

SEPT. 28, 1935

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ARGOSY

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WEEKLY

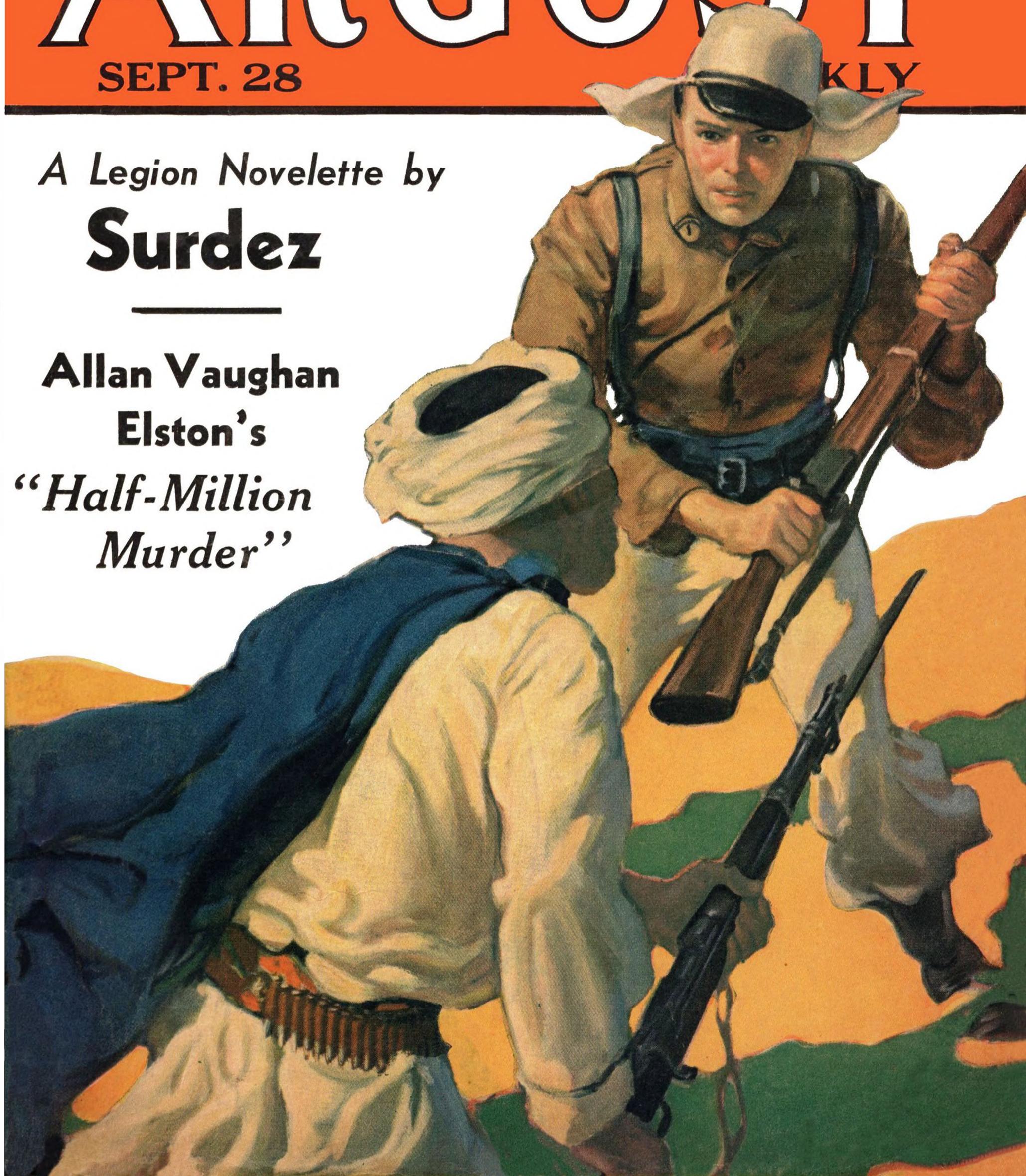
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Novelette—Complete

The dying Berber was going to take one more man with him

Clarions of Youth

By **GEORGES SURDEZ**

Author of "The Iron Adjutant," "Another Man's Chevrons," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG UPSTART.

SUB-LIEUTENANT LANASHAN became interested in Legionnaire Morart from their first meeting. But there are certain rules and traditions observed in the French Foreign Legion which interfered with his legitimate curiosity.

Although an officer must be ready to hear the confidences of any one of his men concerning his past existence,

he can neither prompt nor solicit them. A Legionnaire is accepted for what he has stated himself to be at the recruiting office.

There were close to three hundred men quartered at Post Makhanan, Saharan Territories. The majority were members of the Foreign Regiments in which statistics list some sixty nationalities. There were such freaks as a Japanese enlisted as a Peruvian, a senior-corporal who had been born a prince in the Caucasus and had been a

Morart had his own grim reason for joining the Foreign Legion—and he was determined no one should ferret out his past

general in Siberia. But those were seasoned men, with long years behind them, whose careers could be surmised.

he should have been inconspicuous, for as a general rule the khaki uniform, the blue sash, the képi, wipe out a man's



It might be said that Morart represented youth, and it cannot be denied that he possessed unexplainable charm. He reached the Post with a replacement draft of twenty men sent by Battalion Headquarters at Colomb-Béchar. Standing in line with nineteen others,

personality at a distance particularly.

But Lanahan, who chanced to be crossing the yard toward his quarters when the sergeant called the roll, felt Morart's eyes upon him. For a moment, he was certain that he had seen the fellow somewhere. He dismissed

the idea at once. Lanahan had not been in America or Europe for nearly a decade, and at the time, Morart would have been a child.

"Morart—"

"Present!" The voice was familiar in pitch, in intonation. Lanahan lighted a cigarette and stepped nearer to the line. He knew that his tall, massive silhouette, his reddish color, his gray-green eyes identified him. Legionnaires learn about their chiefs well before they encounter them.

He considered Morart, who was undoubtedly very young, but by no means small in stature. As a matter of fact, he was somewhat broader and taller than Sergeant Breich. He appeared well-knit, athletic. But his handsome face was that of a boy rather than a grown man, his skin was as smooth as a girl's, and although his sensitive mouth was set, an unmistakable dimple showed on his sunburnt cheek.

Why did this youngster arouse Lanahan's attention? The officer decided that he knew the explanation for the swift sympathy he imagined was established between them: this kid was an American.

Lanahan, who had nine full years of service behind him, including campaigns in Morocco, Syria and the Sahara, was stirred, touched. He had been bigger and older than this lad when he had come into the Legion. But he suddenly recalled like an obsession, a nightmare, how much he had suffered for long months from disgust and loneliness; days when the food had seemed strange and coarse, when he would have given a quart of issue wine for one cool drink of clear home water. Days when he had had to choose between soap and cigarettes.

"Poor brat," he grumbled. He beckoned to the sergeant, who came

forward, saluting: "Breich, you took charge of that lot in Bechar, you know them. Think that Morart would make a good orderly?"

"He's too fresh, Lieutenant."

"He is? Instruct him to report to me as soon as he can."

Lanahan walked away pleased with himself. He had an orderly, Hermann, a fine Bavarian, but he could afford an additional man. Not in regulations for a sub-lieutenant to have two orderlies, but he would explain his motive to the captain. He wished to avoid Morart certain early contacts in barracks, allow him to become acquainted with the routine of the Post slowly.

THIRTY minutes later, Morart entered Lanahan's small room in the officers' quarters. He came to attention, saluted. He did not seem in the least timid or embarrassed. Resolute brown eyes met those of the officer squarely.

"Want to see me, Lieutenant?"

This was not a bewildered youngster but a rather tough young soldier. Even with his hands at his sides, Morart contrived to appear defiant, on his guard. Lanahan decided that he had grown belligerent under the hazing of older comrades. Nevertheless, he should be reminded that there were certain formalities to be observed.

"Present yourself, Legionnaire," he snapped.

"Morart, Gustave, Matricular Number 17687."

"Are you American?"

"I'm Swiss, Lieutenant."

"Enlisted as such. But—"

"I'm a Swiss, Lieutenant. You can consult the records." Morart evidently knew his rights and privileges. His eyes did not flinch. There was a slight accent in his French, but he might be

a German or a Romanche Swiss. Moreover, Lanahan had to agree.

"You seem very young—"

"Eighteen on August twenty-sixth last, Lieutenant."

"How long ago did you enlist? Where?"

"At Mulhouse, in Alsace, four months ago."

"And why did you come here?"

Lanahan resumed in a natural tone, but in English.

"Lieutenant?" Morart did not appear to have understood. The sub-lieutenant was beginning to doubt his belief. After all, it was founded on a very vague impression. Yet he sensed that Morart was deceiving him, which was his right.

"Sorry. You don't understand English? All right." Lanahan hesitated, then grew ashamed of altering his plans because of a mere question of nationalities. Swiss or American, this boy was worthy of interest. Well-bred, under his defensive manner. "Would you like to be my orderly?"

"I'm not a flunkey, Lieutenant."

"I realize that. But it's a soft job, carries forty francs a month. You can cut drill—"

"Are you trying to sell me the job, Lieutenant?" Morart asked with incredible insolence.

