Sergeant Passevant was in Mountain Glade on the evening in question, that he had been drinking, that he said the things with which he was charged.

Now Lieutenant Smith rises. "If the court please, Sergeant Passevant, as his record will show, has served creditably in the Army of the United States for two and one half years.

"The Army, gentlemen, has its own vocabulary. Men teaming with men invariably use words which we all know from youth on, although society asks us to pretend that we do not know them.

"There is one word, gentlemen, which we might call THE Army word. It is the staple military word. Without that word the machinery of the forces would probably halt, like an engine without oil. That word, THE word, is used as a noun. It is used as a verb. It has endings added to it, and then it is an adjective or an adverb. It is used to fill out the rhythm of a sentence, and sometimes it stands all alone, for stark rhetorical effect."

The second looys are smiling. Major Murphy is glum.

"Gentlemen, I put it to you that in the Army THE word and words like it have no meaning any longer. All meaning has been worn away by use. The words are mere sounds; they mean no more than any sound; they mean no more than any grunt.

"Why Sergeant Passevant had been drinking I believe has been explained to all of us. Army life, may I say, can be troublesome. He used these words. But, gentlemen, I put it to you further, that Sergeant Passevant did not, quite literally did not, on the evening in question, say the three words with which he is charged. He merely uttered, and I say this with complete seriousness, he merely uttered certain sounds, traditional in our military environment, which have no longer any meaning left at all."

The looeys are still smiling; they are smiling reflectively.

"Gentlemen, I ask you not to think that I interpose a frivolous defense. I ask the court to consider very carefully what Sergeant Passevant *really* said."

Nothing further is said. Major Murphy bangs his gavel. "The court is closed."

Sergeant Passevant, Lieutenant Smith, and the prosecutors leave the courtroom. Smith offers Passevant a cigarette, and Passevant watches the personnel of the legal office. It's old stuff to *them*. He watches the soldiers of the post go to and fro outside. *They* have no worries.

Lieutenant Smith says, "I know the lieutenants. They're smart fellows. I think I made my point with them."

One of the looeys comes to the door. "The court is open."

Major Murphy bangs the gavel again. "The court is open to hear evidence as to the prior record of the accused."

The prosecutor reads excerpts from Passevant's service record; he ends, "There is no record of prior convictions."

Major Murphy bangs the gavel. "The court is closed."

Lieutenant Smith says, "They found you guilty, all right. That's what it meant when they asked for your record, to help fix the sentence. But I think we have the lieutenants."

They wait five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes. "A good sign," Smith says.

"The court is open." Major Murphy is watching those lieutenants as though he'd like to court-martial *them*. "Sergeant Passevant, rise and face the court.

"Sergeant Passevant, on secret written ballot, two-thirds of the members of the court concurring in each finding of guilty, the court finds you, of the specification guilty, and of the charge guilty."

GUILTY!

"And again on secret written ballot, two-thirds of the members concurring, the court sentences you to be fined \$25 and to be restricted to the limits of your post for the period of one month."

Relief convulses Sergeant Passevant. No guardhouse, and he keeps his stripes.

Major Murphy glares once more at the lieutenants. "Court is adjourned."



THE close of a letter from Passevant to Smith, June 1946:

I want to thank you again for helping me out. Of course, now the Army seems a hundred years ago, but then I was sure I was a goner.

I'm really pleased to hear how successfully you have returned to your own affairs. I believe I am properly translated into a civilian, and Doris, well, I have finally translated Doris into a pretty sweet little wife.

I said the Army seems a hundred years ago, but once in a while I see Klucher; and then I'm not very happy for a while. He's still prowling around town, but most of us are on to him, and even his family is fed up.

It's petty of me, I know, but listen to what happened the other day.

Klucher drives up. "Fill 'er up, Sergeant."

I brought out the last Continental Oil bulletin. I opened it very carefully. Very carefully I pointed to his name on the list of deadbeats whose gasoline credit cards were dishonored.

"Captain, you'll have to make your payments much more promptly."

"But—"

"Captain, your record does not entitle you to gasoline this month."

"But—"

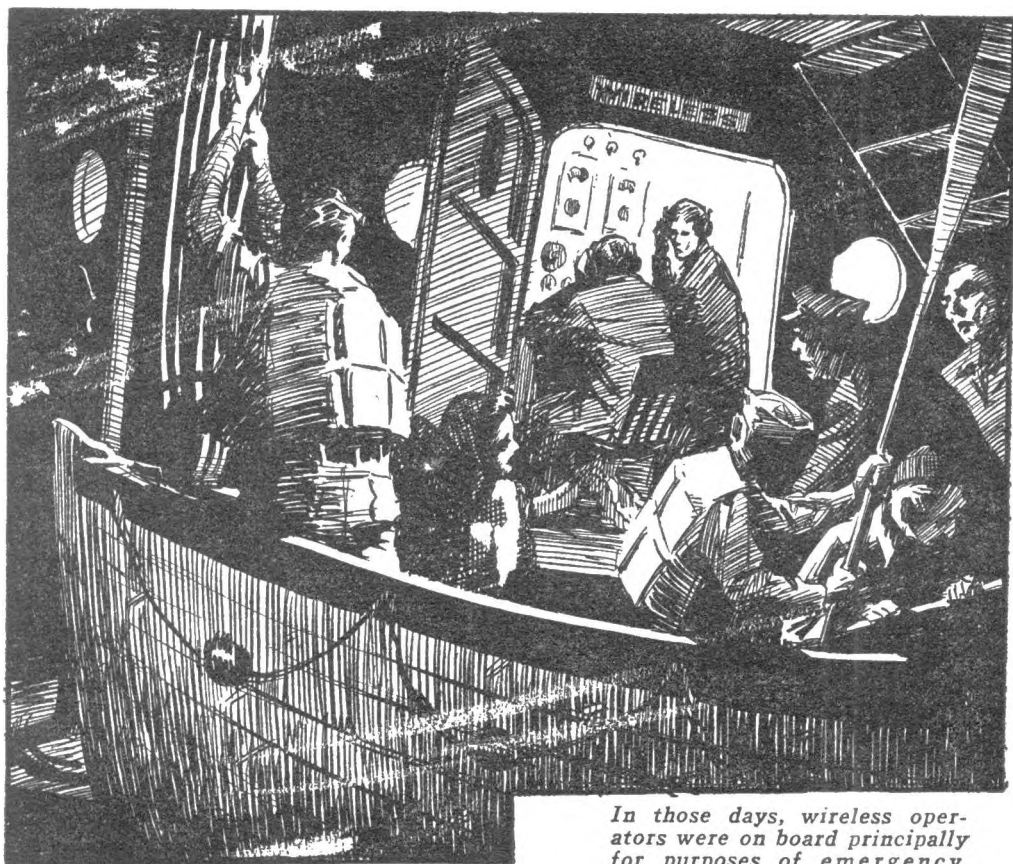
"That is all, Captain."

Oh, man!

Angels of Wireless

A FACT STORY

By ETHAN GRANT



In those days, wireless operators were on board principally for purposes of emergency.

OF THE many thrill-seeking lads attracted to wireless telegraphy by the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, few were chosen. Occupationally, those that were had the cinch of the century.

The *Titanic* had carried 2,207 persons; 711 were saved and wireless got the credit. She carried two operators, Phillips and Bride. Phillips died of exposure in an over-loaded lifeboat, but there seemed

no end to the praise the boys got for their heroics in the wireless shack.

Imaginative youths who recognized the adventurous future in wireless promptly learned the code, rigged up practice sets and began getting ready. I pounded the brass so determinedly that my family and the neighbors thought I was tetchy.

Then one day an operators' school was opened, with fifteen enrollees. Having the edge of some persistent key practice,

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

I was the first to graduate. The liner *Gloucester*, Norfolk to Providence, needed a junior operator and suddenly I became an "angel."

Wireless was relatively new and deeply mysterious. It easily attracted and enthralled the passengers. There were two of us and we were the miracle boys. If disaster struck—we, they knew, would stir the ether magically and save them. They treated us as if we'd been sent along from heaven with the new blessing. Even the captain showed us a degree of reverence unusual in the seadogs of that time. We were Big Sparks and Little Sparks, and he called us Mister—although I had scarcely begun to shave.

Across our chests and the left sleeves of our neat uniforms we wore the word WIRELESS and streaks of lightning in conspicuous gold. We had good quarters and at mealtimes were seated appropriately in the main saloon. Everyone stared at us. It was the one job on board the captain knew positively nothing about and he neither commanded nor reprimanded us. But, of course, being devoted to the work, we gave it our dignified and egotistical best.

The skippers of those days thought we could perform miracles of communication and, forsooth, before many years some of us did. For, with more and more boys trying to crowd in, performing miracles became part of the racket.

This lasted through a period of several years, until American genius began to catch up with us. There came a time when the national hobby was building receivers, a time when the lowliest messboy could come from his quarters and say, "Look, Sparks, your transmitter's decrement is way off government requirements. You're coming in all over my dial!"



BUT those early years were glorious. The *Gloucester's* wireless shack was a converted cabin on the promenade deck. It had a big window, which we never closed as long as passengers were at large. They crowded around and watched, curiously. We pretended to ignore them. We tuned the mysterious dials, flipped, unnecessarily, the switches and adjusted the earphones. Listening, always listening,

with quiet and heavy concentration to what the ether was saying, to what nobody else could understand.

Most of the time we were hearing nothing but frying static. The pretty little cat's-whisker crystal detector tuner had a maximum daylight receiving range of very few miles. And there were very few stations with anything to say.

But occasionally, a short distance from port, we had a message to send and could put on an exciting show. Passengers fought each other for space at the window.

Sending a message was an intricate process. You adjusted the brass key screws. Sometimes you loosened them and smoothed the contacts with a small file. You adjusted the earphones, the cat's-whisker, and maybe changed the carborundum crystal. You set the wavelength by rearranging the contacts on the big copper helix over in the corner.

Finally you closed the main circuit and threw the change-over switch. You waited tensely for the noisy motor-generator to pick up speed. Now at last you were ready to send.

You knew passengers' attention would be centered on the spark gap. Attached to the bulkhead opposite the window, it was a circular device about two feet in diameter. Spaced around the inside were metal contact points. In the center was a whirling arm with similar contacts on each end. When the key was pressed to form the dots and dashes, there was a noisy, round purplish flame. It was this device that gave operators throughout the English-speaking world the nickname "Sparks."

It could be heard all over the deck and it filled the wireless room with a god-awful odor. "Ozone," we told the passengers, and inhaled. "It's healthy."

Passengers with their heads in the window also inhaled, deeply. It wasn't till years later that I learned the stuff was actually poisonous.

World War I brought improvements, but not startling ones. Voice transmission was still in its infancy. In 1915, Lee De Forest had invented the oscillator tube, but it was delicate and expensive. Many ships, notably freighters, were still carrying the old style apparatus. As late as 1920, I helped install a spark-gap

transmitter and a crystal detector type receiver on a newly-launched freighter.

Later that year I had my first experience with the radio tube. My ability to perform miracles in communication was discovered when I accepted that berth. It was a two-operator job and the other youngster was an ex-Navy operator named William Lynch.

The ship was the S.S. *Innoko* of the Oriental Line.

What Lynch and I did aboard the *Innoko* may now be considered a confession to a fine old skipper and an apology to the entire ship's company, including the cantankerous first mate.

The skipper's name was Hill. The mate's, I never bothered to remember. A former Navy lieutenant with his first merchant ship berth, he told us we were "too damned fresh." He was incensed by the discovery that on merchant ships a radio operator enjoyed the same privileges as a first mate.

Lynch and I were assigned from Radio Corporation headquarters, then at 326 Broadway, New York, on December 3. We found the *Innoko*, a big freighter, at an East River pier loading general cargo for South America.

In Captain Hill's cabin we surrendered our credentials and submitted to the usual skipper questioning. When it was evident that we were acceptable, I asked him why the last two operators had quit.

"Why, they were assigned to Astor's private yacht," he replied with almost paternal pride.

He told us their names and when we said we'd never heard of them, he seemed surprised at our ignorance.

"The most competent operators I've ever had," he said. "Why, they got time signals and press reports clear to the equator!"

To Lynch and me, that was bad news. Operators were on board principally for purposes of emergency. Lacking emergency, they were judged almost entirely on their ability to get accurate time signals and a reasonable amount of news, or "press," while in range of NAA's nightly code-sent broadcasts.

NAA, at Arlington, Virginia, was the most powerful broadcasting station on the American continent.



RADIO was still a mysterious something about which none but a licensed operator knew anything. Still in the development stage, its transmission range was so limited that ship operators could seldom hear a shore station beyond a radius of more than a few hundred miles even under the most favorable atmospheric conditions.

"Those boys were exceptional," Captain Hill insisted. "You'll likely find it hard equaling their reputation."

We took his word for it and went up to the radio shack, aft of the chartroom on the bridge. We found an ordinary Navy spark-gap transmitter and an SE-143 type receiver—with a single small tube detector. Lynch was familiar with tube reception and knew its advantages and limitations. The other operators, he said, couldn't have done what Captain Hill claimed for them.

We closed the door and talked it over. We either didn't know our radio or the other boys had stuffed the skipper. Or maybe he was stuffing us. With a one-tube receiver, they couldn't have copied anything intelligible more than a hundred miles or so south of Key West. At least not through the heavy tropical static.

We debated whether to accept the berth or walk off. The *Innoko* was a clean ship belonging to a line with a reputation for good food and fair treatment. New York was cold and the world south of Cape Hatteras was summery. We signed on.

In the saloon at lunchtime, we heard more bad news. Mr. Cox, the chief engineer, hadn't known about the loss of the other boys. He was so sorry I thought he'd cry in his soup. But he wasn't surprised they'd gone to Astor's private yacht. Boys as good as they were didn't belong on an ordinary tramp.

The table conversation was annoying. We soon had the impression we were only a pair of hams and a disappointment already. Seafaring men are characteristically blunt, and they were not merely trying to rib us.

During the next five days, until we sailed, we heard a lot more about the young geniuses. We heard it from the second and third mates, the assistant engineers, the messboys, the quartermasters and the steward.

The steward said, "Why, they got press clear to the equator! I never was on a tub with sparks as good as them."

You'd think the equator was the end of creation. I was tired of it. "We'll get you press clear to Buenos Aires," I boasted.

"Stew, we'll make pikers of those other guys," Lynch chimed in. "You just wait and see."

We sailed at noon on December 8. Lynch took the first watch. I relieved him at 6 o'clock. Arlington's broadcast began at 10 P. M. First came the time signal, then weather reports and about an hour of selected news items. I had an idea. In typing up the press, I omitted a few items and stored them in the desk. The remainder I padded, a sentence here, another there, till the whole filled the customary number of pages.

We made a copy for the saloon, one for the petty officers' mess and one for the crew's.

Next morning, the press was accepted and read without apparent detection that it had been tampered with. On each succeeding night I clipped additional items, to hoard for "publication" when we'd pass beyond the audible range of NAA.

South of Key West, static increased and NAA gradually faded, becoming less intelligible with each night's broadcast. I copied what I could of the dispatches and supplemented what I couldn't by guess and sheer imagination.

When finally we could no longer hear Arlington at all, the customary amount of press consisted of old items previously accumulated for just this emergency. I found it surprisingly easy on the conscience by adoption of the assumption that news was still news till published and read. We could detect no evidence that our readers were dissatisfied with it.

Static one night was so bad it created a crackling blue flame across the eight-inch gap of the opened lightning switch. The skipper, the mates and others on the bridge saw it. But when the usual bulletins were presented next morning, they never thought to question how they could possibly have been copied with the antenna grounded. It was one miracle nobody but another radio operator could ever appreciate.

The hoarded news supply, stretch it and pad it though we did, was exhausted two days before we reached the equator. But by now our anxiety to make pikers of those other two operators had become an obsession. We'd observed what we thought was a twinkle in the skipper's eye and now suspected him of at least a measure of exaggeration in the matter of what our predecessors had done.

In addition to the news items, we'd also continued to provide the chief mate with daily time signals for his fastidious chronometer. We had an alarm clock. We kept it fairly accurate by stolen comparisons with the chronometer itself, usually a few moments before the mate appeared for his noonday shot at the sun.

It may have been this that made the mate cantankerous. Or he may have been annoyed at his poor navigation. When finally we got a legitimate time signal from a station in Brazil, he was puzzled. He seemed to think the chronometer had been playing games with him.

As for the news we could no longer hear, we began creating it. I had a big atlas, complete with countries, states, highways, railway systems and even street maps of the larger cities.

Our first purely fabricated story was a report of a theater fire, with great loss of life, in Chicago. To give it authenticity, we included the exact street corner location. It was a horrible calamity and we gave it voluminous coverage. Minor happenings, datelined at various places, completed the customary number of daily dispatches—all hot off the kilocycles of pure hoax.

Two imaginations ignited in mischief were hard to quench. Each day the news was headlined with a major disaster. A fire, a bad train wreck, the collapse of a big office building, an earthquake. One I well remember was a record ten-foot snowfall in Maine.



ONE morning the frequency of disaster and the possible cause became the subject of breakfast comment. Mr. Holland, the amiable first assistant, blamed it on sunspots. Interpreting this as a possible hint in the general direction of suspicion, we permitted the calamities to

subside in favor of less gruesome and more national happenings.

Perhaps it was a fortunate thing. At the rate we were going, we'd soon have had the whole world out of kelter.

It wasn't long till Lynch and I made a pleasant discovery. We were making pikers of those other two boys, and it was reflected by evidence of growing respect for us. What did it matter if we gave them spurious reading matter, so long as it was satisfying?

We crossed the equator on Christmas Day. We still provided them with press. They had the customary amount of it clear to Buenos Aires. And when we left there, clear to Rotterdam, Hamburg and back across the North Atlantic till we could again pick up Arlington.

By now we'd made pikers of Mr. Astor's boys and probably all the rest. We had a professional trade secret, and we were never going to tell.

But as we neared New York we decided to give them one more calamity. Something that was downright ridiculous, something that would cause them to howl with laughter. Then, if they'd had any previous suspicions they'd accept us for the pranksters we were and know we hadn't meant any harm.

And so on the following morning we presented an astounding story. The wooden shoring on one side of the Central Park reservoir, the report stated, had caught fire. Firemen had found the timbers so filled with highly inflammable pitch they could not cope with the flames. One section had burned out and the entire reservoir had emptied and flooded the whole lower portion of the well-known park.

The reception given this story was surprising. It was consumed without the flutter of a doubting eyelid. We couldn't believe it. We fished for comments, but all we got—from one of the engineers—was an authoritative affirmation of the burning qualities of pitch. Besides, didn't wooden ships burn at sea?

The stunt had failed and we were stumped. We decided to forget it and keep our secret.

The captain may have known. I could never quite decide. But he did undoubtedly know that news at sea, authentic or

otherwise, had some bearing on morale. Maybe he didn't care.

When we got into port and quit the ship, he paid us a high compliment. He said we were the best operators he'd ever signed on. He endorsed our licenses with the word "Excellent."

"You're smart boys," he said. "I hope you'll never have to do this, but if you ever get into serious trouble with the law and need help, get in touch with me."

And he gave us his address. As I grow older, I wonder more and more what he meant by that. I also wonder if the two operators who replaced us enjoyed the next voyage.

The best berths were aboard ships with one operator. At sea, we had no rigid watches to stand. We had no strict schedule to meet but the daily time tick and press if we were in range. And this didn't require more than an hour a day. Or, if you knew how, you could always fake it without fear of detection.

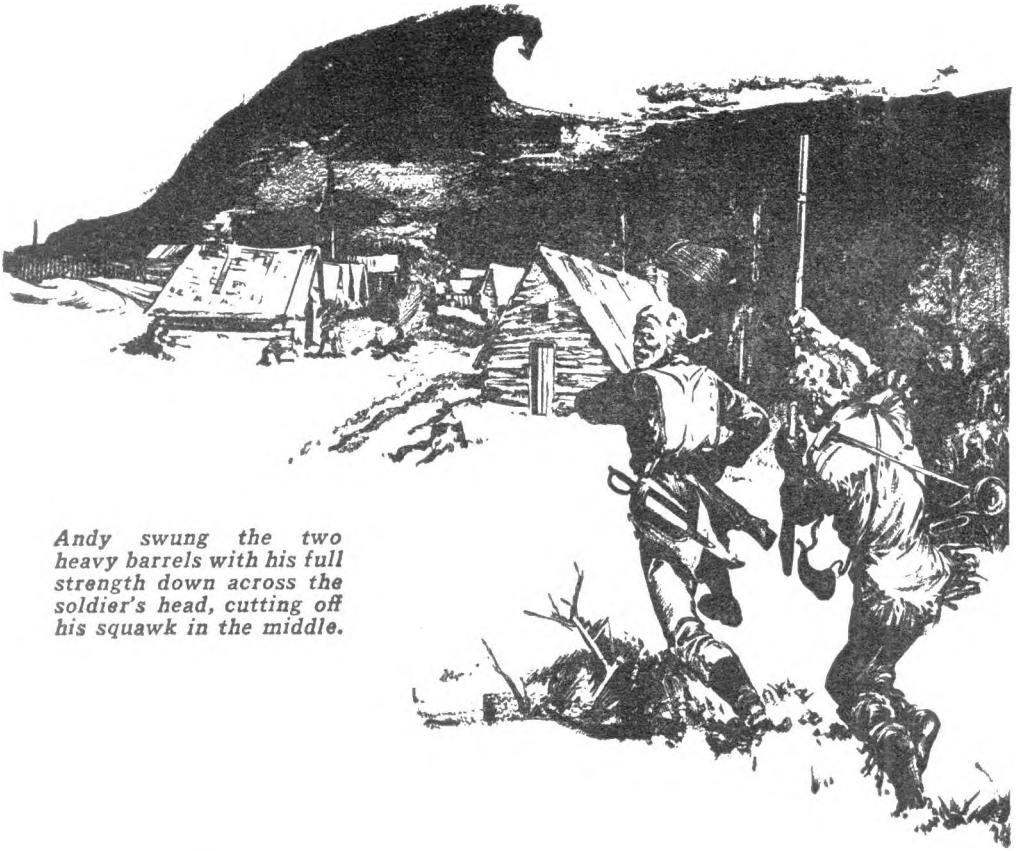
We ate and slept and read. Or played cards in the saloon. There were always others off watch. And after a ship cleared port, both the skipper and chief engineer were normally idle and in a mood for a game of pinochle.

In season, ship's personnel wanted the major league baseball scores. Betting on the various teams was a popular pastime. If, beyond the range of NAA, the last operator could never get the scores and keep a record of the teams' standings, why he had no imagination. If you knew how, you provided the daily scores and kept the standings clear across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean to Constantinople and back.

During the last few days of the voyage home, when you got the actual scores from NAA, you might cause the greatest team scramble in baseball history. But that was because standings would have to tally with those published in the papers the day you arrived in port.

It was great, being able to move events of the world around at will. You knew things were happening and you knew the personnel wanted to know what and where. You also knew they thought by the miracles of wireless you could keep them informed.

And so you did.



Andy swung the two heavy barrels with his full strength down across the soldier's head, cutting off his squawk in the middle.

BUGLE SONG

By

EVERETT M. WEBBER

THE November wind was howling and cruel, coming across the snowy woodland along the Waxhaw, but Private Andrew Jackson, age fourteen, scarcely felt its bite. Eyes almost unseeing, he hunkered by the little fire he and Captain Eagan had built on the old hearthstone of a house which the British had burned this summer. Eagan and a detachment of his Carolinians had surrendered under quarter from it—and the bloody Major Trumbull had hanged six of them before relief came and rescued the others.

Today Private Jackson's hatred of the English burned so hotly that it brought a gorge of blood to his throat fit to choke him and now and then, in trying to breathe, a sound like a sob escaped him. His feeling would in no measure be cooled until he saw Trumbull lying dead. For last night word had come that his mother had died of the plague on a prison ship at British-held Charles Town where she had gone to nurse her captured nephews, and was buried there. The nephews were sent to Charles Town by Trumbull, though they gave their paroles they would bear



arms no longer if allowed to stay home to do their work.

Slowly Private Jackson clenched and opened his hands. Any way you looked at it, Trumbull had killed his mother just as much as he had killed those six men he hanged from the oak yonder.

Eagan straightened, listening. A tall, austere Black Irishman of twenty-eight, his brooding dark eyes were prominent in his wasted face. He glanced at Jackson

now, though he had been carefully keeping his look to himself. "Wind—or the coach?"

Jackson raised his bearskin cap. "Can't tell."

He pulled the cap back down to shield the scarce-healed saber cut of the English officer whose boots he had refused to polish. A shiver ran over him, for he was still thin and pinched from the small-pox he had caught in the prison camp at

Camden before his mother got him and his brother out.

She'd had a time of it nursing the pair of them until Robert's death, and also Eagan who was grievously wounded in the engagement here with Trumbull.

"Coach, I'd say." Favoring his tender side, the captain rose from his haunches, drawing his threadbare greatcoat around him—a Continental of buff and blue, for he had been on Washington's staff before coming here to raise and train militia.

Now he and Andrew, being well enough to travel, were on their way to join Shaw's Rifles because that was their best chance to meet Trumbull, who was harrying the countryside to the southward. Nor had Eagan shown the bad taste to suggest that maybe Andy should stay home until he was stronger. Andy reckoned Eagan knew the value of a veteran who had been through half a dozen skirmishes and could claim two enemy dead for sure besides one probable.

Andy kicked snow over the fire and lifted his pack and his Deschert two-shot rifle, and Eagan's bugle which he was being allowed to carry. There was some faint kinship between their families. It had been tremendously strengthened in Andrew's mind when he learned that a common ancestor had blown the charge for freedom against another English horde a hundred years ago on this very bugle at the Battle of the Boyne. It did something to him deep in his soul to finger the rough brass, and something stronger yet to blow it.

Now the captain must have thought to cheer him or to show his appreciation for the way Andrew's mother had nursed him. Abruptly he said, "I'd like to make you a present of that bugle, Andy."

Andy looked at him sharply, heart quickening. Yesterday he might have taken it, for he had never wanted anything worse than he wanted that bugle and what it stood for. But today his mother's last words to him kept running in his mind. He was still in bed from his smallpox when she left for Charles Town, and she must have had a warning they would never see each other again, for she had to keep wiping her eyes with her apron as she stood in the doorway. And she had said, "Never tell a lie, Andy, nor sue for

slander. Settle such cases yourself. And be too proud to take anything you haven't earned."

Now, more stiffly than he intended it, Andy said, "Thank you, sir, but I'll just blow it some now and then if it's all the same to you." But some day, he thought, he might have something he could trade for it.

Eagan was a proud and stubborn man, independent and high-nosed, and for a moment Andy thought he had affronted him, refusing his gift. Then he saw that the captain was really only relieved. So relieved that Andrew knew he would never have anything Eagan would swap it for.



THE COACH rumbled across the creek and up the hill and swayed to a stop, the white breaths of the mules blowing back around Mr. Daley, the driver. Andy followed the captain to the road, glad to be on the way, though he knew that for some reason Eagan didn't want to join Colonel Shaw. He had said, "Just one thing takes me—the hope of getting a crack at Trumbull. Otherwise wild horses couldn't drag me." But he wouldn't say why.

"Can you get us through to Colonel Shaw's?" the captain asked. "We promised him we'd come today."

Mr. Daley wiped frost from his brows and mustache, gathered there from the mules' breaths. "I better. I got somep'n here he's sure goin' to fret about if I don't."

The captain opened the door. Andy saw him start. Saw his sickbed pallor go ghost-white. He was staring at a young woman who looked back at him from the depths of a brown fur neckpiece.

Mr. Daley called down, "Miss Carolyn, this yere is Cap'n Doug Eagan. Cap'n Eagan—Miss Caro-lyn Shaw."

Still looking at Eagan, the girl said, "Captain Eagan and I have no interests in common," and then she turned her eyes straight ahead, putting her hands deeper into her muff.

Her gear was beside her so that Andy and Eagan had to ride backwards, and he felt Eagan's obvious misery so deeply that he almost forgot his own as they jolted along. The tension in the air was

thick enough to cut, and Andy tried to keep from looking at the other two. The girl kept her glance lowered to her muff for she couldn't look forward without looking directly at Eagan. Andy reckoned he must have dozed, for suddenly he had a feeling of being roused by a lurch of the coach.

He closed his eyes again and just then Eagan said, "But Miss Carolyn, I'm not a bit ashamed—though I'm mortal sorry if you're as distressed by it as you seem."

She said, "It isn't anything we need discuss."

"My intentions were honorable. All I'm sorry about is that it led to a quarrel. I was intending to ask if I might write your father—"

"We hardly knew each other. It wasn't ten minutes since we'd been introduced. One little dance together—"

"But you did go out onto the balcony with me."

"For a breath of air."

He ignored that. "And then—well, I won't claim I lost my head. I reckon I could've kept from kissing you—I've contrived to keep from kissing thousands of women—but I didn't want to keep from it and I had a feeling that you—"

"You were quite mistaken. I told you that I am bespoken."

"Miss Carolyn—"

"If you must pester me, please call me Miss Shaw."

Andy didn't know whether he should clear his throat or just let them talk. His eyes came open as a wheel dropped into a deep hole, tilting the coach. Carolyn was thrown forward upon Eagan and for a moment her brown eyes looked as if she wondered what he was going to do.

He lifted her back to her place. He said, "Very well, Miss Shaw. And after you are married to my esteemed kinsman, am I to address you as Mrs. Sanders?"

"The kinship is hardly close enough for consideration."

"Well, heaven knows it was Pete who always claimed it—not I. And by the way—if you think I took this coach because I had any knowledge that you would be on it, Miss Shaw, you are wrong. I was as distressed at the prospect of meeting you again as you would have been had you known I was joining your father."

She said. "I trust the distress won't make your work too unpleasant. And now if you will excuse me, I think I shall rest."

Pete Sanders. Andy remembered something Eagan had told him: "There'll be a Lieutenant Sanders with Shaw. Obey him, of course, but don't trust him too far. He doesn't pay his gambling debts."

The driver had to patch the harness a few hundred yards short of War Eagle and Andy walked ahead with Eagan to see about some vittles for they still had several miles to go. Horses stamped the icy muck before the inn and inside half a dozen soldiers were around the hearth in rag-tag butternut uniforms like that worn by Colonel Shaw the other day when he came to see Eagan. They looked up idly from mugs of hot ale, but Eagan's insignia didn't bring them to their feet.

Obviously fighting to control himself, the captain said, "Lieutenant Sanders, I am now a member of Shaw's Rifles. You and your men will police your uniforms and render mine proper respect."

The big, wide, blond fellow at the end of the hearth drawled, "Ho, now, Doug! We don't play soldier on our off days. Pull up and set and down a mug with us." And then, as if on second thought, he said, "Boys, the cap'n wants a salute. One, two, three! . . . Well done!"

Andrew felt the hot anger that showed in Eagan's face.

Harshly the captain said, "I refuse to accept that. You will report with these men to your commanding officer and await—"

The fire guttered as the door opened. Carolyn and the driver entered. Surprised, Sanders hastily rose with his men, drawing up his stock and buttoning his coat. For a moment Andy thought the girl was going to kiss the lieutenant but they only caught hands as she said, "How is father? And you?"

"Hale and hearty. The colonel is movin' back to the swamp. Trumbull's working this way to protect the Tories since we burnt out Tory Jansen the other night."

"Oh, dear!" They talked swiftly and presently she said, "The coach isn't full. Come ride with me."

Sanders drawled, "Guess I can't. I've just been placed under arrest."

She looked quickly at Eagan and his

eyes were stony as if he were willing for her to believe that this was personal toward her.



THE cold hung on day after day. Tonight the December wind was sharp in the swamp and Andy's teeth rattled like short bursts of distant musketry as he stood on a hummock by the trail awaiting the captain. Colonel Shaw had run into a patrol today and got shot in the big artery in his groin and had bled to death. Now Eagan might be bringing more bad news.

Colonel Shaw was a small man with the hot, fierce eyes of a gamecock. He had been rather embarrassed over the set-to at the inn the other day. Mildly he had said to Eagan: "The boys just didn't understand your attitude. They're militiamen—not regulars like yourself. They live easy between fights. I don't think anything out of the way will happen again, though."

Only nineteen of Shaw's command had returned from caring for their families during the blizzard. Now they treated the captain with exaggerated respect, coming to attention like dolls on a string, but he bore it with the same iron indifference that the men showed toward Andrew, the captain's friend.

Things had come to a head day before yesterday when Eagan took Andy and Sanders and three others on patrol. Ahead, nailed to a tree, they had seen one of Trumbull's proclamations. He had broadsided the country with them—invitations to civilians and private soldiers to come to his camp and swear allegiance and receive the king's pardon. And warnings that he was here to hang notorious rebels and to protect the faithful, and that snipers and ambushers, in uniform or out of it, would be executed, since the British were not here to fight.

For some reason, Eagan had smelled a rat when they saw the proclamation ahead. The birds in the brush nearby didn't act right. The party split—and in violation of orders, Sanders and the three men crept up to destroy the proclamation. They were captured.

Andy and Eagan had had a close squeak and a long hard run of it and got lost in the swamp all night so that it was yester-

day before they reached Shaw's headquarters. By then word was out that Eagan had deliberately ordered Sanders into the trap, and there was an icy reception. Eagan hadn't defended himself and he had ordered Andy in private to say nothing.

But the worst part was that today someone had sniped at a British foraging party in violation of Trumbull's warnings—Andy heard the soft pad of a horse. He eased back the hammer of the lower barrel of his Deschert and made his voice deep as he challenged.

Eagan said, "Andy?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Well," Eagan said heavily, "it's true. I saw one of old Tory Grimmet's slaves. Trumbull made the prisoners draw lots after that sniping. Sanders got the black one. They're going to hang him in the morning."

Andy made no answer. There was nothing you could say. Eagan gave him a stirrup up and as they approached the cabins after a couple of challenges the captain said, "I'd rather be in Sanders' shoes than to tell her—except that he wouldn't try to get me out."

So they were going after Sanders. But Andy had supposed they would. He blinked at the light as Carolyn opened her door.

She twisted her hands together as Eagan just sat there and finally she said, "Pete . . .?"

"We'll try to get him out," Eagan told her in a hollow voice.

"It's suicide. Father wouldn't order it."

"I'm ordering no one. Just asking for volunteers."

"Captain—if—if you—"

But Eagan said, "Time's short," and he wheeled the horse sharply about so that Andy almost slid off its rump.

The men's faces were hard in the light of the fireplace. For Eagan they would do nothing, as Sam Rice said bluntly, but for Sanders they would if they could see where they had half a chance to do anything except get themselves killed going up against two hundred British regulars.

Eagan said shortly, "The British challenge tonight is Yorktown. The counter is Cornwallis. I lay near a sentry and

heard it. I could have passed off as a Tory and got close enough to cut his throat—if there'd been any point in it. We could get the sentries out of the way like that."

"And what then?" Sam Rice's little head was thrust forward, face hard in the dancing orange light.

"Drag up our mortars."

"We've got two. They've got six."

"We'd have surprise on our side—and we'd have our mortars loaded with bomb shells. When they exploded, we'd charge—right behind those seventy or eighty mules that are now in old Tory Grimmet's pens waiting to be shipped to England."

"Mules?" Sam Rice said. "And why would we be behind—"

"For the confusion they would make—and of course they might run over a few lobsterbacks. We did that once in Massachusetts—only he had a herd of steers. Ran 'em through a British camp."

Clell Durand growled sarcastically, "And you think Grimmet would lend us the mules, huh?"

"If he was busy putting out a fire—say his house and barns—he might not have time to object if we did borrow them. And—" The men were suddenly coming alive. "Some of the British might go up to help with the fire if it was a really big one. That way there wouldn't be so many for us to fight."



ANDREW reckoned he would always remember how he felt, loading his gun afresh for a battle he didn't much count on coming out of alive. He hung it on his back, with the bugle which he had brought along for luck. He drove one of the mules, its feet padded like the wheels of the mortar it dragged, and Sam Rice drove the other, and Bide Tulipane moved beside them, his gun ready.

The night was almost as black as a night could be, so that the time had to be guessed at, but Andy reckoned it was past twelve when Eagan gave his signal—the soft grunt of a hog—just ahead. He and Clell Durand came up.

Eagan said, "We killed the sentry at the creek. And Pim Gurney tells us that the trail he worked is clear so we've got open ground to work through—I hope."

Clell went to tell the mule catchers who were scouting Grimmet's place to see what they could do, and Eagan stayed to help get the mortars across the creek and up to the camp.

The creek had a miry, treacherous bottom and they took the guns through one at a time, the mules struggling and plunging fit to wake the dead, and the men heaving at the wheels. Wet and muddy to knees and elbows, they finally had both weapons across. A quarter of a mile ahead, across the brushy pasture, a fire burned on the parade ground between the British huts. An "All's well!" floated around the guard.

"Sh-h-hh!" Eagan froze, there by Andy. Against the firelight a man was coming this way—evidently to relieve the guard.

One of the mules snorted. The man halted. "Oliver?"

"Eh?" Eagan said.

The man came on. "One of Grimmet's mules must've got—"

Suddenly he hushed and spun about to run or call. Lunging at him, Eagan tripped. Andy jumped over him, jerking his own gun from his shoulder. He swung the two heavy barrels with his full strength down across the soldier's head, cutting off his squawk in the middle.

A high arc of flame cut the air a half mile to the left. The fire arrow for Grimmet's roof. The blob of orange stopped against something, trembled, and began to grow. Near it fire belched suddenly from hay or fodder. The British guards shouted, "Fire! Fire!"

"Damn my clumsy feet!" Eagan breathed. "That was close."

The camp flew into uproar. The fellow Andy had downed wouldn't be bothering anyone for a long time—maybe never—and they whipped the mules up with the guns. There were shouts at Grimmet's place, and some of the soldiers ran to help him. Presently they unhooked the mules at a hundred and fifty yards' range and hauled the mortars around and aimed them well away from the cabin where Eagan had learned from his afternoon's spying that the prisoners were held.

The weapons were loaded, the bomb shells with fuses ready-cut being held in the shallow barrels by stuffings of grain

sacks which were now drawn out. Punk smoldered in a bucket for lighting. They pulled the plugs from the touchholes and dried away the water from crossing the creek and primed with pistol powder.

Andy and Eagan mounted the mules then and went to meet the detachment from Grimmet's.

Black shapes loomed ahead and Andy heard the pad of many bare hoofs. The herd was imposing, the dozen riders each holding a handful of ropes twisted around his pommel.

Clell Durand said, "Cap'n? Old Grimmet didn't have halters on but about half of 'em—the hard-to-catch ones, I reckon. We had the devil of a time."