Lanahan refrained a gesture of irritation. But he had summoned the young man, had asked for this interview, and it would not be fair to punish him.

"Trying to do you a favor, that's all."

"Thanks a lot, Lieutenant." Morart was sincere, apologetic. "But I've been in four months without asking protection. Moreover, I mean to try for the corporals' squad, and I couldn't do that as an orderly. You understand?"

"Sure. How come they sent you to the Sahara so soon?"

"At my request, Lieutenant. I asked to see the colonel and told him I wanted to fight. And he said he didn't blame me, and would do the best he could for me. So I was sent here."

"Fine spirit." Lanahan offered his hand, not an unusual gesture from officer to private in the Corps: "Glad to have met you. Good luck. Behave yourself. You may go."

LANAHAN decided to speak to the captain concerning Morart. But he did not have the chance, for Kerrellys took him aside after mess that evening.

"I'm making you a present you won't thank me for," he said. "There's a crazy kid with the new bunch and I'm putting him in your section. He'd be a case for the prison camp within a month if mishandled. Too young for us."

Lanahan nodded. And he knew why Captain Kerrellys had selected him. The other section commanders were too rigid in their principles. Lieutenant Bayral was an excellent officer, twenty-seven and a school graduate. But he lacked a sense of humor and worked from the textbooks. Adjutant Vacheron was over forty, a self-educated non-com, with a tremendous sense of dignity.

"You'll get him as soon as he comes out of the cooler."

"He's in already? What did he do?"

"Dislocated a corporal's arm showing him a Japanese wrestling trick he's picked somewhere. An accident. But Old Vacheron dropped in and gave him four days in the jug, with this motivation: 'Under guise of instructing a superior in self-defense, incapacitated

him for the proper discharge of his duty.' I had to maintain the punishment, or Vacheron would have howled that I was letting him down publicly.

"I had a talk with Morart, and saw Breich, who brought the detachment from Bechar. That boy shot at a gazelle from the truck, at the risk of blowing off a comrade's ear. I don't know where he got a cartridge." Kerrelys smiled. He had three boys of his own, the eldest preparing for military school.

Lanahan was confident that he could handle Morart easily. He felt less foolish since the captain had admitted having an interest in him. With a little flattery, and a bit of stern talk, the young fellow could be guided. This was a vain hope.

Morart proved the most turbulent Legionnaire in the company. He could not escape notice. Fortunately, both Bayral and Vacheron soon shared the general liking for him. His constant energy grated on older men's nerves, and he picked one fight after another. A thrashing taught him nothing. Older and heavier men, for there are some sullen chaps in any company, beat him severely. And the next day, he would pursue them with his practical jokes as usual, without fear and without resentment.

He threw himself into military activities with zest. He could shoot well from the start, and before long was a fine fencer with bayonet or foil. The first practice march proved that he had courage and endurance as well as dash. He returned with lacerated soles and bruised toes from wearing a pair of boots too snug for his growing feet.

FOR a time, Morart developed less charming traits. On the fifteenth and last days of each month, he accompanied his friends to the native

village near the palm oasis, and returned blind drunk. Three times, Lanahan inflicted the usual punishment for public drunkenness, forty-eight hours in a cell. On the fourth occasion he had him brought in as soon as he had sobered up.

The boy was white, sheepish. Lanahan was vaguely amused and sincerely shocked. In the hard climate of the Sahara, hard drink affected strong men. The sub-lieutenant wondered what it might not do to a growing kid.

"I've punished you like a man several times," he said, locking the door. "The captain ordered me to look out for you. I don't want to be made a monkey of. If I catch you drunk again, I'll give you a good hiding."

Lanahan had been told that Morart's usual answer to such a challenge was a punch. But as he stood four inches taller and weighed forty odd pounds more, he worried little. To his astonishment Morart did not plead the Legionnaire's sacred right to get drunk on pay day, did not show fight. He swept the officer's bulk with an amused glance, and shrugged.

"You're too big. I've heard of you. May I ask a favor, Lieutenant?"

"You pick a fine time to ask," Lanahan grumbled.

"I mean, would you tell me that before the others? That you'll lick me if I get soused?" For the first time, Morart appeared awkward, embarrassed: "I don't like to get soused, it makes me sick. But if I pass up the wine, the men kid me. They already say I shave with a candle and a moist towel, Lieutenant."

Lanahan understood then that the poor chap drank to prove he was a man. This confession revealed a whole inner tragedy, pent up longing for a confidant.

"I'll take care of that," he agreed. And he kept his promise.

Morart was sober from then on. There was no humiliation in obeying Lanahan under threat of a physical beating, for he had a definite reputation for carrying out what he stated. The young man's activity went in another direction.

He collected curious rock formations found in the Desert, known as "sand roses," and mounted them on plaques of polished wood. Military chauffeurs plying between the outpost and the tourist centers to the northeast disposed of the stuff on a commission basis.

Captain Kerrellys spoke of him to Lanahan one afternoon: "That boy is well educated, a gentleman born. Very intelligent, too." He caught Lanahan's glance of surprise at this unprofessional concern and added: "My oldest just went through a scrape at school. Worried me a lot. Makes me feel for others, I guess." He shrugged: "But our hands are tied."

"Right, Captain. We can't investigate him without a request."

"I've been paying particular attention to police circulars sent down. He's not been reported missing. What do you know of him?"

"Nothing, Captain. He's left an envelope at the company's office, to be mailed in case anything happens. But he's a smart little chap—the address is sealed inside."

CHAPTER II.

THE HIDDEN PAST.

MORART had been at Makhnan five months when Lanahan's section was ordered to cooperate with detachments from other out-

posts to trap a raiding band. There was no valid reason to leave Morart, Swiss and over eighteen, behind. As a matter of fact, he would have fought such a course desperately, for he was eager to see action.

At the time, Morart was a *voltigeur*, that is an ordinary rifleman. He was not experienced enough to be a gunner on an automatic, and his liking for bossing would have made him a poor member of a crew. Lanahan adjoined him to his orderly, Hermann, as a liaison runner.

The operation had been carefully planned; the various detachments were kept in touch by radio and planes. The raiders, sixty to seventy-five rifles—no one was certain—were a mixed lot of renegade Doui-Menia and Filali Berbers. The northern troops pushed them toward the well of Oum-er-Seba, where Lanahan and his section of fifty Legionnaires awaited them.

Odds were even enough, and the raiders' skill in the Desert compensated the superior armament and organization of the Legion men.

The surprise was not complete, scouts reported the soldiers before they were within striking distance. While the slow pack camels, loaded with the loot collected in their incursion into the pacified zone, were getting a lead, the warriors held the crest of a dune, each one huddled in a hollow of sand.

To plunge headlong into their accurate fusillade would have been to invite severe losses. Lanahan's mission was not to gamble life for life, but to engage the bulk of the enemy while other French troops, circling northwest, intercepted the caravan. He advanced cautiously, taking advantage of all cover.

The desert combat offered nothing

spectacular, very little that was picturesque. Groups of men wearing faded khaki plodded in short rushes, moving about as if casually. Then a dozen figures would rush forward, fall headlong. For minutes at a time, the silence would be complete. Then isolated shots would resound, increase in number, dwindle, peter out in three or four scattered detonations.

Occasionally, the sand would ripple and smoke, as if a tiny, invisible animal were scurrying along the surface: a bullet skimming along, like a flat pebble on a quiet pool.

Bayonets were fixed, and Lanahan gave the signal for a rush within two hundred yards of his objective. Fifty men scrambled up the incline, in the slithering sand. But they were disappointed: The Berbers had fled, avoiding contact.

Morart paused for a second to stare at a corpse, probably the first he had seen. It was that of a rangy, almost nude man, whose teeth glistened in a gray beard. He grew pale, then reacted as usual. The men nearest him laughed at some ribald, macabre remark.

Then the section moved on, repeating the same maneuvers, through another ravine, toward another dune. Remote firing on the north told Lanahan that the others had reached their goal, the caravan. He also knew that the warriors before him had heard also and would rush to protect their belongings.

"Up after them—!" he broke into a run.

As he had foreseen, the crest was silent. In his haste to participate in the concluding phase of the engagement, Lanahan grew careless. He thought of nothing when he attained the edge of the dune save the running figures four hundred yards away.

"Look out!"

Something hard and heavy smashed against him, and he lost his balance, tumbled down the incline, shots ringing in his ears, his mouth and eyes filling with dust. He came to a stop with Morart's face six inches from his own. The Legionnaire was on top of him. Lanahan pushed him off, rose.

"You clumsy fool!"

LAUGHING, Morart pointed at a group of men surrounding something on the ground, striking with clubbed rifles. It was a Berber, who, wounded in the belly, knowing he was doomed and unwilling to face needless suffering in a vain attempt to escape, had waited quietly, to kill a last foe at point-blank range.

Alert and quick as a cat, Morart had seen him rise, shoulder his Mauser. And he had hurled the officer out of the way, perhaps saving his life.

"Good work," Lanahan praised. "Come along."

When the action was over, the officer had time to think of personal matters. One thing was certain, that he owed Morart a certain amount of gratitude. He more or less was obligated to cite him for the Colonial Cross: Morart had not weighed the risk, and had not stopped to consider that he might well receive the slug intended for his chief. Lanahan had no doubt that Kerrellys would back a citation.