The riders lined up with the mules. Men readied themselves to herd the animals the right way. Andy's heart drummed in a slow, ragged beat. He took the rope bridle in his teeth and gripping his rifle in one hand he drew his pistol. Nerves taut, he jumped at Eagan's whimpering fox-cry.

Off to the right he saw the glowing punks start the bomb shell fuses, and then move to the touch holes. The mortars roared. The mules jumped and cavorted on the ropes and the free ones ran out into the open as the powder burned in long red plumes. The British camp was all but panicked with the explosion of the first of the shells against a cabin. The second struck on the parade ground and bounced across it, and as it shook the earth the jar from it apparently set off the magazine.

A wall of air struck Andy. Logs sailed up, appearing to float on the spout of fire. Soldiers were thrown about. Others, uninjured, poured from the barracks. They gathered to their officers in the light of a burning cabin.

Ropes came down across the rumps of the mules. They plunged forward as the men released them—but a big red one reared and danced about and struck Andy's mount. Dodging the pawing feet, his animal jumped squarely out from under him. His rifle exploded as he struck the ground. He jumped up. The mules were scattering, out of control. Many of them shied away from the camp and Andy saw in one sickening moment that the British had discovered they were riderless. The soldiers who were breaking for cover

suddenly whirled back to formation. The battle was lost—



ANDY dragged the frosty bugle from his back. He filled his tremulous lungs. And as The Charge ripped out Eagan responded. Up there nearly to the camp he turned and as Andy gulped more wind into his lungs the captain cried, "Come on, Major Shoop!"

It was Shoop who had bloodily vanquished Trumbull's outfit when they were hanging Eagan's men at the Waxhaw last summer. The memory of him worked wonders. Perhaps even now they thought they could hear the gallop of his cavalry on the wind. Andy almost thought he could himself, and he shrilled the trumpet again. The English broke and ran for the friendly darkness, fleeing from Trumbull who stood with his sword, cursing them. Andy discovered that he still held his pistol. With it, he ran forward—but before he got there Trumbull staggered and went to his knees, clutching his breast.

Andy turned aside, grabbing onto the log with which several men were running at the door of the prison. Powder smoke curled from the great crater yonder, blowing across the litter of dead and wounded men—three score of them maybe. Some crawled about, trying to rise. Some cried with pain. And Eagan's shout came, as he stood over Trumbull with his pistol: "Collect hostages!" Evidently he was counting on a quick British rally from the darkness.

Andy's shoulders jarred as the log hit the door. It broke through the middle and Sanders and the others came out with grateful shouts. Eagan yelled, "Rally around! Let's take Trumbull and get out of this!" And Sam Rice and Pim Gurney came prodding up another officer. Andy guessed from his great size and his enormous wig that he was Lord Anglin whose atrocities were as great as Trumbull's.

Well, history would record the hanging of both of them for the murder of prisoners. And tomorrow would come the news that Cornwallis had fallen and that the war had been over these two weeks—which would make this the first, but not the last, battle which Andrew would help win from the British after a war was over,

though he dreamed nothing of that now.

Coldly he looked at Trumbull, and the captain shouted into the darkness, "If there's any sniping, we'll kill these men!"

"Mercy!" Trumbull croaked. And Andy jumped at a great shouting off toward the creek. A man bawled: "Hold on, Eagan! We're a hundred strong!"

Sam Rice said, "Major Turner!" and backwoodsmen galloped into the camp on their winded horses. Not a hundred, but anyhow forty or fifty. In a moment Andrew understood they had been gathered at Turner's place to re-join Shaw tomorrow, when by grapevine they got wind of Sanders' scheduled hanging.

Carolyn Shaw rode up to Eagan with one of them. She said, "Major Turner—Captain Eagan."

Eagan answered, "I was getting ready to resign this command, sir, and it looks like it's to you."

"Resign?" Carolyn repeated.

Eagan removed his coat with its insignia and tossed it to Andy. He said, "I'm fixing to hold a courtmartial that Sanders can understand, although he can't understand the ordinary rules of Army life. Sanders!" His voice cut like a whip. Sanders had been trembly-voiced in his thankfulness, but now he stiffened.

"You disobeyed orders," Eagan told him, "and endangered the lives of all these men who had to come pull you out. On top of that, you told that I ordered you into that trap to clear the way for me with Miss Shaw, and the story spread—as you knew it would—through Grimmet's slaves. Now tell her you lied."

"Lied? That's a strong word."

Eagan went toward him in short, choppy steps and Sanders said, "Well, if this is the way you want it—"

He plowed in with a punch that struck Eagan in the chest. He followed it with a swing that caught him on the right temple and staggered him. Sanders followed up and stopped a blow with his short ribs. Eagan crossed like the kick of a horse and his fist crunched bone or gristle. Bright blood spouted from Sanders' nose. Sanders lunged, knuckles cracking on Eagan's forehead—and then as the captain's fist buried in the lieutenant's middle, the big man's guard dropped. He wobbled, mouth open, knees sagging.

Eagan walked up and gave him a shove that sprawled him half under Carolyn's horse, and he snapped, "Miss Shaw, there's your man. Andy, we're heading for the Waxhaw."

He led the way to his mule, stiff-legged as if he feared his knees would give way if he got careless. And as they reached the mule, Carolyn rode up to them.

She said, "Mr. Eagan, this is the last thing ever I shall bother you— Well, if you're still of the same mind you used to be—now—now is the time—"

"You wanted Pete Sanders. There he is."

"I didn't want him. I knew the day we rode in the coach I didn't. Maybe I knew it before or I wouldn't have been on the coach father wrote me you would take."

Andy saw the anger and perplexity and—he didn't know what—on Eagan's face. The captain said, "Then in the name of God, why did you want me to risk my life to pull him out of here?"

"I didn't want you to—but you said you were going to—and I knew if I argued against it, you'd be more stubborn than ever. And I knew if—he died here, you'd always have thought that if I could've had him, I wouldn't've had you. . ."

She started her horse full tilt toward home and Eagan jumped on the mule and started hard after her. By the faint glimmer of the fire, Andrew saw him catch her this side of the creek.



IT WAS next day after the wedding, with Colonel Shaw sitting up in bed to give the bride away, that Eagan offered Andy the bugle again. And evidently he had known all along why Andy wouldn't take it the first time, for he said, "If your mother was here, she'd say you earned it when you blew *The Charge* last night. Don't you reckon so too, Carolyn?"

She warmly agreed—and who was he, Private Jackson, age fourteen, to argue with a lady? His eyes stung.

And as he took the rough brass in unsteady hands, she said, "Blow something."

He stepped to the door so it wouldn't deafen them and across the swamp he splattered high, shrill urgent notes. *The Charge*—for that was all he had ever learned, and all that he ever would.



ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER L. THOMAS

SIX UNDER

THERE were six of us caught when the cave-in came. It was like being drowned deep in the solid earth. We were working the 3,000-foot level, more than half-a-mile down in the mine. It started with a surging rumbling sound that grew into a great roar, and the tunnel filled up and cut us off. Watching it

and choking in the heavy dust, we stood there waiting for the whole thing to go and bury us. But after awhile it stopped, the roaring and shaking faded, the earth quit rocking and vibrating. And we stood there trapped and frozen, staring and dumb in the dead-end.

Sertich had been pushing a loaded car



Hodkey's teeth showed in a snarl as he lifted the bar to strike.

THE EARTH

toward the shaft when it caught him. We heard Sertich scream through the thunder as it came down and crushed him under. Then we could hear him groaning and swearing and calling for help.

"Come on," Ashbaugh said. "We got to get him out."

The lamp on Sertich's hat was still

By

ROALDUS

RICHMOND

burning and maybe he was still under it. He was, covered almost to his shoulders, senseless but still breathing in the thick dust. Ash sent the rest of us back while he and big Mihalik dug Sertich out. Big Mike carried Sertich carefully along the tunnel and laid him down, easy and gentle. Ash knelt down to see how bad it was. Both legs were broken and blood was coming out of Sertich's mouth. We could see the shine of it on his black face in the light from Ash's cap.

"Looks pretty bad," old man Bytnar said. "Poor Sertich."

"Poor, hell!" said Hodkey. "He's done, he's lucky."

"Yeah," Mihalik said. "Maybe he is."

"Shut up," Ashbaugh said, on his knees working over Sertich.

Hodkey stood and swore at the blocked-in passage. He was even bigger than Mihalik, taller and wider with great broad shoulders and long arms corded with muscle. Hodkey came back and looked down at Sertich.

"Wastin' your time, Ash," Hodkey said. "He's gone, and damn lucky too. The first one. He ain't got to wait for it like us."

Mike Mihalik nodded and said, "Yuh."

"Shut up," Ash said again, busy on his knees beside Sertich.

I watched Ashbaugh's lean hard-jawed face in the light and shadow. It was a fine strong face and I tried to take comfort in it, but I felt too sick and smothered with terror. There was an awful tearing in my chest and throat, a kind of screaming inside me. The worst of it was we were so helpless, there was nothing to do but wait, wait . . . I was glad Ash was with us anyway.

"I lived through one," old man Bytnar said, shaking his narrow sooty gray head. "I knew another would come sometime . . . You don't live through more than one."

"They'll get us out—maybe," Mihalik said.

"Sure they'll get us out," Ashbaugh said. "You boys better start diggin' through there."

"To hell with diggin'!" Hodkey said. "The whole thing went except this end. We start diggin' and this'll go too."

"Well, they'll get through to us maybe," Mihalik said.



HODKEY spat and leaned against the wall disgusted, a big ugly brute of a man. "How in the hell do you figure that? They don't know where we are. They don't know where to start. They don't give a damn, only six of us. They think we're dead already down here."

"We got food in our dinnerpails," I said.

"It ain't food we need," Hodkey said. "A man can live without food quite awhile. It's air we need, kid, and water. Air to breathe and water to drink."

It was true, the water had been buried in the landslide. I felt my throat tighten up, dry and hot and thirsty. I felt myself begin to suffocate, lungs pumping and heaving and fighting for breath. The dust had settled some but the taste of coal stayed rank and bitter in my mouth.

"They'll put an airline through," Ashbaugh said. "They'll get air to us."

"How long can we last in here?" I asked, trying to keep my voice level.

Hodkey laughed. "Not very damn long, brother."

"Two-three days," Bytnar, the old-timer, said. "Maybe not so long. Can't say for sure."

Ashbaugh stood up and turned away from Sertich. "That's about all I can do." He placed Sertich's lamp carefully on the floor and sat down beside it, stretching his long legs and rubbing his cramped knees.

We all sat down with our backs to the rough wall. It was damp and cold in the tunnel, and already the air seemed scarce and poor. Sertich's breath made a slow ragged bubbling sound, and old man Bytnar began to cough, his thin bent body shaking with it. The weight of the earth seemed to bear down on us as we sat there and didn't look at one another. Sertich gave a moan and his stocky broken body twisted. I tried to shut my ears to his breathing and Bytnar's coughing. There was nothing to do but sit there under that crushing pressure and wait to be rescued or to die.

Hodkey glared at the unconscious Sertich. "Why don't you die, damn you? Usin' up our good air, dead and still breathin'. Why don't you die, Sertich?"

Ashbaugh looked at Hodkey but said nothing. Nobody else spoke for a long

time. We just sat there listening to the dying man breathe and hearing Bytnar's hacking cough, thinking our own thoughts, clenching our teeth at the awful tortured sound Sertich made.

I was trying to pray. I hadn't for a long time and it came hard. It was cowardly to start praying now, I suppose, because I was in a tough spot. But I didn't care, I tried to, thinking of my mother and sisters and brothers, my father who had died in the mines just like I was dying, my brother Dave who was killed on Saipan . . . If Dad and Dave were alive I probably wouldn't be down here in the mine. I would have finished high school and maybe got a chance to play professional baseball, the coach said I was good enough for Double-A anyway. So instead of praying I was thinking how I might have started with Erie or Oil City and gone up to Harrisburg or Allentown in the Inter-State and maybe even wound up with the Pirates someday.

I had seen other cave-ins from the outside, and I knew what it was like up on the surface. The women weeping and crying, the kids bawling, the men with faces drawn tight, hollow-cheeked and sunken-eyed. After the word got around the newspapermen would come, and then the crowds up from other towns and cities. They would come driving big polished cars and some of them would bring lunches and make a picnic out of it. There would be women in tight slacks and shiny colored shirts with dark glasses on their painted faces and bright scarves on their heads, and they would drink cocktails out of big thermos bottles and nibble dainty sandwiches and scatter cigarettes red with lipstick all over the place. I had seen them before.

Somebody was sure to set up stands selling coffee and sandwiches, soda and hotdogs, and it would be something like a country fair with the smell of frying onions and meat, hotdogs and mustard, and people hanging around smoking and talking, taking pictures and laughing . . . Only there would be a tension and feeling that you don't get at a fair. And the sound of women crying underneath it.

None of us except old Bytnar had ever been caught before. But if you work in the mines you always have the feeling that it

will come sooner or later. I had dreamt about it once in awhile, waking up with a jerk, scared and sweating all over. The fear had always been in the back of my mind, and now that it had happened I felt as if I'd known all the time it was coming, as if I'd been through it before. And still it seemed unreal, impossible, a nightmare that I couldn't quite believe was true.

Buried way down in the earth you lose all sense of time, everything is blotted out under the crushing down-pressing weight that is on you . . . You think of how it is up there on top with a whole skyful of fresh air to breathe, with sunshine and blue skies by day, moonlight and stars at night, green grass growing and waving in the breeze, tall trees and pretty flowers, rivers running cool and bright, lakes lying calm and smooth, everything wide open and free and clean. And you think that this is a hell of a way to die, smothered deep in the ground without a chance to fight back. You have always known it was a hell of a way to live and work too, but you've never been able to get away from it any more than the others have. And now you are not really surprised at coming to die this way. You just wish it had come quick and sudden, without the long wait in the chilling darkness.

Sertich started screaming, a hideous shattering scream. Hodkey heaved his mighty bulk upright and crouched there cursing and panting. "Kill him," Hodkey said. "Put him out of it. I'll kill him if nobody else's got the guts to. Put the poor bastard outa his misery." Sertich screamed again, his smashed body writhing and threshing. Hodkey roared and reached for a pick-handle.

Ashbaugh stood up and moved in front of Hodkey. "Sit down, Hod," Ash said quietly. He was tall and rangy but he looked slim against Hodkey's huge frame. My jaws were clamped so tight my teeth ached numbly and my face felt stiff.

Hodkey glared at him, fingers working on the pick-handle. "You goin' to let a man suffer like that?"

Ashbaugh looked at him, hard and steady. "How would you feel, Hod, if you killed him and the rescue party came through?"

"Outa my way!" Hodkey said, big yellow teeth showing as his thick lips skinned

back. "Rescue party he damned. I ain't listenin' to no man suffer like that!" Hodkey lurched forward but Ash blocked his way. They stood almost chest to chest staring at each other. Ash was too close for Hodkey to use the pick. Ash was fast as lightning and Hodkey knew it.

Big Mike Mihalik swung up alongside of Ashbaugh and shoved Hodkey back. "Yuh," Mike grunted. "Leave him be. Go set down."

Hodkey looked at the two of them, shook his shaggy head, and sat down against the wall. Ash and Mike settled down near where Sertich was lying. Old man Bytnar shook with a fit of coughing, and then there was silence. The lamps lighted the craggy dark walls and timbers and touched the shadowy coal-blackened faces. No one spoke. The only sound was our breathing, Bytnar's cough, and the moaning rasp of Sertich's slow breath.



AFTER a long time I realized I couldn't hear Sertich any more. Every so often Ashbaugh went and knelt beside him. I watched Ash's strong-boned face, etched and shaded under his lamp.

"Gone?" Mihalik asked.

Ash shook his head. "Not yet."

"What time is it?" I wanted to know.

Old Bytnar looked at his watch. "It's stopped, son." He screwed up his knobby wrinkled face and pulled at his stained gray mustache. "A bad sign."

"How long's it been?" asked Mihalik.

"About twelve hours," I guessed.

Old man Bytnar cackled. "More like three or four."

I glanced at Ash and he nodded his head.

Hodkey said, "If they're workin' on the other side we oughta hear 'em."

"Musta been a big one," Bytnar said. "Most likely the whole level went."

"They oughta be comin'," Hodkey growled.

"It's slow work," Ashbaugh said. "It takes time."

"It'll go out on the radio tonight," Bytnar said. "From Pittsburgh to Philadelphia and New York. To Cleveland and Detroit, Chicago and St. Louis. All over the country and the world they'll know about it."

"Helluva lot of good that does us!" Hodkey snorted. "What do you suppose they care? Some a them white-collar bastards that think we're gettin' too much pay oughta be down in here now."

"There'll be newspaper reporters and photographers when we go up," Bytnar said. "There was that other time, I remember. The picture flash scared me when it went off."

"It won't this time," Hodkey said, laughing. "You'll go up feet first this time, grampaw."

Mihalik scowled at him. "That ain't no way to talk, Hod."

Ashbaugh moved nearer to Sertich and bent his head down. He stayed there longer than usual, and we were all watching him. Mihalik looked across at me and shook his head. Ash finally spread a jacket over Sertich's face and straightened up. We were all relieved to have Sertich dead. He had been broken up inside and suffering something awful. He was better off dead all right.

"What we do now?" Mihalik asked.

"Dig him a grave," Ashbaugh said.

Hodkey laughed. "Ain't this grave enough, for chrisake?"

"We'll bury him for now," Ash said.

"We can't just leave him lyin' here."

"Poor Sertich," said Bytnar. "Five young ones he leaves."

"What they do, those kids?" Mihalik said. "What happens to them?"

"Oh, they'll go in the mines," I said.

"When they get big enough." I hadn't intended to go in the mines until my father was killed, and then Dave . . .

"*They won't get you,*" my mother always said. "*They'll never get you!*" But they got me just like they got practically every boy that was born into a miner's family in a mining town.

Ash was searching my face with his clear gray eyes. "Come on, Remy," he said. "Bring your tools and help me dig at the other end. Mike, you bring Sertich."

I walked down the tunnel with Ashbaugh, glad of something to do even if it was digging a grave. The light from our lamps danced dully ahead of us.

"Is there any chance, Ash?" I asked. "Tell me what you think."

"Sure there's a chance," Ashbaugh said. "Don't listen to Hodkey. We're

goin' to have trouble with him, Remy."
 "You and Mike can handle him," I said.

"I can take him alone," Ash said grimly. "If I have to."

We began digging at the far end of the tunnel. Mihalik came carrying Sertich's body, and the three of us worked silently digging the shallow grave. Then Ash and Mike lowered Sertich into it, and we covered him lightly with coal and dirt. Afterward we stood for a moment with bowed heads looking down at the crude grave, and Mike crossed himself and moved his lips without saying anything out loud. I glanced at the rugged dirty faces of Ashbaugh and Mihalik varnished with sweat in the flare of light. If you had to be buried alive they were a good pair to have with you.

"We'll take him up when we go, huh?" Mihalik frowned at Ashbaugh.

"Sure, Mike," Ash said. "We'll take him up with us."

We walked slowly back along the tunnel. When we reached the others old man Bytnar was coughing hard and Hodkey was swearing at him. Hodkey stopped cursing and leered up at us: "Did you give Sertich a good sendoff?"

Ashbaugh nodded. "Not much ceremony."

Hodkey laughed loudly. "Old Bytnar'll be the next one. Listen to that cough he's got. Ain't that a bad one? An old man can't last long with a cough like that. I'll bet two to one Bytnar goes next. What you say, old man?"