Then there was the shout: "Look out!" He could still hear it ring in his ears, in English. In a moment of intense excitement, Morart had forgotten his rôle and had used the language he felt would be instantly understood. Lanahan called out: "Legionnaire Morart, come here."

"Guess the cat's out of the bag, Lieutenant."

"You're American?"

"Sure thing."

"How old are you?"

"You won't have me sent away?"

"I couldn't. Some one outside would have to claim you."

"Well, I was seventeen the other day, Lieutenant."

"Where did you learn French?"

"Used to come over every summer for years. Then when my—well, I went to school in Switzerland, at Lausanne." Morart added hastily: "But nobody misses me, don't worry. My father's dead and—well, I guess I'm as well off here as in some boarding school. I don't want a fuss, Lieutenant."

Lanahan nodded. He looked about the camp swarming with armed men, at the tent where the wounded were being treated. Perhaps, for Morart, this was better than school.

"LANAHAN," Captain Kerrellys said a week later, "you're an old woman! Your sentimental outpourings are touching in a chap of your bulk. But granting that Morart is a countryman of yours and that he is too young to know what is good for him, what then?"

The sub-lieutenant walked to the edge of the terrace on which they had gone for a smoke after dinner, looked over the walls into the glowing twilight. Then he turned about sharply.

"That boy saved my life. I am afraid something will happen to him, and I shall feel like a murderer for not trying to—avoid it."

The captain struck the parapet with a riding-crop, laughing sarcastically: "Nice spirit for an officer of Legion! No doubt, if we were to take each man individually, we could demonstrate that he had no business here."

"This one's seventeen, Captain."

"A man is as old as he feels—" Kerrellys lifted his arm to indicate the door of the non-coms' mess across the yard: "That's Sergeant Armin—he was in the cadet school at Petrograd at fourteen, in the Russian artillery as an officer at seventeen. There's Vacheron—at seventeen he was in the Colonial Infantry, in the Soudan. One of eight survivors of a company melted through disease and war. A man."

"This is a special case, Captain."

"Remember what I tell you: You'll make a mess seeking to mix in. Never interfere with another man's destiny, unless you are prepared to help him out of the trouble you cause. Nothing official can be done. What you do privately does not concern me."

Lanahan knew as well as Kerrellys that he had neither the duty nor the right to delve into any man's past. But that seemed an evasion of a debt of gratitude: Morart had exposed his life for him, and there was a strong probability that the sub-lieutenant would be doing him a favor by finding out what had driven him to the Legion.

Now that he had admitted his nationality, Morart did not avoid Lanahan. He seemed glad to talk English, dropped in to borrow books, newspapers. And often, he would remain a few minutes, talking respectfully, and from these rambling conversations, the officer sought to assemble a picture of his past.

Lanahan sought for a method that would bring him information without an absolute betrayal of confidence. He felt confident that he could then decide. He must first obtain a photograph. As usual, the sight of a camera brought the men off duty forward. Morart would not pose, but he naturally took

a hand in arranging groups. Then he turned toward Lanahan for approval.

"Fine—now get out of the way—"

But he had snapped Morart, turning to consult him. Lanahan knew better than to have the plates developed at the Post, where gossip was rife. He obtained permission to go to Colomb-Bechar for a couple of days, and had the work done there. An enlargement of Morart's face came out clear and sharp.

There was an adjutant in the Legion Battalion whose brother was chief of police in a large city of Switzerland. Lanahan, who had been his intimate friend as sergeant, took him into his confidence. He wanted to discover whether Morart had in fact attended school in Lausanne, and who he was.

THE other assured him this could be done without the chance of a leak. His brother could take a trip to Lausanne on some routine investigation, and take a number of pictures to the various schools specializing in tutoring foreign children. He suggested also that Lanahan might write to Oran and obtain French and foreign newspapers from a shop there, dated about the time of Morart's enlistment. If he was of any importance, his disappearance would be reported.

Lanahan received these publications within a week. There were British and French journals, and the Paris editions of American sheets. But the sub-lieutenant could not find anything concerning a missing boy. His imagination had worked too fast, probably, or Morart had manufactured a glamorous past for himself, as Legionnaires have been known to do.

At the end of the month, the Swiss adjutant sent him his brother's reply, together with the photograph as proof

that nothing further would be done. Morart had told the truth.

He had attended school near Lausanne. A number of people had recognized the picture, and recalled his name: Frank Warren Houghton. But he had not been reported missing. As a matter of fact, his mother had notified the school that he would not return. The police official suggested that there were a number of ways to reach the family concerned: through the American Embassy, through the Express Office or one of the American papers of Paris. What would be even simpler would be to write directly to the address kept at the school, a palatial hotel near the Place de l'Étoile.

Lanahan was furious with himself. Why had he not left matters alone? Morart had told the truth when he said that no one cared what happened to him. A mother callous enough not to have her son searched for was nothing to go back to! Why had she not called in the police? What sort of a woman was she to permit her child, even a self-assured child, to vanish?

"How's your search coming along?" the captain asked him soon after.

"Finished, Captain."

"And you found out there was no motive to intervene, eh? I knew it. When a man comes here, he has reasons." Kerrelly shrugged: "Certain rules may seem arbitrary, but they're based on experience. I am slating Morart for promotion to corporal next month, which is better for him."

Morart wore the double green chevrons for a month. He had been at Makhanaan almost a year. He had grown in height, and was hard and tanned. His admiration for Lanahan had increased, and there was nothing he would not have done for the sub-lieutenant.

Everything appeared smoothed out and calm, when Kerrellys summoned Lanahan to his quarters. The captain did not appear pleased, and he gruffly handed over an official envelope from Regimental Headquarters at Sidi-bel-Abbes, which enclosed another and smaller letter postmarked Paris, to which was attached a note from the colonel's secretary:

"Investigation here leads to the belief that the person concerned is Legionnaire Morart, Gustave, 17687. Our last information shows his promotion to corporal. Please inform at once who is responsible for this unfortunate rumor."

Lanahan looked at Kerrellys, who said: "Read that letter."

WHEN the sub-lieutenant opened the enclosure, a number of thin sheets fell out, with a dozen snapshots. As he collected them, the American recognized Morart's face on each one. In tennis costume, wearing a bathing-suit, seated behind the wheel of a long, powerful car,

"Real name is Houghton," Kerrellys announced.

"I know it, Captain."

"Who the devil suggested he was dead, do you know that?"

"I'm sure I didn't, Captain."

"Well, read that document, my friend!"

It had been some years since Lanahan had scanned the writing of an indignant American mother. What her French lacked in spelling and grammar was amply made up by a certain garrulous terseness of expression. She explained that she had sent the pictures to make sure that there was no mistake in identity. Then she threatened to have everyone in the Legion locked up unless she received satisfaction.

The pathetic grief piercing through that letter killed all notion of ridicule.

She stated that she was Madame Frank Warren Houghton, well connected in America and favorably known in France. She would spare no expense in learning the truth.

Friends visiting their son in a school near Lausanne, Switzerland, had brought back the shocking news that her son had died in the Foreign Legion. She wished to know how her child, only sixteen and not very strong for his age—this brought a grin to Lanahan's face—had been accepted for service.

There was no use denying that Frank had enlisted. The headmaster and several professors had seen a picture of the boy, wearing a uniform adorned at the collar-tabs by the numeral *One*. As he was an American, the only military unit that would have taken him was the Legion.

"It's a wonder the old man didn't have a stroke when she threatened him with prison," Kerrellys said.

"Captain, I did have someone inquire at the school. But they must have leaped at conclusions, because a police official asked the questions. More likely, the pupils distorted the story."

"By now, the colonel's been plagued by personal notes from the Minister of War and the Ambassador—you can bet on it. She's a determined woman."

"We'll wire Sidi-bel-Abbes that he's all right."

"They know that from the records. Legionnaires are not very important outside, but we do keep a record of their deaths." Kerrellys called an orderly: "Corporal Morart here, at the double." He explained to Lanahan: "The only thing that will reassure her is direct news from her son."

"Think we better tell him right off? I—"

"Until she hears from him, she'll be visiting every official she can see and spilling that story. If the papers get it, it will be magnified—and we can deny it later—a denial of four lines does not wipe out virulent articles."

MORART entered, alert and confident. Kerrellys looked him over slowly, from head to foot: "You seem very much alive, Corporal."

"Captain," Morart asked, puzzled.

"I wish you'd do us a favor and cable Madame Houghton the good news. She thinks you're dead." Morart turned red when the captain explained, and glared at Lanahan. "By the way, Corporal, if your mother used a pet name, not likely to be guessed by anyone in a company of Legion, use it for a signature. Otherwise, she'd suspect forgery."

"I don't want anything to do with my family, Captain."

"Neither do we. But it will save trouble. There's a paper and a pencil. I'll see that it's sent." Morart wrote rapidly. Kerrellys, who had a reading knowledge of English, picked up the slip: "Let's see if this covers it: 'Am alive and well stop having good time stop please do nothing about this stop love—'" the captain looked up, puzzled and uttered a word questioningly: "Bunnikins?"

"Signed as suggested, Captain." Corporal Morart was red to the ears, humiliated. "May I leave—"

Lanahan rose to intercept him: "Morart, just a moment—"

The corporal faced his chief with clenched fists, and uttered a few words. Madame Houghton, who had called him "a sweet child, almost a baby

still," would have been startled by the spiteful tone as much as the expressions used: "I don't want to talk to you, you—"

Lanahan saw that it was best to drop the matter for the time. Morart hurled out of the room. Kerrellys called the orderly, sent him to the telegraph office with the telegram. Then he tapped the table rhythmically and looked up at Lanahan: "Insults to a superior, two years!"

"You understood?"

"My regiment was in line near American troops, before St. Mihiel. For a while, I thought what Morart just said was the customary greeting among privates. I discovered my mistake when I cordially employed it." The captain rubbed his knuckles, sighed: "How long ago that seems! but your protege seems to have abandoned your wardship."

"I meant to help him, Captain."

"I warned you." Kerrellys shrugged: "I regret to inform you that you are confined to quarters for eight days. If I don't punish you, the colonel will—and he's so sore he'd exaggerate. As it is, he'll simply approve my sentence."

"I'm sorry, Captain."

"Oh, get out of here, Lanahan. Each man has his own way of making an ass of himself. The mistake is to keep on braying when you're found out."

Morart got drunk and Lanahan did not thrash him. The corporal, to show his disapproval of what had occurred, went to the village without leave and within four hours was clamoring before the gate, mixing insults to Lanahan in French, German and English, so that all might understand him. Tough old Vacheron, who was on guard duty, had him locked up.

"But don't hurt him," he urged the

Legionnaires: "He's had news from home and it gave him *cafard*. That happens to anybody."

It was the start of an exciting week.

Morart lost his stripes for public drunkenness. Before he emerged from prison, a cablegram pages in length arrived for Frank Houghton and was delivered to him. Its probable cost was estimated by those who had a bump for mathematics and Morart found himself surrounded by rare respect when he was freed.

FOURTEEN men sought to borrow money as friends. Four showed him plans for inventions they wished to market when discharged. Three brought letters written in foreign languages he could not read and assured him they were pleas for money to save children from starvation.

As Lanahan ignored the epithets applied to him, his orderly, out of loyalty, fought Morart. More handy with a pressing-iron than his fists, he had his eye blackened.

"He'll shoot you, Lieutenant," Hermann assured Lanahan.

"Nonsense."

"Be careful. Those millionaires think their money will get them out of anything, Lieutenant." To the Bavarian, anyone who received a cablegram costing a sergeant's pay for a month could not be less than a millionaire.

The sergeants wished to show they were not awed: "If Monsieur Morart will consent to lift a broom and manure the stables? If you would stoop so far as to dump these buckets outside the wall? I regret, but we are not living at the Ritz now!"

Morart retorted, and days in prison rained on him. He accumulated sixteen in a few hours. Then Colomb-

Bechar radioed Captain Kerelys: "Regimental Headquarters advise us give leave of absence Corporal Morart, 17687, supply him transportation to Oran." And at the same time, Morart received a telegram from the Coast.

"You leave with the supply-trucks day after tomorrow," the captain told Morart. "Bechar will arrange your railroad trip."

"I don't want leave, Captain."

"I order you to accept, Morart. It will be preferable for all. You'll be transferred to a northern garrison until your family gets you out, probably. Good luck."

"Thanks, Captain."

But Morart did not leave for Oran as scheduled. He was reported missing from his cell the next morning. Some time during the night, he had broken out and deserted, with rifle, ammunition, purloined from the stand in the guard-room, a small quantity of biscuits and chocolate and a canteen holding two quarts of water.

Thus equipped, he probably believed he could cross the Sahara.

CHAPTER III.

MORART IN THE SAHARA.

WHEN his orderly brought him the news of Morart's escape, Lanahan called on Kerelys. This took some courage, for the captain believed he was to blame. The first minutes of the interview were stormy, and the big officer heard a concise outline of his shortcoming as a man, as a Legionnaire, as a chief.

"—and your moronic display of abortive favoritism needs no qualifications," Kerelys concluded. He slapped the table, glared at Lanahan: "Now, what do you want?"

"Your permission to find him, Captain."

"The way you manage matters, he'll have his throat cut before morning if you take charge. Go back to your quarters, Lieutenant."

"If the native auxiliary riders go after him without one of us, his throat will be cut. He has a gun, he may shoot. If he were unlucky enough to hit one of them, you know in what condition he would be when they brought him in." Lanahan grew persuasive: "So far, it isn't desertion, but illegal absence. Give me three days before reporting him gone. Attention is already attracted to his case—"

"By whom? By you! All right, what's your suggestion?"

"Morart will make for the west, with the hope of all deserters, that he can encounter a marauding band from the hostile zone, make them comprehend that he is a deserter before they've killed him, and swap his rifle and cartridges for his life. I'll take the best tracker in the auxiliaries, Ben Lakhdar. We've gone hunting often. Sergeant Breich and two Legionnaires, mounted on horses supplied us by the cavalry, will come along."

"You have my permission," Kerrelly agreed. "But be careful—the situation is unsettled—" He tapped some dispatches on the table: "Bands are reported west of here."

Ben Lakhdar, born and raised in the Desert, picked up the tracks of Morart's hob-nailed boots without difficulty. The party of five started out. Lanahan hoped to catch up with the deserter within a few hours, but the day passed as they trotted monotonously over the arid plateau.

The American feared that news of a desertion had leaked to native villages, and that Arabs were after him

for the reward. When opportunity offered, they were not tender to a European, as the Legionnaire was their victor of yesterday.

Somewhere ahead, in the shimmering haze, a lad of seventeen was trotting on foot, weighed down by his baggage. While there was as much ignorance as courage in his undertaking, his decision to risk everything to hold to an original belief which had caused him to enlist, forced Lanahan to admiration.

He knew that Morart was suffering already. No man can go far in the Sahara without water. Even the natives collapse after a couple of days. The least quantity, a glass a day, the mere wetting of the lips and palate with a damp cloth, helps. But complete privation from liquid cannot be endured.

Without his comrades, without the sharp voice of a chief to warn him away from his canteen, without the emulation of matching the endurance of men suffering as he was, Morart would have drained his canteen by mid-afternoon. And the next well was in the hills, forty-five miles from Mekhanan.

Thirst. Morart would suffer early. At three o'clock, he had discovered his canteen empty, very probably. But he would keep on until nightfall. There would be a measure of relief for him after darkness, when the surface cooled.

Then the cold would grip him, for he had taken no blankets and still wore his prison suit of light cloth. He would drop off into a restless sleep, until the sun awoke him. Within an hour, the leaden cape of heat would crush down upon the earth, and he would plod on under the broiling rays.

He would feel a steady tightening about his temples, like a steel ring being

screwed tightly. His tongue would dry, curl back in his mouth like the tongue of a parrot. Instinct would make him tighten his belt tighter and tighter about his stomach, a result of extreme thirst.

His fevered brain would suffuse his vision with mirages.

In the distance, suspended between earth and sky, he would see the blue streak of a placid lake, hemmed by waving reeds. Then the desert would bloom with a dream city, long, cool, tree-shaded streets just ahead, streets lined by the terraces of a thousand cafes.

AS the hours passed, torrents of rushing waters would tumble in his mind, he would lose consciousness partly, start walking in a crouch.

He would drop his rifle, his cartridges, his food, to lighten his load and stagger toward the mirage. He would tear his clothing from his back and limbs. He would walk in a circle, large at first, then smaller and smaller, until he dropped. His knees would hunch up against his belly—he would die.

"Faster, faster," the sub-lieutenant called.

"If we gallop, I shall lose the tracks," Ben Lakhdar said.

The five men were still trotting their horses, with the hills in sight, when night shut down suddenly. It was useless to keep on, for they would be unable to discern the deserter's footprints. Ben Lakhdar said that he had probably reached the well. Lanahan spent half the night pacing restlessly, staring westward. Once, he believed he had heard a shot, but none of his companions stirred.

What had it been? A rock cracking

loudly as the temperature changed? Or had Morart decided to spare himself further suffering?

They were in the saddle at dawn. The hills receded before them, and the party did not attain the pebbly slopes until mid-morning. At that time a scouting plane from Bou-Denib, an outpost across the border, in Morocco, swooped low. Ben Lakhdar waved a scarlet sash in greeting. The plane rose, the roar of its motor dwindled rapidly, until it was like the fluttering of an insect's wings against a window pane. Then it died out.

"The well—"

The single hole, three feet across and thirty feet deep, was obstructed by the carcass of a gazelle which had tried to reach the damp sand at the bottom. The air was filled with the stench of decaying flesh. Morart could not have refilled his canteen, although tracks all about showed he had made an effort.

"He's thirsty now," Ben Lakhdar stated.

A mile further, he reined his mount before a cluster of yellow boulders. It was evident that Morart had spent part of the night there. The Arab picked up bits of white cloth, chewed into shreds. He held up an empty cartridge: Lanahan had heard a shot.

"Something scared him into shooting," he opined.

"No. The smell of rotting meat has drawn jackals to the well. They followed the man, and he sought to kill one for his blood. He failed. He cannot be far, his tracks waver."