Mihalik muttered under his breath and eyed Hodkey narrowly.

Bytnar raised his thin twisted face to snap back at Hodkey, but his words were lost in a violent spell of coughing that racked his small withered body.



"WE can't just sit here," Ashbaugh said. "We've got to do somethin'."

"What we goin' to do?" sneered Hodkey. "You tell us what to do, Ash, you're a bright feller. You tell us how to get out."

"All right, I'll tell you," Ash said. "We'll start cuttin' through. Anythin' is better than just sittin' and waitin'."

"You want us to get what Sertich got?"

Hodkey said. "You wanta bring the whole works down on top of us, huh?"

"We can work careful," Ash said patiently. "We can take it slow and see if it's safe or not." Mihalik and I agreed with him and Ash went on: "We'll work in two shifts. Hodkey and I'll take the first, Mike and Remy the second. Bytnar can help out when he feels like it. Come on, Hod."

"All right," said Hodkey. "Might as well bring the roof down as set around and suffocate slow."

Ashbaugh and Hodkey went to work on the blockade. After a time old man Bytnar got up and joined them. Mihalik and I lay back in the damp shadows, watching them work and thinking our thoughts. The cold was getting inside me now, aching bone-deep.

I thought of my mother up there on top waiting and hoping. She wouldn't cry and carry on so much as some of the womenfolks perhaps, but she would feel it even worse inside herself. The kids would get no supper at home tonight, unless she made the girls go back to town and get the meal. Little Basil was probably having the time of his life, eating hotdogs and bragging to the other kids about his brother being down there . . . I could see my mother's worn face wet with tears, her washed-out blue eyes and gray-streaked head, her veined hands twisting together. What a lot she had been forced to stand in this world. First losing her husband in the mines, then her oldest boy Dave in the war, and now her second son in the mines again. "They'll never kill Remy in their mines," she used to say over and over. But once a family is swallowed in the mines it's hard getting out.

Sertich's wife would be up there too, not knowing Sertich was already dead. Up there they didn't know whether any of us were alive or not, but until they knew for sure we would be alive in their hopes . . . Old Bytnar's woman was on top waiting for them to dig her husband out again. She had seen him come back from the dead once, and I wondered if her faith was firm enough to believe in a second miracle.

Hodkey's great fat mountain of a wife would be there, making jokes as if at a party, laughing and shaking all over, show-

ing off like she always did at public gatherings, boasting that nothing could harm her Hod, throwing a beefy arm around some reporter: "Yes, honey, my man's down there but he'll come out all right..."

And Mihalik's little woman, plain and quiet, nice and gentle as a dove, dry-eyed and tight-lipped, calm and brave as she crossed herself in silent prayer . . . Ashbaugh's pretty young bride with her bright head bowed on some older woman's shoulder, maybe my mother's, wondering if her unborn child would ever see his fine straight father.

I was the youngest of the men and had no wife, but I had Lotta—some of the time, at least. I wondered if she cried and prayed for me, if she cared whether they brought me up alive and whole or stiff and stark, boots first. Would she be heart-broken, or would she forget tomorrow and be as gay and flighty as ever, dancing and laughing and making love with that Jake Molenda? . . . I didn't know, and I didn't care so much now as I might have. Things like that aren't so important when you are trapped half-a-mile underground.

We worked a long time in relays. It was better to work than to lie there in the cold and think. But working used up more oxygen and made us thirsty, and knowing there was no water made our thirst all the harder. We had milk or coffee in our lunch-pails and we drank that sparingly, a little at a time. But when a man is really thirsty nothing will do but water.

I was dozing off, cramped at the foot of the wall, when I heard Hodkey roaring at old man Bytnar, "Get outa my way, you coughin' old bastard!" Looking up in the weird dim flicker-flare of light I saw the powerful Hodkey grab little Bytnar and slam him savagely against the side of the tunnel. Bytnar bounced off the wall, the breath driven from his body in a long wheezing gasp. He fell twisting to the ground and I heard the splintering crash of glass as his lamp broke.

Hodkey started after the old man but Ashbaugh caught him and spun him around like a huge ungainly top, crowding and beating Hodkey back along the passage. Hodkey tripped and landed heavily on his back with Ash on top of him riding him down. Ash's left hand was

fastened tight on Hodkey's bull-neck, and his right fist was drawn and cocked ready to slug that ugly snarling face on the floor. I got up and followed Mihalik toward them.

"You—leave—him—alone," Ashbaugh said, very slowly and distinctly, and fear shone through the wild fury in Hodkey's eyes. Ash climbed off him, moving quick and light and smooth, and stood balanced easy, watching Hodkey heave himself up, slow and ponderous.

"Sorry," mumbled Hodkey, rubbing his thick neck, turning his brutal head from side to side, fumbling with his hat and lamp. "He got in my way. I just pushed him."

Mike Mihalik shouldered in at Hodkey. "No more pushin'. You touch Bytnar again I'll break your back, Hod!"

"Listen," Ashbaugh said. "We're all in here together. We're all up against the same thing. It's crazy to fight among ourselves. The next one to start trouble—" Ash's voice was mild, almost gentle—"I'll tear the head off him."

I was kneeling beside Bytnar. The old man lay where he had fallen, sobbing and groaning, coughing and choking. I tried to move him but he shook his gray head that was bald on top. I made him as comfortable as I could.

"My lamp," Bytnar panted. "It's out—broke." He coughed harshly. "A bad sign. The watch first . . . Now the lamp."

I told him it didn't matter, didn't mean a thing. I don't believe he heard me at all.

I stretched out beside Mihalik. Mike's great chest heaved and the muscles stood out along his gleaming solid jaw. His narrowed eyes kept turning to the sullen bulk of Hodkey. Ashbaugh took his place near Bytnar, watching Hodkey coldly. Hodkey swore and threw a chunk of coal at the barricade. There was a madness in Hodkey that you could feel, a blind unreasoning hate for Ash and all of us that sent icy shivers along my spine. Across the way Bytnar started coughing again.



"STOP coughin', dammit, stop coughin'!" raged Hodkey, sudden and hoarse after a long heavy silence.

"I can't," Bytnar choked out. "Can't stop."

"Die then!" Hodkey said with a snarling laugh. "Crawl off and die."

"Shut up, Hodkey," Ashbaugh said evenly.

"Why don't he stop coughin'?" Hodkey demanded. "It's drivin' me nuts! He's doin' it on purpose."

Mihalik stirred his broad shoulders and flexed his mighty arms, eyeing Hodkey with sharp interest.

"I can't stop," old man Bytnar panted. "Can't help it." He went off into another spasm.

"Cough all you want," Mihalik said.

Hodkey glared around like a big cornered animal but said nothing. The corridor was silent again except for the breathing of four men and the strangling cough of one. The pressure on us seemed to increase, crushing in with all the weight of the earth above and around us. Nobody spoke for a time. It might have been an hour or it might have been ten minutes. Then Hodkey lurched upright, towering in the tunnel, his black face horrible to see.

"I'll stop your coughin'!" Hodkey grated. "I'll fix that goddam cough!"

"Hodkey!" Ashbaugh's voice rang clear as he came up quickly and sprang after that broad hulking form.

Hodkey stumbled on toward Bytnar's shrinking figure like some maddened monster. Mike and I jumped up and paced after them. Hodkey whirled around all at once, and we saw then that he held a steel bar in his hand. Hodkey's teeth showed in a snarl as he lifted the bar to strike. Ash stopped short and stood half-crouched on his toes.

"Drop that bar, Hod," he said.

Hodkey laughed. "Who made you boss, huh?"

"Drop it!" Ash slid forward on his toes, poised and ready.

I felt Mike Mihalik quiver beside me and saw him lunge ahead. Hodkey heaved and swung the heavy bar at Ash, but Mike's reckless plunge carried him in between them before the blow fell. There was a dull solid *thwack* and the sickening crunch of flesh-and-bone under steel. Mike Mihalik reeled back, bent in the middle, then reared straight up and toppled slowly like a great tree. Ashbaugh knocked Hodkey down clear across the tunnel and landed on top of him with a panther leap.

Fists working like trip-hammers Ash smashed Hodkey's face and beat his head into the stone floor.

I knelt beside Mike. His skull was crushed right down into his bloody face. I turned away swearing and sick, sicker than I'd ever been before. Slipping to my hands and knees I swayed there, torn in two by a burning retching agony. Long after my stomach was empty it went on turning and leaping, and I gagged and drooled until my throat felt raw and ripped out. My eyes streamed scalding tears and bulged almost out of their sockets. I couldn't breathe and I couldn't keep my stomach down where it belonged. I really wanted to die then, I didn't care about living at all.

Ash had knocked Hodkey out and was tying his wrists together behind his back with a length of rope. I got up holding onto the wall as soon as I could. Old Bytnar was wailing and whining between coughs. Leaning on the wall I watched Ash run the rope down and lash Hodkey's ankles tight to his wrists. Ash's face was all out of shape with feeling as he looked down at Hodkey. Ash's whole frame swelled as if charged with an electric current. His heavy boot kicked at Hodkey as if Ash had no control over it.

"I ought to kill him," Ash said through his teeth. "With my own hands. I ought to kill the dirty son."

Old man Bytnar was up on all fours now. "Mike?" he said. "Mike? . . . Where's Mike?"

"Dead," Ashbaugh said. "Give me a hand, Remy."

Bytnar fell back silent except for his coughing. Ash threw a coat over Mihalik's head and shoulders. Grasping the legs we dragged Mike's heavy body to the dead-end of the tunnel where we had buried Sertich. "Grave?" I said, and Ash shook his head. We were beyond that stage . . . I leaned against an upright, sick again. Ash's hand was strong and steady on my shoulder.

When we got back to the others Hodkey had come to and was raving like a maniac, wrestling about in the dirt and fighting to free his arms and legs. Old Bytnar lay there like a bundle of old clothes. Ashbaugh stood over Hodkey.

"That was murder. Hodkey, and you're

goin' to die for it," Ash said. "You'll go to the chair, Hodkey, unless the boys get hold of you first. You know what they thought of Mike Mihalik. They'd want to soak you in gasoline and set fire to you, or cut you to pieces with a blow-torch . . . You'll pay one way or another, Hodkey. I ought to kill you myself. I'd like nothin' better . . . But you'll get it, Hodkey. Either down here or up there."

Old Bytnar looked up with his thin wasted face. "Hope I see it," he said. "Wanta see Hodkey die. Said I'd be next—but I won't . . . I'll live to see Hodkey die." Bytnar laughed but it broke off into ragged coughing.

Hodkey was raging madly, screaming curses, straining at the rope that hitched his wrists and ankles behind him.

Bytnar held his frail old body against the side of the tunnel. "Hodkey lost his bet. Wanta bet again, Hodkey?" He cackled with laughter. "You're as good as dead right now. They'll tear you apart when they hear what you done to Mike!" Bytnar laughed again but that hacking cough came back to rip through the laughter and leave him choking and gasping.



I SLEPT from exhaustion, restless fitful sleep full of queer crazy dreams. Every time I woke up Bytnar was coughing and Ashbaugh was awake, sitting up straight against the wall. The air was bad and getting worse all the time, and it was hard to breathe now. Once when I woke Hodkey was begging, "Cut me loose, for crissake cut me loose! Don't leave me all tied up. We're all dyin' here, we're all dead men, you damn fools!" Nobody answered him. I drifted off again.

Every time I went to sleep I thought it was the last time. I didn't care much if I woke up or not. Sleep was peaceful and nice . . . One time I'd wake up burning in hell, and the next time I'd be freezing to the bone. I dreamed about lovely hot sunshine washing me in golden warmth, glowing through my bare flesh. I dreamed about drinking cold pure water from a brook that made rippling silver music. About diving into the cool clear depths of a lake with a clean sand bottom . . . I opened my aching eyes and saw Ash's face like something carved out

of shining grimed bronze. Old Bytnar's cough echoed through our tomb. Hodkey's raving made a chill prickling up my spine and tightened the scalp on my head.

Coming to once more I was startled by the stillness. I opened my mouth to scream but no sound came. Then I realized that Bytnar was no longer coughing. I crawled over to the old man and held my lamp down. His eyes were staring up, wide open and sightless. His mouth sagged loose, and blood clotted his mustache and caked his thin corded neck.

"Dead?" Ash said over my shoulder.

"Yeah." My voice sounded flat and far away.

Hodkey scraped and thrashed about in the dirt. "Bytnar dead? . . . Cut me loose, please cut me loose. I won't make no trouble, Ash. This is killin' me, I'm all outa joint, I can't stand it. Only three of us left and we ain't got much longer . . ."

Ashbaugh lifted Bytnar easily and carried his small body down the tunnel. Bytnar hadn't lived through his second one, but he might have if it hadn't been for Hodkey. The flashlight bulbs wouldn't scare Bytnar this time . . . Ash came back and stood thoughtfully over Hodkey.

"Turn me loose, Ash," pleaded Hodkey. "Only three of us now."

"All right," Ash said and bent to untie the rope. "But I'll be watchin' you, Hod. You make a move and I'll kill you."

Hodkey groaned as the blood started circulating again. "I won't, I won't do nothin'," he whined, moaning with the cramped numbness of his limbs. "I won't make no trouble, Ash."

I felt sorry for Hodkey in spite of what he had done, and I guess Ash did too. Hodkey was just a big wild half-crazy animal, but he seemed tame enough now. For the dead I couldn't feel too sorry, because they were better off than we were. I would have missed big Mike Mihalik, but I figured we'd all be with him before long.

I settled back and tried to sink into sleep again. Ash sat straightback against the wall, strong and alert and tireless, holding the iron bar across his knees and watching Hodkey on the other side of the tunnel.

"Hear that!" Hodkey yelled all of a sudden. "Hear it! Hear 'em on the other side. They're comin' through!"

"Quiet a minute," Ashbaugh said. We listened hard, straining our ears. Faintly came the muffled distant sound of men drilling through the earth.

"I told you I could hear it!" Hodkey cried. "They're comin', Ash!"

"Take it easy," Ash said. "They're a long ways off. We've still got a long time to wait."

"Let's dig through to meet 'em," Hodkey said. "'This stinkin' air ain't goin' to last much longer. And all our food and drink is gone."

"All right, Hod," said Ashbaugh. "You work one shift. Remy and I'll take the other."

Hodkey toiled for a while at the barrier of earth and coal, timber and rock. He came back steaming with sweat, panting and gasping, and flopped on the floor. Ash and I went at the blockade in the foul smothering air, Ash using the pick while I shoveled. All at once I got so faint and dizzy I almost keeled over.

Ash looked at me. "Sit down and rest, kid. This air is gettin' bad."

I walked away leaning on the shovel. Sobbing for breath I sat down and waited for the dizzy spell to go away.

Hodkey grabbed my shoulder roughly. "Up and work, boy!" he bellowed. "Get back to work there. What the hell ails you?" I looked up at him and shook my head, too weak and tired to say anything. I could see that the madness was coming back on Hodkey, and I thought Ash should have kept him hog-tied.

Ash came toward us with the steel bar in his hand. "Let Remy alone!" he ordered sharply. "Go sit down, Hodkey."

"Awright, awright," mumbled Hodkey.

Pretty soon I went back to digging beside Ashbaugh. I was ready to drop when Ash gave the sign to quit, and we stumbled back to let Hodkey have his turn at it. This working and shifting and resting went on and on without end. I haven't any idea how long we kept at it, but it seemed like days and days. The sounds from the rescue party didn't come any closer either.

Back to the barricade once more. I thrust again with my shovel and the ground gave way under my feet. Tasting coaldust and feeling dirt and stone under my face I floundered around on the floor.

I tried to get up but there was no strength left in my arms and legs. Then somebody lifted me and carried me off, laid me down very gently, and I saw Ash's shiny wet blackened face through a blurred haze.

"Rest, Remy," his voice came from a distance. "Go to sleep if you can . . ."

I tried to nod and smile. I was all hollow and gone inside, and I couldn't feel my hands or feet. There was a faint funny ringing in my head, and everything seemed a long ways off, fuzzy and fogged. The rocky floor felt soft as feathers under me, and I was floating away, floating into friendly darkness.

This is the finish, I thought. This is the end . . . The blackness swirled in closer, thicker, deeper, and I sank into it, faded into it, welcomed it. I was weary, dead-tired, all in, and I didn't care. It was pleasant to slip off this way, lightly, easily . . . I lay back and let myself go.



I WOKE to the rush of falling earth, the surging roar of a cave-in and then the lessening thud and pelt of dirt and stone.

I tried to raise my head but I couldn't, I was numb all over. *God*, I thought, *I must be buried to the neck . . .* I struggled and strained until I felt my arms and legs moving free, and prickly feeling crept back into my body. I wasn't buried, not at all—not yet anyway. There was another flurry of blows and once more the rush of sliding dirt and coal.

"Cut it out, Hodkey!" Ashbaugh's ringing voice reached me, and I rolled onto my hands and knees as Ash ran by toward the barrier.

Hodkey was swinging the pick like a madman, shouting and screaming as he flailed wildly at the earth-choked tunnel. Ashbaugh raced toward him carrying the steel bar and yelling at the big maniac. I crawled after Ash, holding my head up to watch. Small avalanches of dirt and coal fell around Hodkey as he sledged the blockade with tremendous strokes.

"Stop, Hod!" yelled Ash. "You'll bring it all down."

Hodkey turned around, roaring and laughing, nothing human about him now. Hodkey shook his shaggy head and shouted, "Come on, Ash! Come on then. You and me, Ash. Come on, come on, *come*

on!" He was out of his head, a stark raving giant of a madman, and it turned my blood into icewater to see him.

Ashbaugh paused and shifted the long iron bar into both hands, crouching a little and gliding forward smooth and easy, balanced and sure, fearless in front of that monster.

Hodkey leaped to meet him, pick flung high for a terrible downstroke, and I reared up onto my legs to watch in horror.

Hodkey's pick caught in a crossbeam that sagged from the ceiling of the tunnel. With furious insane strength Hodkey wrenched and heaved on it as Ash stepped in to smash him with the steel bar. My legs folded and I pitched forward on my face.

A thundering roar filled the tunnel, and powerful hands jerked and hurled me away from it. I fell against the wall with Ashbaugh beside me. The thunder slowed and stopped at last, and Hodkey's screaming came through to us then. Only his face showed in the blur of his light. He was buried neck-deep and screaming horribly. The unearthly sound went on until another dark flood from above covered Hodkey's face and the lamp, blotting him out of sight. Hodkey was gone. Where he had been was a solid mass of dirt and coal and rock, filling the passage from side to side.

Ash and I huddled there waiting for the rest of it to cave in on us. But somehow it didn't come down.

Ash threw the bar aside and walked slowly away while I slid to the floor. In a few minutes Ash came back and sank wearily down beside me.

"All that work for nothin'," I said.

Ashbaugh nodded. "They were almost through too. Hodkey had to go like a mad dog."

"Any chance now, Ash?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," Ash said. "There's a chance. There's still time—if they make it plenty fast."

"What'll we do?" I asked, sobbing and gulping in the vile dusty air.

Ash spread his hands. "Nothin' to do but wait, Remy," he said, his deep chest laboring as he breathed.

So we sat there waiting, Ash and I, alone now and waiting. Buried with four dead men.