But they trotted on for an hour longer without coming upon Morart. Lanahan computed that they had covered some fifty miles since leaving the Post. The deserter must have rare powers of endurance to have covered this distance on two quarts of water!

The hoofs of their horses had clicked against the rounded pebbles of a dried stream-bed, they were climbing a long, stark slope, when the pinging swish of a missile startled them: Tzzzing—ing!

The report awoke sharp echoes in the hills. The five trotted back to cover. Sergeant Breich and his men loaded their carbines, and the non-com said:

"I was afraid he would do this. He's nutty, Lieutenant."

"You keep under cover, I'll go up alone. No matter what he does, don't shoot as long as I'm on my feet."

"You're crazy Lieutenant," Breich protested. "Believe me, he'll shoot. He's a mean little guy when he's sore."

"I'll chance that—"

THERE was three hundred yards to cover in the open. Lanahan emerged, holding his hands high, in full sight, one hoisting a handkerchief. Nevertheless, another bullet kicked up sand thirty feet before him. He discerned the rigid outline of the képi above a rock as Morart rose to shoot.

"Cut out that nonsense," he called.

He walked on, placid outwardly, but fighting down a sickening dread that the Legionnaire might be insane enough to drop him dead. This fear grew so strong that he halted a hundred yards from the rock, and shouted: "Morart, Morart!"

"Keep away, leave me alone!"

"I'm coming up for a talk, fellow. There's a lot of guys all through the hills; you haven't a chance."

"Go to hell! If you come nearer, I'll kill you."

From the quiver in Morart's voice, Lanahan sensed that it was not yet time for a rash move. And a long distance argument followed, with Lana-

han standing, arms up, in the blazing sun.

"All the captain will charge you with is illegal absence. We won't mention the shots, you know that. You'll get off with thirty days."

"Yeah, and how much for swiping this rifle?"

"The captain will hush it up." Lanahan was using English. "He wants to cover the whole business because of the fuss your folks are likely to make."

"I give you a minute to get out of sight, Lanahan. I might as well finish it right here—I'm sick of everything—"

Evidently, reminding Morart of his family had had the wrong result. A new idea occurred to the sub-lieutenant. He unslung his canteen, held it up temptingly: "How about a little drink, eh?"

Morart showed himself. Lanahan walked toward him. The Legionnaire grasped the water bottle, while Lanahan kicked the abandoned rifle aside. After two or three greedy swallows, he tore the canteen from the lad's hands. And when Morart reached for it avidly, he pushed him back.

Perhaps he had struck harder than he thought, nervous from his recent strain. The effect of the blow was surprising. Morart sprawled headlong, remained motionless. Lanahan whistled for his men, who looked down at the still body.

"*Nom d'un chien,*" Breich commented, "look at his mouth. It's a wonder he could stand." He carried Morart to a shady patch near a boulder, wetted his face with a damp cloth: "Well, old chap, being Emperor of the Sahara is not as easy as it seemed, is it?"

"Water—"

For a couple of hours, Morart was

permitted to suck water from the corner of a handkerchief. Then he had a real drink. And the return trip started.

WHEN they camped that night, Morart had recovered completely. He appeared like a man sobering up after a long drunk. He confessed that he saw now that his desertion had been stupid, that he had had no chance of winning through to a sea port. But it had seemed quite feasible and he had had a good reason to flee.

"The guy's in Oran now. I was supposed to go up to meet him."

"What guy?" Lanahan wondered.

"Might as well tell you. It will be all over the place before long, anyway. The fellow my mother's in love with."

"Your step-father?"

"Not that bad," Morart protested fiercely.

Then, unexpectedly, he was no longer Morart, the decorated Legionnaire, the demoted corporal, but seventeen-year-old Frank Houghton. He launched on a queer, halting narrative, almost crying at times. Lanahan listened to him, amused at first, then sympathetic. He remembered that things which brought a smile now had been major tragedies in his teens. It was a strange yarn to hear at a Saharan camp.

Houghton, Frank's father, had been a research engineer for a large electrical company in the East. The family had been prosperous enough. The mother was a girl from a suburban town of New York. The father's parents had lived in a small town of Pennsylvania, which Lanahan knew well. He could visualize the street of neat residences, a street lined with big trees, quiet and respectable. Frank had

gone to visit his grandmother often, and had had a swell time.

The family had been prosperous right along, but not wealthy. When Frank was about six years old, his father had discovered some gadget for the radio, and had founded his own company. That was what had changed everything, the money rolling in.

Even at that time, Frank stated, his mother had had foolish ideas. She had wanted him to attend a private school, which was good for culture and background. But Houghton had sided with his boy, who wanted to continue where he was. The only unavoidable development had been a yearly sojourn of two months in Europe, when he had studied French and German with private tutors.

His father was seldom along, as business kept him tied up all the time. The mother, Frank said, had mixed with a lot of foreigners, and given a lot of parties. She was crazy about that social stuff.

Frank had had two serious grievances even then: she had had paper printed with a coat of arms, and the boy had known that people made fun of her because of it. Then he had been made to wear a tuxedo coat with short pants and silk stockings, to mix with children who talked as if they had hot mush in their mouths.

When he had gone home, he had complained to his father, who had told him not to worry, that travel was good for him, and promised him a car of his own when he was sixteen. Frank had entered high school at thirteen, and had made the freshmen track team.

Then Houghton had died. He had returned for dinner one evening, gone up to change because there were some people coming. And the maid had found him lying on the bed, with only his coat, his collar and his shoes off.

His mother had taken him abroad immediately after the funeral. She had lived in Paris and put him in that school near Lausanne, not a bad place, putting out wonderful food and with a lot of sports. But, Frank expressed in rather coarse terms, the atmosphere had lacked virility. His special burden had been a young British instructor, who said nothing an American did could surprise him.

During his first holiday, in Paris, Frank had been introduced to "the guy," whom he also spoke of as "the count" with appropriate adjectives.

The count, he told Lanahan, was like somebody out of the comic sheets. Good looking, tall and thin, with a baldish head and a little mustache. Frank did not need an adult's mind to see through his game: he was after his mother's dough. Nobody was going to kid him out of it, either, and he had a way of laughing off any crack without letting it sink in.

FRANK had done his best to be diplomatic, had suggested to his mother that they go home. It was then that she had informed him that she was to marry again and that he must remain with her. He had tried to tell her what a mistake she was making, but she had scolded him, saying that he would "just adore" the count when he knew him better.

There had been a terrible row soon after, because he had written his grandmother about the whole business, and the grandmother had written her daughter-in-law. When grandmother had died, he had been accused of having caused her to die with his dreadful lies.

At the end of his vacation, he had been sent back to school. But his mother just wouldn't let well enough alone,

and when she had come to visit him, she had brought the guy along. She had cried when Frank had been rude to him. And the count had gone out into the school-yard, walking back and forth, smoking a cigarette in a long black holder, shrugging to himself and knocking pebbles around with his cane.

Frank had been taken sick soon after, and the doctor had said that being confined in the school and worrying had caused it. So he had been sent to the French Alps, on the other side of the lake, to board with a private family. When he had been well again, his mother had come, this time alone, and they had argued a long time.

She told him that she understood why he did not want her to be married again, but that some day he would see that she had to forget and make her life over again. They had drawn up a sort of a treaty. She would write the school and say he would not be back. He would go back to America and attend high school, living with friends. She even agreed that he need not see the count again unless he wished to.

But she had spoiled everything by insisting that she would get married in three months. There was no sense in that, Frank had insisted in turn, no sense whatever. To start with, the guy would never have met her if it had not been for his father earning the dough for trips abroad. Then he would not have bothered with her if she had been poor. The whole world to pick from, she had to choose a skinny bald head with a clipped mustache!

When his mother had gone, Frank had considered matters seriously. He had no intention of going home to the States and abandoning his foolish mother to her deserved fate. But what could he do to prevent the marriage?

He had consulted a French lawyer, who had first laughed at him, then told him that his consent was not called for by law, adding that he would get over his resentment without legal assistance.

Then an idea had occurred to Frank: his mother had loved him a lot. He wrote her a long letter, telling her that he was going away by himself, and that it was best not to look for him, as he would make out all right. But if he saw that she had got married in the papers, she would be sorry, for in that case, he would never see her again.

Knowing better than to use his passport, which could be traced, he had got a ride on a fishing boat across the lake, landed in Switzerland. He did not know how to save money, and was broke in a couple of days. And he had been considering a humiliating return, when he had encountered an odd character, behind a hedge.

The man was old, but pretty big, and tough. He had given Frank some food, and the boy had told him that he was from a near-by town, running away from home.

THE stranger had said that he was bound for France, to reenlist in the Foreign Legion. He had served fifteen years already. He spoke of Morocco, Algeria, the Sahara, Syria, Indo-China. He said there was no life like it: good food, a bonus on enlisting, adventure, wine. A man's life, if ever there was one, and no one asked questions.

"Five years is a long time," Frank had protested.

"Short—you'll reenlist like me. And if you don't like it, you can desert. It's not hard, if you know anyone who'll send you enough dough."

"And that's how I got here," Morart, again the Legionnaire, concluded.

"I was doing swell until you butted in, Lieutenant."

"You didn't write your mother after that?"

"No. If anything happened to her, I'd see it in the Paris papers. She was mentioned three weeks ago, visiting some people at Menton. Nothing to worry about."

"She hasn't married?"

"No. The paper called her Madame Houghton."

"Can she get at the money without you?"

"Father left her everything. Oh, I'm not worried about getting chiseled. She's soaked my part in trust, until I'm of age."

"I mean, she could have married and not lost her money?"

"Yes, of course."

"She had the right to. Just as you have the right to make a fool of yourself in your own way, if you're willing to pay the price for it. It's a wonder she didn't have the cops find you."

"Maybe she was scared to." Morart, perhaps because the Legion had taught him something, suddenly was ashamed of himself: "Guess I was a skunk. Wrote her that if she had me looked up, if I saw my name and my picture in the papers, I'd go where no cops would follow me. Suicide stuff, you know."

The tyrann of growing boys over widowed mothers, the complex and often cruel methods of playing on maternal love, was not new. All that could be said for the boy was that he had suffered from a normal form of jealousy.

Jealousy drives not only boys but adults to mad actions.

"I don't want to see that guy," Morart resumed. "I'd—"

"The captain will decide. I'll help

you all I can, Morart," Lanahan concluded.

CHAPTER IV.

COUNT RAZKEWICZ.

"YOU returned just in time," Captain Kerrellys said testily as Lanahan entered the company's office at Makhanan. "I was about to order the auxiliary native forces to rescue you! There's agitation among the Berbers, our partisans at Ain-Zeft had been attacked repeatedly. The two officers of the Intelligence Service there need protection, and I've been ordered to detach a section from this place for the job.

"As you were out on that last counter-raiding patrol, I've picked Bayral to go. Well, how's your pet?"

"Safe and sound, Captain. I promised him your indulgence—"

"The least I can give him is thirty days in the cooler. With the sixteen he has already, he'll be occupied a while! But we are not at the end of our complications with him. Since the colonel granted him special and extraordinary leave, he's been demoted, has been absent without leave, not mentioning other sins which you probably conceal. So that furlough is automatically voided."

"Morart admits he's deserved severe punishment, Captain."

"Very good of him." Kerrellys smiled faintly. "However, I learn that there is a telegram from Oran and another from Colomb-Bechar for Morart. At the same time, the major informs me that I am presumed to show all possible courtesy to a guest arriving here within three days.

"Must be a fairly important person to obtain permission to come practi-

cally into a dangerous zone. I cannot help connecting the two—and think Morart is involved."

"His mother?"

"Luckily, no. The notice specified it was a gentleman—"

"It won't mend matters for him to come," Lanahan explained briefly: "The lad has had a year of Legion and may express his dislike by taking a poke at the chap."

"That's possible," Kerrellys admitted. "Moreover, receiving his unwelcome visitor in prison will humiliate him to the point of fury. Let's see, we can avoid the meeting in this manner. By special favor, I have lifted all punishment of men belonging to Bayral's section, so that they may leave with their officer. I'll tamper with my records—the end justifying the means—and transfer Morart to that group, dating it yesterday."

Morart was called in. He had had time to clean and change, and save for the cracks on his lips, appeared recovered from his hard journey. He read the telegrams handed to him, reddened and turned helplessly toward Lanahan. The captain then informed him of his transfer.

"Don't thank me in words; show your appreciation in deeds," Kerrellys cut the private short. "You are a most fortunate young man, as you realize, to escape severe punishment. Remember that from now on you're serving under Lieutenant Bayral, a strict and just officer, and that our patience is ended."

"I will conduct myself like a man, Captain."

"You may leave." When the Legionnaire had left, Kerrellys laughed gently. "If he only knew it, he'd have insisted on serving his prison term. Bayral will work him hard—and there's an outpost to be constructed by

the section at Ain-Zeft. They'll be fired on often, and it won't be a picnic."

At dawn, the section for Ain-Zeft was lined up in the vast yard, for the captain's farewell. Lanahan was surprised to see Morart as Number One of the first automatic-gun's crew. And more surprised when Bayral, crisp and precise, sought him out.

"Look here, old man, you mustn't worry," the lieutenant said. "I shall spare him trouble. He has spirit, intelligence, and is learning discipline, obedience, rapidly. That last scrape sobered him up. Good Legionnaire."

The bugles sounded, the captain made a short speech, and the section pivoted, marched through the gate. The ceremony had been simple, quickly over. But Lanahan and those left behind had an odd sensation of uneasiness. Somehow, this departure was not like all other departures—some of those who had left would never return. Ain-Zeft held a sinister ring.

Lanahan knew the place, had stopped there four times: a few hundred date palm trees strung near a murky, elongated pool of water, a crumbling native village on a near-by hill. The outpost would be built on another crest, a mile away, where the geographical service had indicated the presence of water at a depth of forty feet.

THAT evening, Colomb-Bechar had radioed that a scout plane had flown over the section at four o'clock, sighting the column twenty-seven miles south of Makhanan. Lieutenant Bayral and his men consequently would reach Ain-Zeft some time during the following afternoon.

Lanahan was on duty on the next day. At eleven o'clock, three armored cars of the Colomb-Bechar Squadron

of Motorized Legion Cavalry rolled through the gateway. Lieutenant Bertain, in command, emerged from behind a steel door, hailed Lanahan: "Visitors, old man—hungry and hot, mostly thirsty!"

A very tall man, who wore a khaki *gandoura* over a white suit, alighted in his turn. But for the broad-brimmed straw hat, the sub-lieutenant would have believed him a professional officer, from his appearance and bearing.

"Count, this is Lieutenant Lanahan, of whom I spoke to you—Count Razkewicz—"

"Enchanted to—" Lanahan started in French.

"I speak English and even a little American," Razkewicz assured him. "Lived in the States, mostly in Detroit, for several months after the war."

Lanahan then knew he was facing the man Morart detested so intensely. He considered the count with curiosity, and wondered that the young Legionnaire, who admired strength and character, had not liked him.

Razkewicz was handsome, long, sinewy, with hard, lean cheeks, and the eyes of a fighter, pale, light-blue northern eyes. Where Lanahan had expected a sleek, oily "comic sheet" nobleman, he met a vigorous, jovial soldier. The type of man, as a matter of fact, one would like having about in a tight situation.

"Where's Kerrellys?" the count asked.

"We did not expect you so soon," Lanahan said. "He's in his quarters."

"I'll walk in on him—" Razkewicz grinned.

Without hesitation, like one who knew his way about a military post, he strode across the yard. Lanahan was puzzled by his informal use of the captain's name, until he saw the two meet.

"Captain!" Kerrellys exclaimed.

They shook hands, then grasped each other by the shoulders, laughing and shouting: "How long?" "Fourteen years, eh?" "What a belly!" "What a bald head!" "Why didn't you say it was you?" "Wanted to surprise you, Kerrellys."

At last, the captain whirled on the gaping lieutenants:

"Captain Severin Gaspard Count Razkewicz, March Regiment of the Foreign Legion. As you shall see, the world's thirstiest man—two quarts of Bordeaux and four of Champagne, eh, Razky? *Bon dieu*, when we went through the Bois de Hangard, in eighteen, I'd have been less scared if I had known we'd meet again today, even in such a hot dump as this is. He guided my first military footsteps—"

"And gave you the neck of a Pernod bottle for a teething-ring, if I remember rightly," Razkewicz shouted. "I had wondered what sort of a shave-tail you were going to give me—anything was good enough for a Polack, even then—" the count broke off. "By the way, old man, you know what brings me here? How is he? Can I speak with him?"

"He's out with one of the sections." The captain appeared embarrassed. "He's fine. I'll explain later."

THE lunch was the gayest meal that Lanahan had known at the Post. Razkewicz's enjoyment of the antelope steak, his enormous appetite, made one wonder how he kept in superb condition at his age. And he drank like a Pole, tossing the empties to the German orderlies in the doorway: "Reinforcements, there!"

"Same old Razky," Kerrellys stated. "I thought of quitting the service and begging you for a job—"

Lanahan went from surprise to surprise. The count so hated by Morart, the fortune hunting, impoverished nobleman, was a hard-working industrialist, chief engineer for one of the largest French automobile firms. Already known in his profession when the war broke out, he could have remained at the rear as a foreigner and an expert technician. But he had enlisted in the Legion, served for over four years, rising to the rank of captain.

From the lapel of his coat, carelessly hung from the back of his chair, Lanahan saw the thin ribbons of many decorations: Legion of Honor, Military Medal, War Cross, Wounded Emblem, Belgian, British, and Polish Crosses. This man had been a Legionnaire of the glorious epoch, had charged at the storming of the Ouvrages Blancs, into Belloy, everywhere. His name, therefore, was listed among the legendary heroes of the Corps in the little temple of remembrance at Sidi-bel-Abbes!

No wonder the colonel had permitted him to come, no wonder he had been brought out in a government armored car! And this was the rogue who had caused Morart to run away from his mother! Lanahan laughed at the thought that he had feared the young man would strike Razkewicz. The ex-captain could take care of himself—there were a number of younger men whom Lanahan would have chosen first as possible opponents.