WHEN we got to the top of the shaft the light hurt our eyes. They carried us out on stretchers and set us down on the ground. There were doctors but we didn't need them. I lay there shading my eyes with a black hand and looking straight up at a clean blue sky bannered with white clouds. That fresh open air was the finest thing I ever tasted, and I couldn't get enough of it. But the pressure of the crowding people smothered us again.

The sunlight was blinding after so much darkness and our eyes ached and watered. Everything seemed unreal and queer up there on top, everything looked new and strange and different. Everything was changed.

Voices dinned and buzzed around us. "Who is it? . . . Who are they? . . . It's Ashbaugh and the kid . . . Ash and young Remy!" A cheer went up and I wondered what the hell there was to cheer about. Ash lifted me to my feet, and I was as glad to have him with me up there as I had been down below.

There was a great crowd on hand to watch us come out. People called our names and milled around slapping our shoulders and grabbing at our arms. But even the familiar faces looked strange to us, and we pulled away from them. It was better looking at the ground or the sky than at the crowding faces. Some men in uniform made a path for us through the mob. I stumbled once and Ash caught my arm and held onto it. Everyone was pushing and jostling and staring at us. Ash and I watched our dirty boots move against gravel and cinders and grass.

A photographer clutched at Ash's arm to drag him in front of a camera. Ash yanked his arm loose and shouldered the man away. "Get out of here," Ash told him.

"Come on, boys," pleaded the photographer. "Just a minute, just one close-up. Only take a few seconds."

"Beat it," Ash said, knocking the camera aside with a sweep of his arm. "Get the hell out with that thing."

The photographer looked surprised and scared, and somebody laughed loudly in the crowd. We went on, shoved and jammed and jostled, held up by the crowd of hundreds of people. Flashlight bulbs

exploded and flared greenish-white in the sun. Those women in slacks were trying to tear off pieces of our filthy shirts for souvenirs. Ashbaugh's mighty shoulders split the way for us through the crowd.

A crew of reporters fought their way in and flocked around us. "Names, please, names . . . Statement for the news. How was it down there? What happened anyway? Give us the story, boys . . . What happened down there?"

"Nothin'," Ash said, pushing through with his great black hands. "Not a damn thing."

We finally got through to the outside. There was my mother and all the kids. There was Ash's pretty bride. There was Mike Mihalik's little gray dove of a woman.

Mother held out her arms and took me into them. "Are you all right?" she cried. "Oh, Remy, my boy, my boy! . . . Are you hurt or sick? My poor dear boy . . . Thank God, oh thank God!" Then she looked into my eyes and her own were startled and stricken under the tears.

"I'm all right," I said. "I'm tired—and thirsty."

I sat down on the grass. They had given us water in the mine, but we couldn't drink too much of it at first and I was still thirsty. I stared at the grass and felt of it with my hands. Nothing seemed real up here, nothing was the same.

Someone brought water in a tin cup. I drank a little and looked up to find it was Lotta. She was pale without make-up, even her lips were pale with no lipstick on them. Her cheeks were wet from crying, and she looked younger and nicer than she had in years. But I didn't feel as if I knew her at all . . . Her dark eyes searched mine as if I were a stranger, and then she turned away quickly.

My family and my friends and Lotta were there close around me, but I felt as if I didn't belong with them. I was nearer to Dad and Dave and those others down in the mine . . . I saw Ash holding his wife in his arms, looking over her bright bent head at the sky. His face was blackened and grim, bleak and drawn to the bone. His face was the only one I knew.

I heard the quiet broken sobbing of Mike's little dove, the wailing of old Mrs. Bytnar, the loud angry bawling of Hodkey's fat woman, and all the others. But none of it was real. It didn't matter who was there . . . I knotted my fingers in the grass, clawed them into the earth.

I wondered dully why Sertich's wife was crying. Sertich had been dead a long long time.

The rest of the crowd had forgotten all about Ash and me. They had gone back to the mouth of the mine, the reporters and photographers and all the people, to watch them bring the dead men out.

"Riley Grannan's Last Adventure"

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From Yankee Doodle

Songs That Soldiers Sing

I DON'T suppose that the huge, red-faced old sergeant had ever heard the sage observation that "a singing army is a cheerful army, and a cheerful army is invincible," but in his own small way that July night nearly thirty years ago in the little *estaminet* in Brest, he was to demonstrate its truth. Tousled red hair pushed back from his damp forehead, one huge paw clamped around his glass and the other thumping out the rhythm on the sturdy oak table, he leaned back in his chair and bellowed "The Mountain Battery," the old "Jackass Artillery's" favorite lay—

*"Stand up! Stand up! Attention!
You red-leg mountaineers
With your gun and your pack
And your box of tack,
Non-coms and cannoneers,
Baptized in Mindanao,
Beside the Sulu Sea,
With a tow and a tow
And a tow-row-row
From a mountain batter-ee!"*

We in the little group of junior officers in the adjoining room peered through the door and smiled tolerantly. Not so the two scowling doughboys sitting at a table near the sergeant.

"Can that caterwauling!" growled one. "Who the hell d'ya think y'are? Caruso?" The sergeant rose, still singing.

*"I'd rather be a soldier
With a mule and mountain gun
Than knight of old
With spurs of gold,
Or Roman, Greek, or Hun."*

Suddenly his hands shot out and grabbed the two soldiers by their collars. A British drum-major couldn't have



ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

to Dirty Gertie

By EDWARD ARTHUR DOLPH



A British drum-major couldn't have done a better job of beating time. Rhythmically slamming their heads together, the sergeant didn't miss a line.

done a better job of beating time to that old "British Grenadiers" tune. Rhythmically slamming their heads together, the sergeant didn't miss a line.

*"For when (slam!) there's trouble
brewing (slam!)
They always send for me
To start the fun
With a mountain gun
From a mountain batter-ee!"*

And, with a final vigorous slam, he sent the two sprawling across their overturned table.

A young artillery captain scrambled up from beside me and started out to untangle the swearing pile.

"What a tribute to Colonel Gerald Griffin!" he grinned. "He wrote that song for the 'Double Bottom Club' near Havana during the Cuban Pacification of 1906 to '09, and every red-leg loves it!"

I've learned a lot about soldier songs since that night, though never again in quite such a dramatic fashion; for since time immemorial soldiers have lightened the hardships of campaign or lessened the monotony of camp by singing about their officers, their regiments, their food and shelter, the enemy, and the many little intimate details of their daily life. It is even recorded that Caesar's men used to sing a ribald ballad that reflected on that great captain's morals. Yes, and if old diaries can be relied upon, the ragged Continentals gleefully appropriated the tune of British Surgeon Shuckburgh's derisive Yankee Doodle for verses of their own that, in number and salty content, rivalled those of the famous "Madoiselle From Armentières" and her worthy successor, "Dirty Gertie From Bizerte." One mild example must suffice:

If the first submarine had been a success, or if Lord Howe had not gone to bed with the wife of his Tory commissary of prisoners, the Continentals might never have had the fun of singing "The Battle of the Kegs." Bushnell's one-man barrel-like submarine having failed, powder kegs were floated down the river to destroy the British fleet off Philadelphia. The ice exploded many, but one ship was sunk; so for hours the panicky crews and soldiers on shore poured broadsides at every mov-

ing object in the water, greatly disturbing the amorous dallying of their gallant commander, for—

*Sir William, he, snug as a flea,
Lay all this time a-snoring,
Nor dreamed of harm as he lay
warm
In bed with Mrs. Loring.
Now, in a fright, he starts upright,
Awaked by such a clatter;
He rubs both eyes and boldly cries,
"For God's sake, what's the
matter?"*

Informed that the rebels were ferrying troops toward the city "in kegs like pickled herring," Howe issues his orders, the "cannon roar from shore to shore, the small arms make a rattle" and, after many hours and numerous verses—

*The kegs, 'tis said, tho' strongly
made,
Of rebel staves and hoops, sirs,
Could not oppose the powerful foes,
The conquering British troops, sirs.*

And so Lord Howe returned to his love-making.

Many ladies, good, bad, and indifferent, have prompted the soldier's lyre since Lord Howe's adventure, but none has had such a long and honorable career as the "Girl I Left Behind Me," marching song of the Seventh U. S. Infantry. We are told that the regiment obtained it from an Irish officer captured at the battle of New Orleans. Certainly the dash and romance of the Irish is in it, and the tune was known to harpists of old Erin long before our army was born. An interesting old tradition concerns an Irish bandmaster serving with a regiment in southern England. He was such a male coquette that he was ever bidding good-bye to the victims of his charms when the regiment changed stations. In a spirit of sarcasm his band began to play "The Girl I Left Behind Me" whenever he was engaged in one of these sad partings. Thus the piece became the regimental parting tune. Its use gradually spread throughout the British Army, so that in time it was considered disrespectful to the ladies for a regiment to march away from anywhere without playing it.

During the American Civil War the gallant stripling cadets of Virginia Military Institute marched bravely into battle at Newmarket with their fifiers and drummers playing this piece.

In Custer's day it was second only to Garryowen in popularity in the Seventh Cavalry and was invariably played when the regiment returned to the post from a campaign.

Each June at West Point the graduating class stands in ranks for the last time while the band marches by playing a medley of which this famous old tune forms a prominent part.

There are different versions; new wars have brought new stanzas. Those given here, popular with Custer, show the Crimean War influence.

*The hour was sad I left the maid,
A lingering farewell taking;
Her sighs and tears my steps de-
layed,
I thought her heart was breaking.
In hurried words her name I
blessed.
I breathed the vows that bind me,
And to my heart in anguish pressed
The girl I left behind me.*

*Then to the East we bore away,
To win a name in story.
And there where dawns the sun
of day
There dawned our sun of glory.
Both blazed in noon on Alma's
heights
When in the post assigned me
I shared the glory of that fight,
Sweet girl I left behind me.*

Another song of Irish origin, and one which should be forever enshrined in the annals of the Virginia Military Institute, deals with the age-old charm for the ladies of a dashing lad in uniform. It was written by Samuel Lover and was played by the fifiers and drummers of our Army for over a century. During the Civil War it was popular with Northern regiments; and in 1864, with fifty of their comrades dead and wounded on the field of Newmarket, the V.M.I. cadets marched proudly in review before Jefferson Davis in Richmond with their fifiers and drummers playing "The Bowld Soger Boy."

*Oh, there's not a thrade that's
going,
Worth showing or knowing,
Like that from glory growing
For a bowld soger boy!
Where right or left we go,
Sure you know,
Friend or foe
Will have the hand or toe
From the bowld soger boy.
There's not a toren we march
through
But the ladies looking arch through
The window panes will sarch
through
The ranks to find their joy.
While up the street
Each girl you meet
With look so sly will cry,
"My eye! Oh, isn't he the darlin',
The bowld soger boy!"*

Turning our backs for a moment on high sentiment and true romance, we find some quite different gals at the other end of the scale. One of these was the notorious "Lulu"—almost as famous in World War I as the philanthropic Mam'selle from Armentières. Lulu had IT; and, if we are to believe her many admirers, the intimacy entailed by being a diamond on her hand, a necklace on her breast, or even a humble article of boudoir equipment, would have brought untold joy. Unfortunately, the thoughts expressed in song by her numerous worshippers are so intimate that I hesitate to give more than the opening lines. "Of the rest," Lawrence Stallings once said, "silence is golden, but a million men will understand."

*Oh, I wish I was a diamond
Upon my Lulu's hand,
(I cannot write the next two lines
But a million understand.)
Oh she is a lulu,
Every inch a lulu,
Lulu, that little girl of mine!*

But what about the immortal Mam'selle herself, tireless heroine of "Hinky Dinky Parley-Voo?" In the beginning she was a girl from Armentières, "a daughter fair with lily-white skin and golden hair; and there, in 1915, some British soldier met her, loved her, and

sang her praises. Long before the war ended she hailed from many a town in France, and the ballad that Tommy had made for her had been adopted and greatly lengthened by his American cousins.

Major Thomas P. Gordon (deceased), Philippine Scouts, who as a young man had served with Kitchener in the Sudan told me more than twenty-five years ago that he and his buddies used to sing a British Army song of similar tune and verse structure which began, "Oh, landlord, have you a daughter fair, skiboo, skiboo," and an ancient veteran of the Black Watch once told me the same thing.

There's no use of writing the verses here. Scads of them are known by every veteran of '18, so I'll just prime the pump and start them off.

*Oh, Mademoiselle from gay Paree,
Parley-Voo?*

*Oh, Mademoiselle from gay Paree,
Parley-Voo?*

*Oh, Mademoiselle from gay Paree,
You certainly did play hell with
me!*

Hinky dinky, parley-voo?

Go ahead, now, you middle-aged tenors and baritones! Tell us again that she hadn't been kissed in forty years, and about the sergeant-major who broke the spell. Let's hear about the girl from St. Nazaire who never heard of underwear, the medical corps that held the lines with CC pills and iodine, and the American soldier on the Rhine who kissed the woman and drank the wine. And don't forget the customs rare, the funny face, the Y.M.C.A., and why the general got the Croix-de-Guerre. The neighbors will love it!

But who are these I see, inching impatiently forward on their chairs as if they'd like a part in the show? Ah, yes! Some lads who took a post-graduate course in soldiering in North Africa would like to present their own favorite, "Dirty Gertie From Bizerte." And they don't care whether Gertie was the young lady copyrighted by a lieutenant from Cornell or just a fictitious wax dummy to have been snatched from a store window and paraded around in a jeep during the absence of other females. They have a

legion of verses, one of which goes—

*Dirty Gertie from Bizerte
Wiz ze captain make ze flirty.
Capitain think she very pretty.
Lose his watch, also his shirty;
Sound ze general alerte.
Ze gendarmes look for Dirty Gertie
From Casablanca to Gulf of Serte.
Has anybody seen Dirty Gertie?*

Of course, Gertie and Lulu and the Mam'selle were pals or sweethearts protem of doughboys, artillerymen and cavalrymen alike. But Nancy of "The Wide Missouri" was a girl the lonely cavalry trooper on the western frontier claimed for his very own! And yet she was a wanton of uncertain background who kept him dangling, double-crossed him, took his meager pay, and finally drove him far across the wide Missouri.

Though this song found its way to ships at sea, it is believed to have originated with American traders and Canadian voyagers. An old version has a white trader courting Chief Shenandoah's daughter and carrying her across the wide Missouri. Whether or not the cavalry will remain true to Nancy in this mournful, wailing lament now that the horse is passing remains to be seen.

*For seven long years I courted
Nancy—*

Hi! Oh! The rolling river!

*For seven long years I courted
Nancy—*

*Ha! Ha! I'm bound away for the
wide Missouri-i.*

Other stanzas tell us that "She would not have me for a lover"—"And so she took my fifteen dollars"—"And then she went to Kansas City"—"She must have had another lover"—and so, driven to desperation, "I'm drinkin' of rum and chaw-in' tobacco" and "I'm bound away for the wide Missouri-i."

Another song which is reminiscent of the frontier and the days of the covered wagon is "The Regular Army, Oh!" In 1874 a version appeared in sheet-music form with words by Ed Harrigan, but the soldier on the frontier adopted it, changed it when he felt inclined, and made it his own. A war correspondent with General

Miles in the Sioux campaign of the seventies gives us a stanza the general used to sing:

*We're marching off for Sitting
Bull,
And this is the way we go:
Forty miles a day on beans and hay
In the Regular Army, Oh!*

Here is another version—

*Three years ago this very day
I went to Governor's Isle
To stand ferninst the cannon
In true military style.
Thirteen American dollars
Each month we surely get
To carry a gun and bayonet
With a military step.*

Chorus

*There's Sergeant John McCaf-
ferty
And Corporal Donahue,
They make us march up to the
crack
In gallant Company Q.
The drums they roll
Upon my soul
For that's the way we go—
Forty miles a day
On beans and hay
In the Regular Army Oh!*

"Company Q", it should be noted, was old Army for guardhouse.

A similar ditty called, "There Is No Work In The Army" was very popular in the decade before the Spanish-American War.

*When leaving dear old Iowa
In the first part of the year,
My clothes were torn, my feet were
bare,
Of hunger I had fear.
Another bum approached me
And with a pleasant sigh
He told me he was hungry,
And I told him so was I.*

Chorus

*There is no work in the Army,
They call it all fatiguc;
If the Provost catches you loafing
He'll make you dance a jig.*

*It's either at the saw-mill
Or shovelling up the clay,
Policing up or rolling rocks
The long long weary day.*

Other songs in similar vein are the well-known "You're In The Army Now" and that delightful ditty, "The Raw Recruit." What unsung genius coupled the following lines with such an appropriate tune as "Reuben, Reuben" the mazes of by-gone days do not reveal.

*I ain't been long in this yere army,
I'm what they call a raw recruit.
Guess I'll stay; it's better than
farmin'—
Get three meals and pay to boot.*

*The very first thing in the morning
Fellow with a horn makes an awful
noise.
Then that guy they call first
sergeant
Says, "Get up an' turn out, boys!"*

After stable call he goes to the bath house where "water runs in through a hole in the ceiling, runs right out through a hole in the floor." Next, the doctor assures him that "CC pills is all you need. Your leg ain't broke—just badly bent." And then—

*They put your name on a piece of
paper,
Fellow over there gives you your
pay.
Take it to the squad-room, put it on
a blanket,
Fellow yells "CRAPS!" and takes
it all away.*

And then there is that comprehensive indictment of officers called "I Don't Want No More Army" which I first heard in the Army of Occupation in Germany in 1919.

*The officers live on top of the hill,
We live down in the slop and
swill—
I don't want no more army!
Lordy, how I want to go home!*

However, these strictures on army life are nothing new. In the Mexican War soldiers protested in song about the cruel

practice of bucking and gagging as punishment. The victim was placed flat on his back on the ground, his outspread limbs were tied to stakes, and a gag was placed in his mouth. Near Chapultepec the troops sang this song to the old English tune, "Derry Down."

*"Sergeant, buck and gag him!" our
officers cry
For each trifling offense which they
happen to spy,
Till with bucking and gagging of
Tom, Pat and Bill,
Faith, the Mexican ranks they have
helped to fill.*

*A poor soldier tied up in the hot
sun or rain
With a gag in his mouth till he's
tortured with pain—
Why, I'm blessed if the eagle we
wear on our flag
In its claws couldn't carry a buck
and a gag!*

In the Civil War the principal bellyache, both figurative and literal, was caused by food. Hardtack and sow-belly were about as popular with men in the Army of the Potomac as "goldfish" was with their grandsons.

*There's a hungry, thirsty soldier
Who wears his life away,
With torn clothes, whose better
days are o'er;
He is sighing now for whisky
And, with throat as dry as hay,
Sings, "Hard crackers, come again
no more!"*

*Chorus
'Tis the song and the sigh of the
hungry,
"Hard crackers, come again no
more!
Many days have you lingered on
my stomach sore—
Oh, hard crackers, come again no
more!"*

Before the surrender of Vicksburg in 1863, Johnny Reb, rapidly starving on a meager allowance of mule meat and sour pea bread, could still tighten his belt and sing. A soldier named Dalsheimer of the

Third Louisiana Regiment wrote "A Life On The Vicksburg Bluff," to the tune, "A Life On The Ocean Wave."

*Texas steers are no longer in view,
Mule steaks are now "done up
brown,"
While pea bread, mule roast and
mule stew
Are our fare in Vicksburg town;
And the song of our heart shall be,
While the Yanks and their gun-
boats rave:
A life in a bomb-proof for me,
And a tear on "Old Logan's"
grave.*

*Chorus
A life on the Vicksburg bluff,
A home in the trenches deep,
Where we dodge Yank shells
enough,
And our old pea bread won't keep.
Pea bread! Pea bread!
And our old pea bread won't keep!*

In the early days of the Philippine Occupation, another musical "bellyache," "El Soldado Americano," made its appearance to the tune of "A Son Of A Gamboleer."