Lieutenant Bertain, aware that the three others had something to discuss privately, pleaded fatigue and went to Bayral's vacant room for a siesta. Kerrellys dismissed the orderlies.

"Razky, Lanahan knows more of your chap than I do."

"I'm not surprised. Being Americans—"

Lanahan told of the youth's arrival at Makhanan, of his early tribulations. Razkewicz nodded approvingly when told how Morart had pushed his chief away from a rifle: "The boy has splendid stuff in him. He was spoiled by too much catering." He smiled at the desertion, at the capture. And shrugged when Lanahan tactfully outlined why he had believed it wiser to avoid a meeting.

The ex-Legionnaire adjusted a cigarette in the long black holder, struck a match:

"It is only fair for me to tell you what happened. The boy's system has been, always, to avoid speaking to me. His mother insisted that he was too high-strung to be forced to face me, she feared a nervous breakdown. No one could convince her that he was a husky young brute, with his mind upset by too many changes.

"She begged me not to mention his father, saying it would shock Frank. When I was in Detroit, studying American methods for my firm, I met Houghton, who was there to raise capital for his company from wealthy manufacturers. In the space of a few weeks, we became good friends.

"When his wife came to Europe, he naturally thought of me and asked me to look after her, as he was afraid all the expatriated chiselers, all the greedy antique dealers, would surround her. I was connected also with his French office, to market that patent article of his in Europe.

AFTER he died, she came over and asked me to organize her establishment in France. She's a beautiful woman, a cultured lady, an excellent musician. It was to be expected that we would become fond of each other. And it was no foolish,

youthful romance, for I'm nearer fifty than I like to think about, and she's—thirty-six or so.

"Frank was nervous, naturally: cut off from his usual surroundings, with no friends of his age. What he did not tell you is that he had a hard time in school. Children are snobbish, and they made him feel that all he had was money, ridiculed his mother's harmless pretensions, told him things that adults whisper about in good, clear words. He grew to hate Europeans.

"By accident of birth, I was one. I suggested that when he came on his holidays, I meet him casually, show him the factory, my office-things that would link me with his own father in his mind. Alice said it would remind him too sharply, and that was a point on which I could not argue. She insisted on being present when we met, and to show off before her, he was as brash as he could be. She sent him from the room, siding openly with me. Where she fails where he is concerned is in allowing emotion to replace common sense. She cajoles or threatens him.

"When he ran away, she was in horrible distress for days, could not sleep, worried. But she would not go to the police. She was certain that the moment Frank heard he was being sought he would leap into the nearest river. He swims like a frog, too!

"She went to a private detective agency. With the results to be expected: big expense accounts, fees, false reports, trips to Bremen to identify some young lout in jail for vagrancy, to Vienna to stare at a body in the morgue. She made a flying trip to America, hoping that he was hiding near their old home.

"She postponed our marriage until he could be found. Which was just

what the little devil had ordered. At the end of two months, she was ready to call in the police. The private detectives then gave her definite news: her son had signed on a Scandinavian sailing ship, and was on the high seas bound for Valparaiso. They had a shipping company's book to show, on which a man answering Frank's description had signed: F. Hanson. Same initials, you see?

"The ship was somewhere in the South Atlantic, and had no sending set. But Alice was assured her son would be picked up when he landed. But the vessel put in at another port for water, and F. Hanson jumped ship. He was located on a small tramp bound for Australia.

"By that time, I also was convinced, from his actions, that Hanson was Frank. Then, from Sydney came a description of the man held: twenty-three, tattooed, blond, and over six feet tall. The man who had resembled Houghton bore another name, and proved himself to be a Swede.

"So the search swung back to the continent. Alice visited a hospital in Barcelona, an insane asylum near Bourges. You cannot imagine how many young chaps of his general description are loose in the world. I never thought of the Foreign Legion, as I did not imagine Frank would stand the discipline for long without appealing for help.

"A few days ago, Alice called me up at three in the morning, crying. She had been on a party with American friends, just returned from a visit to Lausanne. For fear of scandal and gossip, she had concealed Frank's disappearance from most people. So when they asked her how her son was, she gave some vague reply. Then the woman speaking to her laughed, turned to

her husband: 'You see what boys will invent, Dick—all that story about the man with Frank's picture, who said he had died in the Foreign Legion, was made up.' Other persons present, who claimed to know, said it was fortunate that it had not been Frank, as the poor chap had surely been tortured to death by his superiors.

"THIS frightened her. Although she knew I had served, she had not known exactly in what regiment. Women pay small attention to details! I told her I had served four years, starting as a common private, and knew the facts. I mentioned the names of a dozen comrades still serving, yours among them, Kerrellys, and guaranteed your humane qualities in flattering terms.

"But she would not wait. She started to visit officials, wrote letters. When Frank's telegram came, she was reassured, but wanted to start for the Sahara at once. It was neither the season nor the place for a woman. I prevailed upon her to let me go, as I was known and probably would receive consideration."

"What do you intend to do?"

"His education is not finished," Razkewicz stated. "I'll get him out. The colonel said there would be no difficulty, as he was under age, that a refund of the enlistment bonus would square matters—"

"I meant," Kerrellys corrected, "what will you do now?"

"Go and see him, of course."

"The road is not safe, and there is no regular service as yet to Ain-Zeft—"

"Bertain will run me over in his car—"

"What do you think, Lanahan? You know him best—" the captain asked.

"My thinking hasn't turned out so

well of late," the sub-lieutenant hesitated. "And yet—the trouble I made did some good, reassured Madame Houghton and the count. My suggestion is that having been patient over a year, patience be stretched a few weeks longer—"

"I cannot remain here more than a few days—" Razkewicz said.

"Don't stay." Lanahan added: "You've been in the Legion, and you know that after a year of it, Morart—that is to say, Frank—takes it seriously. In a month or so, when he has calmed down, we'll have him transferred back to my section. I'll tell him you were down, who you are. Chiefly, that you were an officer here. He'll see himself that it is cowardly not to face facts, to damn you without talking things over. Under the circumstances, and with your connections, you can obtain an exceptional favor, a month's leave to be spent in France. Don't force matters, show him a good time, and at the end of his leave, ask him what he wants to do. If he wants to return to us, let him."

"That sounds logical," Razkewicz nodded. "But it implies a friendlier feeling than he's shown."

"Don't worry, he won old Vacheron's heart by listening to his anecdotes of the March Regiment on the Western Front. He's borrowed my books on the Corps, and I found a list of names mentioned in them, men he has met who were with that unit. He's a man in body and achievements."

CHAPTER V.

"FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE!"

THERE were several men at Makhanan who had been with the March Regiment. An informal banquet was organized in the non-

coms' mess room, and numerous bottles were emptied that evening. Razkewicz, known as Razky, evidently had left a good reputation. Even men who had served in German units opposed to the Legion were eager to shake his hand and compare notes. No guest had ever been more popular, and his popularity was not only due to his generosity in presenting the bulk of the liquor consumed.

Kerrellys and Lanahan alternated in taking the count hunting in the hills, with Ben Lakhdar as guide. Razkewicz was an excellent shot, a tireless marcher. And he enjoyed the change from the routine of his life in France, was not at all anxious to leave.

A week passed, and he was not yet ready to start the long journey toward the Coast.

The routine at the Post was unchanged, fatigue parties went out as before, orders for sentries had not been changed. But the telegraphers gossiped, and everyone knew that fighting was in the air. The number of Legionnaires punished for various misdemeanors dwindled sharply. Men did not wish to be left behind if the company was called out.

The section under Bayral was reported at work constructing the redoubt at Ain-Zeft. The intelligence service officers expressed surprise that the neighboring dissident tribes had made no demonstration. Their native agents reported intense antagonism in the oases to the southwest not yet under French rule. The tribal chiefs were against an attack, knowing that the sole result would be to bring invaders in greater numbers. But the mass of the population, harangued by professional holy men, was clamoring for action.

There was no possibility of knowing just how serious the trouble might be.

If the disturbance remained local, eight hundred to a thousand warriors would be engaged. But if the uprising spread, the seemingly empty Sahara and neighboring ranges of hills could spill thousands of fighting men. In preparation, French troops started moving south by slow stages, along the strategic railway linking Ain-Seffra to Colomb-Bechar.

"The Bechar-Bou-Denib auto route has been closed to civilian traffic," the captain told Lanahan one evening. "And from the Middle Atlas to the Desert, outposts have been sniped upon. The Midelt aviation says that the hill people are on the move in strong bands. Any moment, the armored cars may be recalled for patrol work from Bechar north."

Razkewicz laughed.

"Which I might consider a hint to avail myself of one before that emergency strands me here—"

"You're reasonably safe at Makhanan," Kerrellys assured him. "But even this post, with heavy machine guns and small cannon, might be surrounded, besieged for a few days. If your business needs you, it would be too bad. And Madame Houghton would surely worry a great deal."

Razkewicz snapped his fingers: "Which reminds me! After all, I came down to bring back her son, and instead amused myself enormously. She'll never forgive me if anything happens to him. Look here, Kerrellys, I change my plans. Ask permission to have a car drive me to Ain-Zeft. Bertain assures me he's been there before and can make it again—"

THE captain telegraphed Regional Headquarters and received a lengthy reply immediately: Cloudbursts had washed out the trail in four places, the cars could not pass. More-

over, it was not advisable to move military units, as there was still hope of avoiding a hard campaign and subsequent loss of life if nothing was done to excite the hesitating tribesmen to action.