*Man born of woman was a soldier
for to be,
Born to degradation in every de-
gree;
Of guard mounts and dress parades
he never gets his ease;
He has so many masters he don't
know who to please!*

*Chorus
Home, boys, home! It's home we
want to be!
Home, boys, home! In God's
coun-tree!
The oak and the ash and the weep-
ing willow tree,
And the grass grows green back
in North Amerikee!*

After damning the officers, double time at drill, and CC pills for every ailment, the song concludes—

*Now I'm in the guard-house
awaiting my discharge,*

*To hell with all the officers, the
provost, and the guard!
But when I get to Frisco I'll be
happy as a clam
Thinking of the rotten pork I ate
for Uncle Sam!*

But this "Son of a Gamboleer" tune was not the property of any particular period of our Army. The Engineers adopted it in 1918 for their "Helluvan Engineer"; and in World War II airmen in India used it to sing, "I'm A Rambling Wreck of Buddhapore And A Hell Of A Bombardier."

Another tune that has served many hitches with our soldier minstrels is "Mandalay." There was a Kipling vogue during the early days of our occupation of the Philippines, so such songs as "On The Road To Old Luzon," "At Naic," and "Down By Old Manila Bay" soon appeared. Here is the chorus of still another—

*Come ye back to San Roque,
Where old Dewey's squadron lay;
You could hear their oar-locks
clucking
Far across Cavite Bay.
On the road to San Roque,
Where the naked babies play,
And the dawn comes up like
thunder
From Manila 'cross the bay.*

Forty years later, in the South Pacific, Marine fliers sang it this way—

*Hit the road to Gizo Bay
Where the Jap fleet hides all day.
You can hear the duds a-chunkin'
From Rabaul to Lunga Quay.
Pack a load to Gizo Bay
Where the float-plane zeros play,
And the bombs come down like
thunder
On the natives 'cross the way.*

Perhaps no songs from the days of the Philippine Insurrection were so well-known and popular with our garrisons in the islands right up to the Jap invasion as the lament that "The Monkeys Have No Tails In Zamboanga" and "The Filipino Hombre." The latter, which was sung to an old Spanish tune, is accredited

to the late Captain Lyman A. Cotten of the Navy. It begins—

*There once was a Filipino hombre
Who ate rice, pescado y legumbre,
His trousers were wide, and his
shirt hung outside,
And this, I may say, was
costumbre.*

After describing the hombre's "nipa bahay" (hut), which "served as a stable and sty," and commenting on the chewing of buyo, the romping of naked children, fighting cocks and primitive laundries, the song comes to its tragic close—

*When his pueblo last held a fiesta
His familia tried to digest a
Mule that had died of glanders
inside,
And now his familia no esta.*

Do you remember Eugene Field's poem about the "clink of the ice in the pitcher that the boy brings up in the hall" on the morning after? Well, here's a song that will remind you of it. It was often sung by Philippine veterans at the "wallows" of The Military Order Of The Carabao. The tune is "I Dreamt That I Dwelt In Marble Halls," and the song itself is called "A Dream." Only in a dream could such delightful things occur!

*I dreamed that I dwelt on an isle
of cracked ice,
In the midst of a lake of champagne
Where bloomed the mint juleps
in meadows of green,
And showers of lithia rain.*

*I reclined on a divan of lager-
beer foam
With a pillow of froth for my head,
While the spray from a mountain
of sparkling gin-fizz
Descended like dew on my bed.*

From far-away mountains of crystalline ice was wafted the incense of sweet muscatel; his senses were soothed by the soft, purling song of pousse-café rippling over pebbles of snow to a river of absinthe frappe; and so, "lulled by the music of tinkling glass," he languidly floated to sleep.

And then—THE RUDE AWAKENING! On a bed full of rocks, with a bolster as hard as a brick; a wrench in the neck—a rack in the head—a stomach detestably sick! Sand in the eyes—grit in the throat, where the taste of last evening still clung—"I felt a bath towel stuffed into my throat, which I afterwards found was my tongue!"

*And I groped for the thread of the evening before
In the mystified maze of my brain,
Until a great light burst upon me at last—
"I'm off of the Wagon again!"*

No such rude awakening was contemplated, however, by our airmen of 1918 as they sang "The Passing Pilot," that delightful parody on an old western hobo ballad. "Beside a Belgian 'staminet when the smoke had cleared away" the dying pilot coughed a shower of dental work and gasped—

*Oh, I'm going to a better land—
they jazz there every night,
The cocktails grow on the bushes,
so everyone stays tight;
They've torn up all the calendars,
they've busted all the clocks,
And little drops of whiskey come
trickling through the rocks.*

After digressing to relate painfully how he happened to crash, the "passing pilot" resumes—

*Oh, I'm going to a better land
where the motors always run,
Where the eggnog grows on the
eggplant, and the pilots grow a
bun.
They've got no Sops, they've got no
Spads, they've got no Flaming
Fours,
And little frosted juleps are served
at all the stores.*

In just the same way did our young knights of the air of World War II, like their dads in France a generation before, look Death in the face and laugh. In the South Pacific they sang—

Oh, B-26's they rattle and roar,

*I don't want to fly over Munda
no more.
Take me back to Brisbane,
Where brass hats clamor in vain;
Oh, my, I'm too young to die—
I want to go home.*

But it was their dads at Issoudon, France, in 1918 who first took over Gitz Rice's "I Don't Want To Go Home" and made their own parodies, one of which went—

*The gas tank is leaking, the motor
is dead,
The pilot is trying to stand on his
head.
Take me back to the ground,
I don't want to fly upside down!
Oh, my! I'm too young to die!
I want to go home!*

Another '17-'18 aviator song, set to the old British Navy tune, "Wrap Me Up In My Tarpaulin Jacket," was known to Yank fliers as "A Handsome Young Airman."

*A handsome young airman lay
dying,
And as on the airdrome he lay,
To mechanics who round him came
sighing
These last dying words he did say:*

*"Take the cylinders out of my
kidneys,
The connecting rods out of my
brain,
Take the crankshaft from under
my backbone
And assemble the motor again."*

But the British gave us many other songs as well. In our earlier wars it was quite natural that British tunes should be used for many derisive Yankee parodies. In the two world wars, however, when our troops served together, the British passed on words as well as tunes. In the late war they gave us "Bless 'Em All" which we embroidered by adding our own parodies: "Bless all the Germans, the sour-pussed ones," and "Bless all the Eyties and their dopey sons." In World War I they gave us "It's The Syme The World Over," the tragic ballad of the

poor parson's daughter who was repeatedly betrayed by Army chaplains, fox-chasing nobles, members of Parliament, and even bloated bishops, until both Tommies and Yanks wailed through alcoholic tears—

*It's the syne the whole world over,
It's the poor what gets the blyme,
While the rich 'as all the pleasures—
Nowe ain't that a bleedin' shyme?*

And then, of course, there's "Old King Cole," that merry old soul who "called for his pipe and called for his bowl and called for his privates three." There are, too, the wild and woolly "Busted (spelling?) King of England," and "The Drinking Fusileers," the chorus of which would indicate common ancestry with the well-known "Six-Pence." Here is the Sunday School version—

*Eyes right! Knapsacks tight!
Bayonets to the rear!
Oh, we're the boys that make no noise,
We're always after beer.
We're the heroes of the night,
We'd rather drink than fight,
We're the heroes of the Drinking Fusileers!*

*Going home! Going home!
By the light of the silvery
moo-o-o-oon
Yah, ha, ha, ha, ha!
Yah, ha, ha, ha, ha!
We're the heroes of the Drinking Fusileers!*

But it is in their own home-spun ditties which express branch rivalry or *esprit de corps* that American soldier minstrels are at their best. Sometimes they gang up on quartermaster troops in the Service of Supply with lines like these from 1918—

*Oh, mother, take in your service flag,
Your son's in the S.O.S.
He's S.O.L. but what the hell,
He's having a wonderful rest!
He's weak and pale, but that's from ale
Or else I miss my guess!*

*So, mother, take in your service flag,
Your son's in the S.O.S.!*

Again, they use different versions of the same musical theme to express their disdain for one another. During the Boxer Rebellion in China a contract surgeon, later killed in the Philippines, wrote this song for the cavalry—

*Come, listen unto this, my song,
I'm happy as can be,
I'm a masher and a dasher
In the U.S. Cav-al-ree!
So, fill your glasses to the brim,
And brace your courage with sloe gin.
I tell you all it is a sin
To belong to the Infantry.*

Thereupon the doughboys promptly replied with—

*The Cavalry is the showy branch
That people like to see,
But in the field the campaign fails
Without the Infan-tree!
So fill your glasses with cold beer,
And brace your courage with good cheer.
I tell you all it's soldiering
To serve in the Infan-tree!*

But the greatest of all branch songs, one that will live as long as there are guns to fire and men to serve them, is General Edmund L. Gruber's "The Caissons Go Rolling Along." It was inspired by an incident that occurred during a difficult march across the Zambales Mountains in the Philippines which was made by the Second Battalion, Fifth Field Artillery, in 1907. Gruber, then a lieutenant, was sent ahead with a detachment to select the route and repair stream crossings. In the afternoon he and a scout sergeant went to the top of a high peak in order to see what progress the main body was making. Gazing out across the rolling country, he finally heard the distant rumble of the caissons, punctuated by the echoing shouts of the drivers as they urged their teams along.

"They'll be all right, lieutenant, if they keep 'em rolling," the sergeant explained. That expression seemed to characterize the

spirit of the battalion. In April, 1908, the First Battalion came from the States to relieve the Second. Gruber was asked to write a song that would symbolize the spirit of the reunited regiment. He recalled the incident of the march and the sergeant's confident words, and out of that recollection was born the greatest field artillery song of all time. Like all soldier songs, it has undergone some changes in words and music during the years.

Here is the first verse and chorus of the most popular version—

*Over hill, over dale, we have hit the
dusty trail,
And those caissons go rolling along.
In and out, hear them shout:
"Countermarch and right about!"
And those caissons go rolling along.*

Chorus

*Then it's hi! hi! hee!
In the field artillery,
Sound off your numbers loud and
strong!
Where e'er you go you will always
know
That those caissons are rolling
along.
Keep 'em rolling!
And those caissons go rolling along.*

There were parodies, of course, like this jibe at the soft-living coast artillery—

*Then it's di, di-dee! the coast
artillery!
Branch of the women and the wine.
In my cottage by the sea
I will sit and sip my tea
While those didies hang out on
the line.*

Yes, "a singing army is a cheerful army, and a cheerful army is invincible." And, as I think of those lines, I shall always remember that night in Brest. After unceremoniously adding two M.P.'s to the squirming pile of his detractors, the old sergeant, his quarter century of service, his two wound stripes, and his liquor all resting lightly upon him, strolled nonchalantly out to the street, still singing—

*Here's to pack and aparejo,
To cradle, gun, and trail,
And that damned old fool,
The artillery mule,
Who ne'er was known to fail*

*Then fill your glasses, fellows,
And drink this toast with me—
Here's a how, and a how
And a how, how, how
To the mountain batter-ee!*



THE CAMP-FIRE

*Where Readers, Writers
and Adventurers Meet*

A FULL century has passed since the hectic and lawless days that followed the discovery of gold in the Sacramento Valley and the mad rush to the goldfields of California. They braved starvation and fever, those "hell-roarin' Forty-Niners," as well as the bloody raids of the Indians of the Western plains—or the perils of the passage round the Horn, or the trek across the pest-laden Isthmus of Panama—to join the desperate race for the fabulous treasures of the California diggings. And, incidentally, they left behind them a rich vein of treasure which the writers of fact and fiction have mined ever since. But there was another gold rush, two years later and many thousand miles away, which has received scant attention from the yarn spinners. Jules Archer, author of "Thunder Down Under" which leads off the magazine this month, calls it "the gold rush nobody remembers"—

The year was 1851, beginning of the fascinating five-year era of the gold rush nobody remembers. American history books have neglected to tell the story of American pioneer history in a new West . . . 7,000 miles west of California.

It all began when an Australian prospector named Hargraves, returning home with empty pockets from the California goldfields, struck gold in his own back yard. Word of the new Ballarat and Bendigo goldfields, north of Melbourne, Australia, flashed around the world.

Fortune hunters flocked down under from England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France, and the United States. That was how 8,346 pioneers of American history also became a vital part of Australian history as well, just as their G.I. descendants were again to become almost one hundred years later.

The American miners, a rough and tough lot, were not too popular with their quiet Australian hosts. They were resented because of their boundless energy—and success. They were not loved any the more for their noisy, boastful celebrations of the Fourth of July on British soil.



Welcome or not, during the years when \$538,000,000 worth of gold brought incredible wealth to lucky prospectors, Americans streamlined the Australian economy. As "Thunder Down Under" indicates, the continent's first stage-coach was started by four Americans, representatives of Wells Fargo, who resigned to form Australia's historic Cobb & Company. Its drivers carried no guns, for reasons explained in the story, despite 36 holdups by "bushrangers," of whom Frankie Gardiner and his gang were famous examples.

Johnny Queed is a fictitious character, suggested by one American who did start a one-man coach line in opposition to Cobb & Company. Cabbage-Tree Ned Devine was a very real and famous Australian driver for Freeman Cobb, who was also a real person, like Governor Latrobe. Others in the story are fictional.

Among the real Americans of the period were engineer Sam McGowan, who built the nation's first magnetic electric telegraph line, from Melbourne to Geelong. Still other Americans resurrected the Melbourne Stock Exchange in 1853, organized the city's fire brigade, and brought about road construction, wharf improvements, and better mail communication with America.

In a manner of speaking, Americans even helped design the Australian flag. At first, the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack flew side by side in many small mining towns. Then at Eureka, near Ballarat, American miners joined Aussies in defying the government of the Colony of Victoria, which forbade the miners to work their claims.

The embattled miners erected a stockade, from which they fought bloodily against Government police and soldiers. They lost the battle, but they won the fight. Their right to work the claims was finally recognized.

The emblem of the Eureka Stockade was the Southern Cross, five white stars on a blue background. It is now part of the Australian flag . . . woven history which American pioneers helped to write in a foreign West.

Incidentally, there is a fascinating—to me, at any rate—sidelight on "Thunder Down

Under," which explains how and why a number of Americans abroad in that era were alienating our international neighbors, prejudicing them against all Americans. History unfortunately repeated itself in that respect during World War II, when Americans down under—not all, by any means, but the usual handful it takes to spoil the barrel—made themselves generally obnoxious by gross bragging, sneering at what they did not understand or appreciate, and generally riding roughshod over Australian pride and courtesy.

Johnny Queed was envisioned as what the American abroad *ought* to be . . . even if, too often, he's not!

THERE'S a good deal of humor in Leslie Bigelow's Army story on page 70, but it has its serious side too. As defense counsel at scores of courts-martial during the recent fracas, L. B. had the opportunity to observe first-hand the system under which justice (sometimes) was meted out to offenders. And frankly, he didn't think much of it. Most of us who served in the armed forces in World War II will agree, we think, that the Army court system can stand some improving. So we asked the author of "By Secret Written Ballot" to give us a brief analysis of what he thinks might be done to correct the injustices prevalent under the old system. Here's what he writes—

During the war, among other things, I served as defense counsel on the courts of an Air Forces command and defended perhaps 130 men. One of them was charged with the public use of powerful language (powerful? pyrotechnic!), and I defended him with the argument used in the story. It's a sound argument, and should be deeply studied at West Point.

Naturally I am interested in the Army court system and have followed the proposed changes in it with concern. But all these changes seem picayune or frivolous. For example, this year enlisted men will join officers on the courts, so that a sergeant might possibly out-vote a major. Well, if the sergeant is a sounder fellow than the major (as sometimes occurs), let's have him. But why not make sure that the sergeant and the major are surely ranked? Then we'd all rather have the major. Anyhow, all this is just tinkering.

If I were called to the high councils, I'd speak in my own powerful idiom to these points:

Inequality of Punishment

At the close of the war when Manila and Berlin were convulsed with demobilization riots, a general officer procured his son's

premature discharge for shameless reasons—shameless because the boy had never begun the education he was freed to "re-sume." This act degraded the reputation of a splendid corps, inflamed riot, bred a cynicism which affects the quality of national life, and through a natural sequel of disgust cost the government many millions by neglect of stores. This act was a major act of treason. For it the officer was no doubt bitterly scolded in private—no more. Meanwhile such grim assaults upon the national honor as lack of a necktie, absence from rollcall, and dirty footlockers were briskly punished.

Again: I saw an aircraft mechanic, desperate at the penniless pregnancy of his wife, sentenced to six months' hard labor for the theft of a kit of tools. Fair enough perhaps. But meanwhile certain rascals of rank lived at the rate of, say, \$100,000 a year by diversion of government stores, the illicit use of enlisted men as servants, and the waste of tens of thousands of gallons of gas in million-dollar planes for week-end hunting and fishing trips. An occasional Benny Meyers was caught, but most of the Meyerses were promoted.

Inadequate Pre-Trial Investigation

An Army case is investigated before trial. No sound case, no trial. Good. But many investigating officers are utterly innocent of law sense, and especially of the rules of evidence. Still, because the case has been "investigated," the accused comes to a trial deformed by the presumption that he must be guilty or he would not be there at all. Worse still, many young investigators simply do not understand the background of many offenses—the worry, the loneliness. For example, I saw an intelligent young soldier, fresh from an abbreviated basic, sent to trial for disobeying a trivial order. True, he disobeyed the order, but note the background. Fresh from college, he found the Army merely another kind of college, but more absurd; the officers merely another set of deans, far less literate: an order merely another class assignment, to be evaded. All this should not have been true of him, but obviously was true. He was immature but not a scoundrel, and a formal court was about as well-suited to his lapse as to a pup's mischief.

Inadequate Training of the Legal Staff

Many defense counsels have neither the experience nor the imagination to explore the *reasons* for an act and thus to master the immensely important area of extenuation. For example, I once heard a young counsel outline his defense of a man accused of drawing a knife in a USO. He focused on evidence: could a certain witness, or could he not, swear to the knife-drawing. So far, so good; evidence is crucial. But the man *was* guilty, and would be proved so.

The real line of defense was to explore *why* he drew the knife. He was a combat veteran, with a neurosis and wife-trouble, and he got drunk. Very naughty, but scarcely outside human nature.

Improper Appointment of Courts

No commanding officer should appoint his own courts. As it stands, he may appoint and appoint and appoint until he has a bilious panel of little Torquemadas; and that absurd fellow who imprisoned combat soldiers from Anzio at Naples for want of a necktie naturally found apt tribunals for his mischief.

Inadequate Post-Trial Review

A court sentence is not final, but may be reduced or vacated by the reviewing authority. But this authority has only a stenographic transcript to work from, and often not even that. And even the transcript is defective because it abbreviates. Worse still, it omits, necessarily, the whole tone of the session. For example, I saw a young New Yorker tried for an 11-day AWOL. Just back from overseas, he put all his savings in an automobile, mainly because his sweetheart jilted him and he wished somehow to establish his importance again, if only by owning something. The car was promptly stolen, and distracted he hung around New York begging the police to help him. As for the *facts*, he was absent for 11 days. As for the *truth*, he was absent for 11 days because of an accumulation of worries: induction, combat, and so on. But from a cold transcript how could all this be gathered? How could the reviewer sense the forlornness of this youngster and distinguish him from some Rocky Graziano? And for all I know, Rocky had his reasons, too.

Improper Post-Court Punishment

A soldier may be acquitted or lightly punished. But his commanding officer, determined to do him in, can further punish him administratively. For example, a tech sergeant, charged with gasoline theft, was fined by a court uncertain of his guilt. (This court acted improperly; doubt should lead to acquittal, not lenience). However, the court left him in his rank of sergeant—of which he was promptly stripped by the same officer who sent him to trial in the first place. Such action struts over the court to an illicit authority, and should form the business of another court.

Camp-Fire space of course won't stretch to full illustration or remedial proposals. Let me add in fairness that the courts I saw tried hard. I think they would have welcomed further procedural defense against their inexperience, their ignorance of law, and their occasional domination by addled rank and absurd martinets.

On the Army courts, as everywhere, spare

us children; give us men. And help the men, by a perfected procedure, past the inevitable traps of haste, ignorance, and hollow-headed superiors.

Regarding the "proposed changes" to which Mr. Bigelow refers, you may have noticed last December 7 that the newspapers carried a story—it made the front pages of the *Times* and *Herald Tribune* here in New York—to the effect that President Truman had approved a new Army manual for courts-martial, effective February 1, 1949, which Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the Army, was confident would assure a "better and more equitable administration of military justice." We sincerely hope it works out that way.

ROALDUS RICHMOND, who contributes the dramatic yarn of a mine cave-in—"Six Under the Earth"—on page 90, introduces himself briefly, to mark his first appearance at the *Camp-Fire*—

I was born in Vermont thirty-eight years ago, am married and have a son. I have been writing since I was a kid, and for publication since I was graduated from the University of Michigan into the depths of the depression in 1933, but only in the past year or so have I tried to make a living by writing alone.

Since leaving Ann Arbor I have worked at various things, although writing has always been my aim and ambition. I played semi-pro baseball and basketball, did newspaper reporting and sports writing, clerked in a summer hotel, worked with pick and shovel on construction, spent one unforgettable summer on a Wyoming ranch, and served as State Supervisor of the WPA Writers' Project in Vermont. During the war I worked as an inspector of machine-tools. And always I wrote.

In the writing field I got started in *Story Magazine*, *American Prefaces*, and other little magazines of quality, and was reprinted in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories*, other anthologies, and abroad in England and Denmark. Then I started hitting the pulps, and most of my writing in recent years has been sports, westerns and adventure stories for that market.

"Six Under the Earth" grew out of long pleasant hours of listening to the tales of a big rugged sad-faced man, now dead, with whom I once worked on a road gang. He had drifted all over the country working as a miner, sand hog, stonecutter, construction man, and other things, and his description of a mine cave-in gave me the idea and the underground feeling for this story, although the incidents related in the mine are purely

imaginary. He was a real old-time storyteller, especially when primed with the beer or whiskey that he loved.

EVERETT M. WEBBER sends along the following notes to accompany the fictional tale of Andy Jackson in the days of the American Revolution, when "Old Hickory" was young—

Andrew Jackson has been the hero of several of my stories, and has appeared in others such as "The Witched Well" not so long ago in *Adventure*. It was in doing research for our novel, "Rampart Street," recently published by Dutton, that my wife and I were struck by the innumerable dramatic facets of Jackson's character and career. The scene of the novel is New Orleans in the gay, hell-roaring days when gentlemen kept beautiful octoroon girls on Rampart Street and Lafitte's pirates joined with Jackson to whip the British on the nearby fields of Chalmette. I am convinced that the bloody defeat of Pakenham's crack fighters is directly traceable to the events which I now have recounted in the short story of Andy's boyhood.

He and his defiant kin were in a hot corner of the Carolina country during the Revolution, and as a youngster he saw much death and destruction. He was in several skirmishes as a lad, was taken prisoner by the British, and received the well-known saber cut in the head from the angry officer whose boots he refused to polish. He and his wounded brother, Robert, were imprisoned. When smallpox broke out in the jail, their plucky mother effected an exchange of prisoners. She got both her boys home more dead than alive. Robert died. Somehow Andy pulled through—and his mother instantly left for Charles Town to nurse her sick nephews.

Her last words to young Andrew were much the ones I have recounted. When word came that she had died on the plague-ridden prison ship at Charles Town and was buried in a common grave, a cold, implacable anger toward the British came into the boy's heart, and I doubt if it ever left him. He was ready and willing throughout his entire life to lead military expeditions against the English. He hanged two British nationals in Florida on the ground that they "stirred up the Indians." Had the enemy at New Orleans been anyone else, it is likely he would have surrendered his command to Coffee or even Lafitte and gone to bed where he should have been for many weeks past.

Jackson's biographers don't know what he was doing during the weeks following his mother's death—so, in playing around with the idea of what he might have been doing, "Bugle Song" is the result. The British villainy that he went up against, as I recount it—the massacre of prisoners who

had surrendered under quarter, and the execution, by lot, of hostages in retaliation for sniping—is recorded in the history of the Revolution in the South.

Certain it is that by the time he was twelve, Jackson was already exhibiting the traits of character which made his men recognize his indomitable will and courage on their bitter march home from Natchez in another campaign many years later. This march has been forgotten by the world, but the name his men gave him is still remembered: Old Hickory. Throughout the rest of his tragic life, I suspect that he privately considered it the proudest title he bore. And at the time of "Bugle Song," he might fully as well have been called Young Hickory.

OUR first thought on reading Edward Arthur Dolph's fact piece on soldier songs—"From Yankee Doodle to Dirty Gertie" (see page 102)—was what a whale of a lot of research it must have entailed. Months, maybe? Months hell—wait till you read how long it actually took.

You have asked me to tell you how I happened to write "From Yankee Doodle to Dirty Gertie." If the question were, "How long did it take to write it?" I could answer promptly and succinctly. "More than thirty years!"

Although out of uniform since 1931, I first began soldiering in 1913. With a love for fiddle music and folk songs inherited from ancestors who for three hundred years pioneered this land from coast to coast, I soon found that soldiers, too, had songs and music that grew from the fertile soil of their daily trials, tribulations, and passing pleasures. They sang; and, as National Guardsman, cadet at West Point, and officer of the Regular Army, I sang with them from Warsaw, Poland (where I was on The Typhus Relief Expedition) to Peking, China, and points north and south in between. As I sang (and very poorly, I confess) I began to collect; and many officers and men, active and retired, I gratefully acknowledge, helped to swell my lyrical hoard. From impromptu gatherings and regimental reunions in various parts of the world, out of letters from ancient veterans and diaries of men long dead, I gathered the words and music that express the soldier's reaction to his officers, his regiment, his food and shelter, his enemy, and the intimate details of his daily life.

It was not an easy task, however. In a foreword to a book of soldier songs I once published, Peter B. Kyne wrote that it had involved "far more labor and travel and expense than the writing of a great novel." Certainly it often involved much correspondence and many hours of research in old diaries, as well as the winnowing of old minds whose thinking had sometimes grown

fragmentary. But it was even more difficult to select from the hundreds of songs available those few that would, in a short article like this, give the reader a brief but revealing glimpse of the entire field. And yet it has been fun, too, because it has been a labor of love and because many enjoyable hours have been spent with those who contributed to the collection. (I never knew how peppy old vets past eighty could be until I attended a Veterans of Indian Wars reunion in Washington some years ago.)

No one, of course, is more aware than I of the imperfections and shortcomings of the collection that I have made. Even a large book has been inadequate to record all that has prompted the soldier's lyre. And, certainly, no article or book could hope to pass the censors if it attempted to record the unexpurgated repertoire of our soldier minstrels.

We think Mr. Dolph turned in a mighty fine job. Offhand we can think of only two songs he left out that might have been included. We heard 'em both a few hundred times during the war—namely, "Lili Marlene," and that bawdy, rafter-shaking ballad, "Roll Me Over in the Clover."

JUST to keep the record straight (remember the controversy between Chief Engineer Skellenger and "Sparks" Grant in last September's *Camp-Fire*?), Ethan Grant sends along the following data on the sources of material used in his amusing fact story on the early days of radio communication at sea—"Angels of Wireless"—on page 77.

The material contained in "Angels of Wireless" was obtained from logs kept and recollections of my experiences aboard the following ships, up to late 1924:

S.S. Gloucester, Passenger, Norfolk to Providence run.

S.S. Jupiter, Freighter, New York to France.

U.S.S. Democracy, Navy, European Waters in W.W.I.

S.S. City of Erie, Passenger, Cleveland to Buffalo run.

S.S. Baccarat, Freighter, Montreal to St. Johns, Newf'd.

S.S. Governor Dingley, Passenger, Portland to Boston.

S.S. Innoko, Freighter, N. Y. to South America and Europe.

S.S. Radnor, Freighter, N. Y. to Norfolk.

S.S. Hayden, Freighter, Baltimore to Mediterranean Ports.

S.S. Effna, Freighter, Baltimore to Mediterranean Ports and Black Sea.

S.S. Herbert G. Wiley, Galveston, Mexico & Cuba (Tanker).

S.S. Westland, Freighter, Gulf Ports to Germany.

S.S. Cranford, Freighter, Gulf Ports to England.

S.S. Isaac T. Mann, Collier, Norfolk to Portland, Me.

S.S. Comet, Seagoing Tug, New York to Boston.

S.S. Caracas, Passenger, N. Y. to Caribbean and Venezuela.

In addition to the above, I served for three years in a Michigan radio station, while attending college. As for my sea service, I can provide photostatic copies of the radio licenses I held, their endorsements by the various captains under whom I sailed and the record as shown in my old assignment book, issued by the Radio Corporation of America.

In preparation of "Angels of Wireless," I necessarily had to bow to the rule of brevity. The old logs contain an enormous wealth of data that I felt, after all these years, was interesting and a great deal of it was amusing.

AN inquiring reader from Niles, California—Bill Gianella—raises an interesting point about palm trees, which has us stumped—

I am not offering any criticism on "Bargain in Bombers," which recently ran in *Adventure*, but when Weston judged himself near sea level when he saw coconut trees, it made me think of the old saying, "The coconut does not grow beyond the sound of the surf," and revived in my mind the questions: How far from the sea have they been known to grow? What is the highest above sea level they have been known to grow? Where are these places?

As *Adventure* is interested in facts, perhaps some dope on the above would be of interest.

Willis McGuire had some growing at La Clara on the Porce River, about fifty miles downstream from Medellin, Columbia. They were at an elevation of about twenty-five hundred feet, and about five hundred miles up the river from the sea, but straight west over a couple ridges of the Cordillera it would have been possibly half of that.

Perhaps some of our readers can beat these figures by hundred of miles of distance and by a thousand feet of elevation. I would like to know what the limit is.

Come to think of it, we've always associated those gently-swaying, travel-folder palm trees with tropical beaches, but we don't know much about their habits. Can any learned reader give us—and Reader Gianella—the low-down on how high up coco palms grow?—K.W.G.



ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THE Code Duello.

Query:—I address my present questions to you because, as the *Adventure* expert on fencing, I presume you will also be familiar with the code of the duel.

I have recently been told that the choice of weapons lies, not with the challenged party, as I had supposed, but with the insulted party, who would in most cases probably be the challenger. Is this correct?

I was also informed that the choice, if it were to be pistols, could not be say, American army automatics, but would have to be single shot muzzle-loaders. Is this correct?

Is there any published code of the duel, or reference work I could consult for general information regarding these matters?

—The Marquis of Lagos
Berkeley, California

Reply by Col. Jean V. Grombach:—The unwritten and universal law in the code of dueling calls for the challenged party having the choice of weapons, and in most cases the choice of conditions as well. Naturally the challenged party may or may not be the insulted party. In other words, one can readily imagine someone being insulted and baited to the extent of issuing a challenge to a duel, in which case the insulted party, if he issued the challenge, becoming the challenger and thereby giving the person who started it all the choice of weapons.

However, that does not necessarily always follow. I know of one amusing case where a challenger, who had lived in the United States for a long time and knew quite a lot about boxing and was very strong, was baited by someone in a casino in Europe, and insulted. The reason was that the other person was a crack fencer and dueling swordsman but was a poor shot and not interested in fighting a duel with pistols. The Americanized European, however, when sufficiently insulted merely punched his opponent on the chin and knocked him down, stood over him, and asked him whether he had anything further to say. In that case, had the man on the ground issued a challenge, the man insulted would have been the man challenged and therefore would have the choice of weapons.

Probably the most interesting story on the issue raised in your letter occurred in Louisiana during the dueling era there in our early American history. There was a small fiery politician of French descent with a great reputation both as a crack shot and a fencer. He had killed a number of men in both pistol and sword duels and he was a member of the Louisiana Legislature. A new legislator got into a political argument with him one day. This new member was John Humble, a former Tennessee blacksmith who stood six feet four inches and weighed over 225 pounds. The political argument grew heated and the Frenchman challenged Humble to a duel.

Humble paid no attention to the challenge until told by his friends that it meant

shame and political oblivion if he refused to accept a challenge. They told him that gentlemen had to fight duels.

Humble answered: "But I am no gentleman. I am just a Tennessee backwoodsman." His friends finally convinced him that he had to do something about it, but they also explained to him that he had the choice of weapons and choice of conditions of the duel. He thought a while and scratched his head and shortly thereafter had a friend, as a second, go to the Frenchman. He had made up his mind.

The Frenchman was flabbergasted when the second told him the weapons and conditions of the duel. The weapons: Heavy sledge hammers. The conditions: The duel should be held in six feet of water of Lake Pontchartrain. The date was fixed for several days thereafter.

Needless to say, before the day of the duel the French duelist apologized to John Humble. They became fast friends and for years they traveled together, with the Frenchman often stating to various groups: "John Humble and I can lick any man alive."

While the unwritten laws or customs of dueling are certainly not standard or too definite, and while there have been many duels recorded where men have shot it out with six-shooters or with automatics, the accepted custom or tradition of a pistol duel is of course based on the single shot pistol although your reference to a muzzle-loader refers back quite a way because even the dueling pistol in vogue when dueling was still in vogue was a breech-loader where a cartridge was inserted in the magazine by breaking the pistol in much the same fashion as a single-shot shotgun is loaded today. With respect to any published code of the duel or reference works, I refer you to the following books which in turn contain complete bibliographies:

"Schools and Masters of Fence," by Edgar Castle

"Histoire des Duels Anciens et Modernes," by M. Fougereux de Campignuelles

"Les Idees sur le Duel," by Nestor Sapience

IN THE Valley of the Amazon.

Query:—I'm planning a trip to the Amazon soon, and would like to know what equipment and arms to take. Any information you can give me regarding living conditions, camp equipment, porters, etc. would be most welcome.

—Robert F. Pool
Caixa Postal 862
Sao Paulo, Brazil

Reply by Arthur J. Burks:—You don't say just where you wish to go in the vast Amazon Valley, but I believe my sugges-

tions will apply almost anywhere. Don't load yourself down with supplies; stevedores represent your greatest expense in river travel. It's cheaper to travel by boat from Belem to Santarem than it is to have your baggage carried from the boat in Santarem to *Pensao Amazonas*. Take needed clothing only, if you are traveling alone, otherwise my suggestions pertain to each member of your party.

Carry plenty of "small money"—fifty *cruzeiro* notes and under, and don't tip until you know the ropes.

Take at least 1000 atabrine or metoquina and take four tablets weekly while you are away. Native sufferers with malaria will beg the rest from you and it's impossible to look at their faces and refuse. I suggest 1000 instead of 5000 because even 1000 are tough to wangle.

Halazone for purifying water is, in the words of an American doctor friend of mine, "better than nothing." My wife and I drank from all streams, including the Amazon, without, as far as we yet know, ill effects. You'll have to do the same or seem queer to your associates.

Get a rubberized seabag, rubberized because, if you get tossed into a rapids somewhere, you grab the bag and hang on and it'll take you through.

Get a hammock and a mosquito net for *same*! If you have a nice grin you can swing your hammock in any *caboclo* cabin at night, free of charge.

Service field shoes and khaki are my preferred clothing.

Personally, I hate to see hunters go into the Amazon Valley, but you don't say you are going hunting. Indians and Brazilians tackle even the jaguar with a 20-gauge shotgun loaded with birdshot, so this shotgun and a light rifle, for protection against jaguars—though I never saw one in the wilds—should be enough.

Oh, yes, a bottle of the *Specifico*, manufactured in Sao Paulo, for snakebite.

Fishing tackle? Fish strike at anything, including bare hands trailed overside!

I've cut this down to bare bones. I spent six months in the Amazon Valley, 1946-7, for a total cost, New York back to New York, of \$285. You can't do that now. My wife and I just spent a year there, and in Belem, at a cost of about \$3500, most of it spent in civilized areas.

I would never organize an "expedition." Too expensive, and permission of government is needed. Go by yourself from Belem to, say, Santarem, by boat—or air—and take your time visiting with people there, deciding your next jump from that spot. Continue like that and your cost will surprise you—\$1.50 a day for board and room, for instance, at Santarem (ten times that in Belem, however!) with steak and fish twice a day. Boat travel includes food—such as it is, which isn't anything to write home about. Some travelers eke out boat food with canned goods of their own.

Be sure to take yellow fever shots in Belem and get the yellow fever certificate. If you go into the jungles, that noisy mosquito which seems so friendly, *in the daytime*, is *aedes egypti*, otherwise *stegomyia* and she delights in sharing the yellowjack with you!

Of course you can travel by air from Belem to Belterra on the Tapajos, or to Manaos on the Amazon, but you don't see much from the air except the "endless sea of green."

THE tricks of the trapper's trade.

Query:—I have just moved to Montana from Philadelphia, Pa. and have never set a snare or a trap. This is supposed to be good country for trapping, and I would like to learn how. The Boy Scout group with which I am connected are also interested. I would like information on bait, types and sizes of traps for different small animals, how to make snares and deadfalls.

—David J. Geschwantner
Martin City, Montana

Reply by Raymond S. Spears:—Your best bet in learning to locate fur animals and trapping them is a working library of wildcrafting books, which describe the wild-life of your district. The basis for trapping success is to know your region, its map and its wildlife. The best source in books are Government reports.

For maps, get index sheet for Montana maps, U.S. Geological Survey, Washington, D. C. Get the topographical maps of your region.

For Wild Life, ask Superintendent Public Documents, Washington, D.C. for Wild Life reports about Montana. You will receive a catalogue and from this catalogue get reports on Mammals; I think there is one report covering all of the species. One on Birds will be useful.

Fur-Fish-Game, Columbus, Ohio, issues a booklist. Ask for this; there are a score or so of trapping and wildcraft books. Ask them which ones tell about trapping in Western regions. Each region's conditions affect knowledge needed by a trapper.

"Camp Life and the Tricks of Trapping," published by Harper & Brothers, New York—through any book store—gives homemade traps and useful information.

Outdoorsman, Columbus, Ohio, issues a list of wildcrafting books.

"The Stillhunter," by VanDyke, (Published by MacMillan Co., N. Y.) tells about tracking, hunting, shooting, learning wild life habits. Get OUTING LIBRARY list from MacMillan Co., Publishers. Several of this list (including "The Stillhunter") are most useful.

Fur-Fish-Game magazine is professional wildcrafter's "bible."

The more and better you learn wildlife

habits, the more successful you will be seeking furs, wildhides, other wilderness products. Follow tracks of each species—coyotes, skunks, foxes, roamers of the open range and the hill and mountain and forest countries. Just follow the tracks till you know each species—and which way they are going. Twenty or thirty miles of this tracking, backed by study, book learning, and experience, will start you right. The books tell you what to look for—help show you what the tracks mean—what the animals are thinking. To get them, you have to out-think them.

YOU can't both be boss. It's you—or the hoss.

Query:—I would like information on how to cure a horse of being herdbound. When I try to coax him out of the herd he rears and backs. When he is racing, he will pass all but the last horse and race beside him to the finish. He is a good worker when no other horse is around.

—Jack Rote Jr.
RFD No. 1
Johnstown, N. Y.

Reply by John Richard Young:—All horses are NATURALLY herdbound. That is why wild horses and range broncs travel and can be driven in bands, and why tame horses grazing in a pasture will often all start running if one of them starts running. It is their natural way.

The only way we can overcome this natural herd instinct in our riding and work horses is by TRAINING. That is the only trouble with your horse. He has never been properly trained. Whoever owned him before you did failed to train him properly; and you have not had him long enough to teach him properly. Therefore, DO NOT BLAME YOUR HORSE. He is only doing what is natural to him, because he has never been taught to do otherwise.

I hope that you have not whipped or spurred him severely in trying to cure him of his fault. If you have done so, don't do it any more. If he is a high-spirited horse, you will only make him wildly unmanageable. If he is not very spirited, you will make him sulky and stubborn. Either way, you won't cure him of the fault. You will only add to your present troubles.

What you must do amounts to the job of training your horse all over again from scratch—just as if he were a green colt. You must teach him prompt and willing obedience to the leg aids and to the bit. You must be at once gentle, yet very, very firm; above all, you must be patient. Remember that because of his bad mishandling in the past he really does not understand exactly what you want him to do; or, if he does understand, he has convinced himself, because of past successes,

(Continued on page 124)

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS



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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine, unless so indicated (c/o *Adventure*). Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

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(Continued from page 120)

that he really does not have to pay much attention to what you want him to do when he feels like doing something different. It is your job to convince him, without whipping or spurring him, that you are the boss and what you say he must do, promptly and without any fuss. He must learn that if he tries to fight with you you will make it very uncomfortable for him, but when he obeys you will make it easy for him.

For the first month or two, work him entirely alone, drilling him in obedience to your hand and leg signals. When he will start, stop, turn, sidestep and not mix his gaits perfectly, ride him where he can hear and see other horses, but stay as far away from them as possible. If he shows signs of becoming excited again, or getting out of hand, stop him at once, turn him around and go away from the other horses, or wait until they have moved out of sight. If when you do this, he tries to rush after them (as he is now in the habit of doing), grab one of the reins a few inches from the bit and pull his head all the way around to your knee. Pull as hard as you must, but do it quickly. If necessary, dally your rein around the saddlehorn to hold his head in this position. Get his nose as close to your knee as you can, and keep it there until the horses ahead move on out of sight. Speak gruffly to him to let him know your displeasure. Believe me, he won't like it a bit. If he tries to run with his head in this pulled-around position he will find himself chasing his own tail, like a dog.

Do this every time he tries to get away from you. Gradually work closer to the other horses, being alert every moment for own hoofs. But you should not have to do find he will tire of having his neck twisted whenever he starts to take things into his own hoofs. But you should not have to do this very often if you have been careful in your schooling sessions away from other horses to make your horse bridle and give to the bit properly. For a horse that is bridling properly cannot run away.

Remember in these lessons do not whip or spur him. Just be calm, all the time. Give your horse the idea that he is punishing himself automatically, by trying to lunge ahead before you have given him any signal to speed up. (By the way, don't always pull his head around to the same side.)

I would also suggest that you quit foolishly running races. That only encourages the horse to bolt.

If when you turn him around away from other horses, he tries his trick of backing toward them, just give him the same treatment. He'll find himself backing in circles, getting nowhere fast.

You must impress on his mind the idea that no matter how eager he is to get up with the other horses he is POWERLESS to do so, until you give him the signal. Once you have impressed on him this feeling of powerlessness, he will cease to fight.

A POSTMARK from Pago Pago.

Query:—I am a stamp collector and would like to know how the Samoan Government is run since it has become a United States possession. Also, would you be able to tell me when the first stamp was issued and by whose authority or request? Could you give me any information on the living conditions and education for this possession, and if there would be somebody in Samoa with whom I could trade stamps and get some pictures of the land you live in.

I would be very pleased with a reply from an expert, but since I am only 15 years old, you may not think me as important as grownups. Thank you very much for your prompt reply.

—Merrick W. Creagh III
Barstow, California

Reply by Tom L. Mills:—American or Eastern Samoa consists of the island of Tutuila and three tiny islets known as the Manua Group. These were allotted to the United States by an agreement made in 1899 by Britain, Germany and the United States. Their importance lies in the fact that there is at Pago Pago on Tutuila a large and safe harbor which has been made into a naval station. The area has in fact been under U.S.A. naval control throughout, the Governor being a naval officer. It has never had any stamps of its own and the current U.S.A. stamps have always been in use, so that they can be distinguished only by the postmarks. There is now only one post office there at Pago Pago. There used to be one at another village on Tutuila called Leone, but that was closed quite recently. I enclose samples of two types of postmarks at present in use there. As far as possible the natives have been left to follow their own customs but much has been done for them in regard to health and education. I suggest that a letter be sent to the postmaster at Pago Pago asking him to hand it to someone who is interested in stamps. Photos and further particulars about native life could then be obtained from someone on the spot.

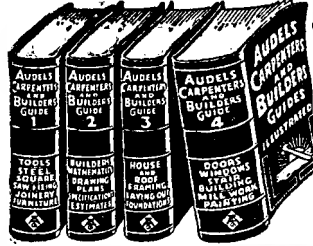
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Query:—I would like some information about what equipment would be necessary for a hunting trip in Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

—James H. Kirkland, Jr.,
Paulsboro, N. J.

Reply by A. H. Carhart:—What you'll need in equipment for hunting in Washington, Oregon and Alaska, depends on three sets of factors. Foremost is what game you want to hunt. Second, what season of the

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year. Third, whether you are going to tie up with a guide or go it on your own, and whether you'll base at a cabin or set up a tent camp.

Taking it for granted that you can dope out the clothing and housing-food angles, probably what you want to know is about arms. The best all-around single rifles you would want for big game, are the .270, the .30-06 or the .300. These are adequate for deer in these areas and in the heavier loads are sufficient in slugging power for animals the size of elk. They'd do all right for big-horns and the common brown bears. Taking the Western ammo as an example, you can get the .270 in a 130 grain bullet that has a mid-range trajectory of only 5½ inches if the rifle is targeted at 300 yards. In the .30-06, the 160 grain load has mid-range of only 6½ inches. The heaviest .270, 150 grain, has mid-range of 7 inches; the .30-06, 220 grain bullet, mid-range of 9 inches. That's pretty flat shooting. The lighter bullets are O.K. for deer; the heavier for elk.

If you're going after Kodiak bears (the big brownies) or Alaskan moose, you'll have to pack more slugging power. I'd feel a lot safer if facing these babies with something like the .306 or .375 "magnum" in my hands.

I don't mean that you are not reasonably safe with say, the .30-06 using 220 grains; that has slugging power. Fact is, one of my steady hunting pals knocks over big bull elk with .257 Roberts, the bullet weighing 100 grains; and another tallies with the 250-3000, bullet weight 87 grains. But you have to be a shot to lay in the bullet at vital spots. That's as big a factor as equipment as such. Unless you have high accuracy, you'll have more success with something in the .30 caliber (.30-06, .300, .30-40, or .303) using loads with bullets from 180 to 220 grains.

You'll find binoculars invaluable. The best I've handled are the 7x35, "zephyr" model: You can hold this degree of magnification in your hand without too much jiggling. Hope this is the information you wanted.

May we remind our readers who are seeking information through Ask Adventure that it's a good idea to state the problem fully. As we say in that little box above the listing of the A.A. experts: "Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question." For example, Mr. Carhart sent us the following note along with the above letter—

It would help in answering questions, if the fellows would tell **WHAT** they are going to hunt, **WHERE**, **WHEN**, and **HOW**. When they merely say they are going hunting, it may be moose, civet cats, hawks, bighorns or Injun squaws. But I done muh best, podner!

THE END

(Continued from page 51)

I sat with eyes closed, half-heartedly listening to his harangue. I could see a little, incredibly dirty native boy toiling up the road under the weight of a huge bundle. He stopped in front of us where we loafed and mopped his face with a streaked arm. "The Sergeant Jose Reyes! For him I seek!" he said politely.

Sergeant King's chair legs hit the ground. "Yes! Yes! You have perhaps the message?"

The child shoved his package into the sergeant's hands.

"For you, sar! A person pays well for me to bring to you the gift!"

Sergeant King giggled happily.

"It is a gift from her, *Teniente!* God be praised!" And he ran for his quarters hugging the bulky bundle. The little chap, ignored, trudged back down the street.

I must have dozed because I was brought violently to my feet by the sound of a shot blasting into the evening air. It came from the barracks at my back.

Men were running for the quarters on the second floor as I barged into the hall and leaped up the stairs.

Silently a group was clustered about the room of Sergeant Jose Reyes. I elbowed through the gaping throng and stepped into the room.

His service revolver dangled from lifeless fingers and a dark stain spread from a gaping wound in his temple over the blanket covering.

In a daze I advanced to the table where there was a jumble of banana leaf wrappings. In the center of the leaves was a grinning, newly polished skull—obviously the skull of a woman! The sardonic emptiness of the glaring sockets sent cold chills racing up my spine.

I looked closer.

By the side of the skull—and partially twined about it—lay two long braids of lustrous black hair. And twisted into the braids were several fresh blossoms of the sickeningly sweet Ilang-Ilang tree.

I remembered with a rush the look in the eyes of old Chief Agus as he looked at the maiden Juliana as we marched from the village.

Juliana had come to join her bridegroom!

THE END

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(Continued from page 41)

ing and rattling, the winch raised the end of the braile net until there was a silver cascade spilling into the hold, the black and purple and silver fish forming a living carpet for the hatch. Each emptying braile sent another ton of sardines hissing swiftly into the hold. Keating and the fishermen watched, fascinated, for there seemed no end to the number of times the braile came up full.

The castle crags of the coastal range flushed with dawn glow, grew violet with the strengthening light, then were tinted lemon-yellow as the sky began to take color, blue patches showing between the white clouds. By then the brailes were coming up lighter, and it was once more necessary to shorten the net.

At ten, when both hatches were full, there were still sardines in the seine. Keating went up to the bridge. Seeing a purse-seiner headed southward, he signalled. As she drew nearer, he recognized the distinctive raked bow of Sunderhall's *Bold Venture*.

Salvatore Rossi came to the wheelhouse, his black mustache twitching with indignation.

"What the hell, Keat! We do better to dump our remaining fish than let that no-good Sunderhall get them."

Keating's smile was bleakly humorous. "I owe that guy something," he said; and he wasn't thinking of the surplus sardines Sunderhall had once given him.

When the other boat came alongside, Keating stepped from the wheelhouse. Sunderhall stepped outside, too, a scowl on his dark and flabby face.

"Got twenty or thirty tons we can't use. Need 'em?"

"I'll take them!" Sunderhall cried explosively. "But if you ever again try to ram me—"

Keating planted big fists on the rail. "You'll *what*?" he roared. "One more crack from you and so help me I'll board that waterlogged hulk of yours and when I'm through with you, you'll have no more ears than a skipjack!"

Sunderhall's face darkened, but in a moment his scowl changed to a sickly smile. "Can't you take a little joke, Keating?"

"I can take a joke like you any day in

the week," Keating burst out savagely. "Where in blue blazes did you get the idea you could cut out fish from my seine? Next time you try that, I'll scuttle you even if I sink my own boat. Now take your blasted fish, and be damn quick about it!"

"Don't get sore," Sunderhall said sulkily.

Keating snorted, strode into the wheelhouse, then down to the galley. The men trooped in, all of them grinning broadly.

"That's telling him!" Ben Tucker said, chuckling. "Hey, Cook—where's the skipper's breakfast?"

"Coming," said the cook.

Keating laughed as he sat down. "You got to put guys like Sunderhall in their places. Sort of relaxes you."

"What the hell," said Rossi. "You been worrying too much. You look good now."

"It was more than worry," Keating said cheerfully. "So many things went wrong after I bought this packet that I began to expect fresh disasters. Got so I was afraid to take a chance! But I caught on when I forced Sunderhall to get clear. You've got to take chances—or take the leavings of guys who do!"

"I suspected that was why you were becoming so cautious," Tucker said. "We thought maybe if we got you a new seine —" He caught himself, and flushed.

"You got me a new seine!" Keating demanded incredulously.

"We all had a little money in the bank," Rossi explained. "So Tucker put it up to this lawyer friend. We thought it would kind of bolster you, thinking you looked like a good risk to a lawyer."

"It practically scared me out of accepting the loan," Keating admitted, laughing. "But why would you guys take such a risk?"

"The money wasn't doing us no good in the bank," said Tucker. "It would do us all plenty of good if we could get you back to making a set as if you meant it."

"Sure," said Rossi gravely. "It was casting our bread overboard on troubled waters."

Thinking about it, Keating decided Rossi's quotation was an improvement on the original—in this case, at least.

THE END

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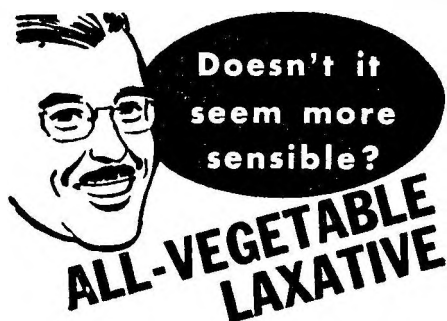
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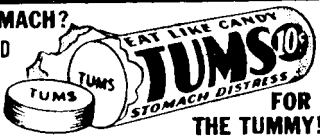


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(Continued from page 23)

cent men, and had robbed coaches of both gold and the Royal Mail.

Freeman Cobb had dropped around to say, "You kept your word, Queed. I'm keeping mine. It took a lot of guts to do what you did, and it's a miracle you weren't shot off the seat. Any time you figure you'd like a partnership in Cobb & Company, my three partners and I are ready to make room."

Cabbage-Tree Ned Devine had ambled over, rubbing his jaw and looking sheepish. Then he'd extended his hand. "You're all right, mate. I'm thankin' ye on behalf of all the Cobb drivers. I guess we'll all live a lot longer, thanks to you, Johnny."

But nothing anybody could say seemed to make Johnny Queed feel better. He felt depressed. He could understand why everybody felt he'd done a good thing for the Colony. But he needed the impartial word of an outsider, somebody who had no stake in the death of the bushrangers.

It was a gloomy morning, with a fine drizzle, one week after the dynamite episode, that Johnny saw her. He was just closing the coach door, getting set for the Ballarat run. She came toward him breathlessly, her feet moving invisibly beneath a blue crinoline dress sheltered under a small parasol.

Her violet eyes stared at him for a moment. Then she said, "Have you—have you room for one more, Mr. Queed? I'm anxious to get to Bendigo."

"I'm not going to Bendigo," Johnny said slowly. "Ballarat."

"Ballarat?" She smiled at him. "Oh, well, it doesn't matter, not really. The truth is I—I just feel like a ride."

"There's always room for one more, ma'am," Johnny said, and a warm glow began to rise within him. "But you might find it a little crowded in the coach. If you don't mind the drizzle, you can sit up with me on the buckboard."

"Why . . . that's very kind of you, Mr. Queed. I believe I will. It wouldn't be dangerous now . . . would it?"

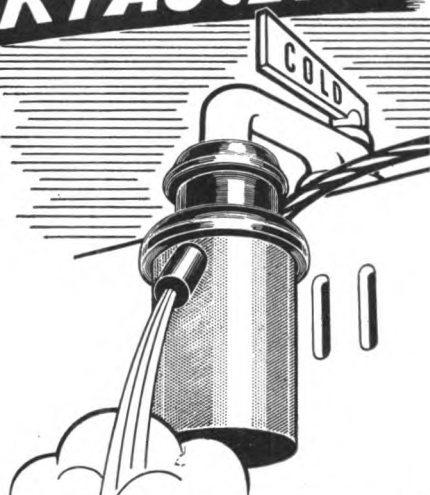
That depended, Johnny thought with a silent chuckle, on what a pretty girl considered dangerous. He glanced up at the clouded, murky sky, and reflected it might turn out a mighty fine day, after all.

THE END

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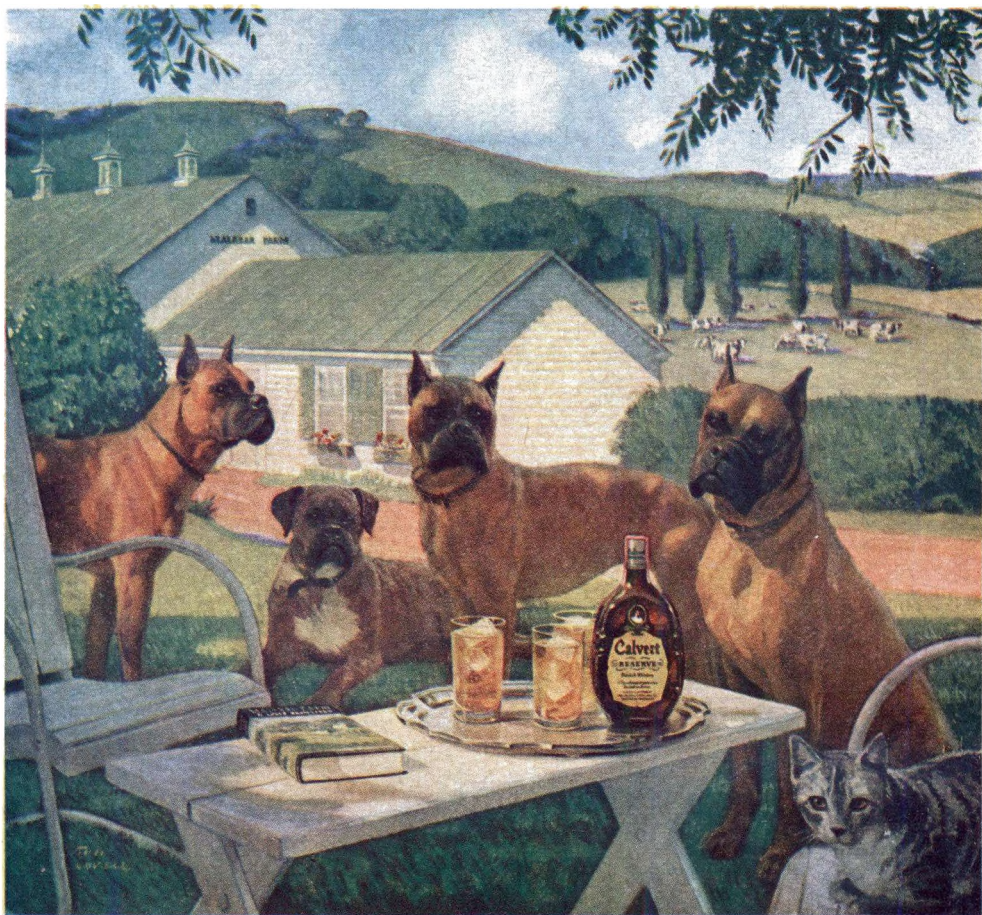
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