"No luck, Razky," Kerrellys declared.

"All right. I'll hire a horse and start out with Ben Lakhdar."

"No. If you were ambushed and murdered, I'd be held responsible for permitting you to start. And sending Bayral a civilian at this time would not be a nice gift. He has enough on his mind as it is."

Razkewicz straightened, passed his sinewy, tanned hand over his bald skull. Lanahan could see that this concern over his safety was humiliating and irksome.

"I might not be useless," the count grumbled.

"But you're technically a non-combatant, Razky."

"That's the hell of it. Even you think that I should tend to my blueprints and production costs."

"That's what you picked yourself," Kerrellys reminded him. "When will you start back?"

"Grant me a couple of days. Ben Lakhar, who lies like the Arab he is, promises to get me a shot at the largest antelope he's ever seen. Oh, don't worry, I'll be careful when I go out." Razkewicz rose and left the room.

"I wish he'd go," the captain told Lanahan. "This is no place for him. He's to be married. Yes, I have a wife and children, but I've never ceased being a professional soldier. He knows as well as I do that there is no chance of withdrawing Morart from the section now.

"It would humiliate the man, and have a poor effect on the morale of his

comrades. He just wants to get out there in the hope of seeing the excitement. I'll ask Headquarters for an order to evacuate civilians, if he stays much longer."

But there was no time for this. Ain-Zeft was reported attacked. The news was incomplete but sufficiently alarming. The native population of the oasis had surrounded the residence of the French officers of the Intelligence Service. The two had resisted, helped by their Arab guards. One had been killed. Two groups of the Legion had charged, cut through the attackers, and taken the survivors back into the redoubt.

Bayral and his men were now surrounded by three or four hundred men. When the observation plane had flown over, he had displayed canvas signals, to indicate that he would need help.

Lanahan, summoned to the office, saw that Razkewicz had arrived ahead of him. Unless he was much mistaken, the count was not altogether sorry he had remained.

"The company goes out at once," the captain outlined: "All but Vacheron's section, which must stay here to defend the Post. How many men does that leave us?"

"One hundred and five, Captain."

"Unless the swine have been tremendously reinforced, that should be enough to scatter them," Kerrellys said. "I have no orders, but the time for hesitation is past. We better hit quick and hard, so hard that they'll quit. Light marching equipment, rifle, trenching tools, blankets, two hundred and fifty rounds a man. Additional ammunition to be distributed at once—"

THE non-coms went out. Lanahan was signing slips for the supply-sergeant, for even under stress, routine had to be observed, each bag

of flour, every grenade issued accounted for. In the yard, the oldest bugler in the unit, a gray-haired veteran, was sounding the assembly. There was something thrilling in that string of alert, brassy notes lifting into the sunlight.

"We should beat every other relief detachment by at least six hours," the captain said, laughing. These moments were rare, paid men for the monotonous existence of Saharan outposts. "What is it, Razky?"

The ex-captain rose leisurely: "I suppose that not being on the active list I'll have to go on foot?"

"Go where?"

"To Ain-Zeft."

"No civilian allowed."

"You'll leave me beyond to bite my nails? Nonsense."

"What else can I do?"

"All I need is a *kepi*. If you're afraid I'll spoil one of yours, a trooper's will do. I have my own pistol, and if you can't spare a Lebel, I'll carry my sporting gun. Further, I'll sign a waiver to cover your responsibility."

"That's against regulations—"

"Come," Razkewicz said leisurely. "You forget that my whole happiness is involved. If anything happens to that boy within a few miles of me, my chances of marriage will be slim. I'm desperate in advance! Nothing to live for and all that!"

"Within a few miles! I'll be damned if I supply you with a horse."

"Lanahan's walking, and so am I."

"I haven't much time to argue, Razky."

"That's what I'm counting on," Razkewicz grinned.

The captain stopped short, and for an instant Lanahan was not sure whether he would become furious or laugh.

"I know what's the matter with you," Kerrellys said at last. "That bugle! You're like an old army mule, you react through habit. *Bon dieu*, I haven't the heart to turn you down. What do you say, Lanahan?"

"As you order, Captain."

"All right, Razky! If you want to take off a few years for a few days by risking what you have left to live, I can't help it. No need to sign anything, I didn't turn in a receipt for you when you arrived. Let's see—I can adjoin you to Sergeant Breich. He's good natured and won't mind obeying you."

"I'll give no orders," Razkewicz said. "I'm just an emergency Legionnaire."

"All right. Go borrow a *kepi* and equipment."

The outgoing sections formed in the yard within an hour. At the rear were the pack-mules, carrying ammunition, food and water. The Legionnaires made a point to appear casual, unconcerned, but the lines rippled with concealed excitement. Sixty miles at maximum speed, with a combat at the finish—that was a neat feat to undertake.

Vacheron was arguing in a low voice with Kerrellys: He wanted to be taken along.

"Ready, Captain," Lanahan said.

"All right—" Kerrellys climbed into the saddle, turned toward the men: "If you need anything to cheer you on, Legionnaires, think that fifty of your comrades are fighting already. By the time we reach them, you'll have their dead to avenge."

HE looked toward Breich's combat group. The rear man was tall, rangy, and wore a *kepi* somewhat too small for his skull. Under the belts and straps, the bulging cartridge-pouches, the khaki traveling suit could

pass for a uniform. Razkewicz's legs were gaitered in solid, high laced boots.

"Sergeant Breich, you may allow your extra man to ride on a mule at his request—against custom in the Legion, but he's an exceptional case."

All heard Razkewicz's answering laugh.

"Forward—"

The two sections swung through the gate, headed south, into the ardent sun.

There are a number of famous forced marches in the records of the Foreign Legion, among them the extraordinary feat of the battalion which covered seventy-five miles in one day, out of the City of Fez, to rescue Gouraud's column in the early days of the Moroccan Conquest. And there are the incredible performances of the mounted companies of the Corps everywhere.

In the Legion, there is not this company or that company: A company of Legion is a company of Legion, just as one dollar is worth the same as another.

There were dried river-beds and gullies to be crossed, tumbling down rocky inclines, laboriously climbing the opposite side: stretches of hard stone flat as a mirror, which rasped the hob-nails like a giant file; loose sand and brown silt, and soil as fine and white as flour—and the Legionnaires from Mekhanan clicked off the miles.

They swung under the setting sun, darkness did not slow their pace. And when the moon lifted in the black sky, the plodding files were marching beside their elongated, ghostly blue shadows.

At long intervals, the captain's whistle halted them. At the start, the men sat down or stretched out. When fatigue turned the tendons of their legs to red-hot wires, the majority stood

during the rest-periods, leaning against one another, to avoid the effort of rising. Another blast, and they fell into formation again. Belts and straps sawed at the flesh, pouches, bags and canteens grew heavier. Sleepy men stumbled into those ahead. Curses, muffled threats were exchanged, but the march continued.

There were no stragglers. Because the men had been trained with great care for such a test, because the unfortunate chap who dropped out was disarmed and left to the mercy of prowlers, but no straggler, chiefly, because a Legion unit marching to battle wants no straggler. The implacable, century-old traditions, the spirit of the Legion come into play.

Sub-Lieutenant Larihan led the way on foot. Kerrellys would dismount and walk at his side for some time, then get into the saddle again. He needed more ease, for his was the brain that would think for all when the enemy was sighted.

As they filed down a dune, toward dawn, a chill wind lashed them. They hungered for warmth as they had hungered for fresh air. Then a voice lifted, in a ribald song, and the words were clamored by the combat groups. The whole Sahara might know that they were coming, more than a hundred Legionnaires, with comrades needing them ahead.

WHEN the sun rose, Kerrellys trotted his horse along the lines, encouraging men individually. They turned haggard, dust-masked faces toward him, grinned or scowled. At the rear of Breich's group, Razkewicz did not falter. For fourteen years, his exercise had been taken on the courts, the links, in the saddle. But he was one of a breed of mythical

heroes, an ex-Legionnaire of the March Regiment. Under the eyes of the new Legion, the Old could not fail.

The captain offered him his canteen, aware that a novice in the desert would have drained his canteen before others. Razkewicz shook his head. Yet, not three minutes later, when Kerrellys had gone on, a private of his group passed a canteen to him, and he mumbled thanks. It was a subtle point of etiquette that could not be acquired in schools.

The sound of firing at Ain-Zeft was first heard at a great distance, while progressing between rocky walls. Then, by a frequent phenomenon of acoustics, it was lost again, to be picked up later. Each time it ceased, a fierce anxiety sent the men straining forward—could it be over, had the isolated section been wiped out? And when the faint vibrations were perceived once more, the feet would tramp in rhythm for a while, as if the common hope had coordinated all muscles.

"A few miles further," the captain called, "and you have them!"

A grunt of sullen determination answered him. Yes, they would get to the enemy—their reward for marching sixty miles in record time.

Once, a man slipped, fell to his knees. A sergeant hoisted him erect, two smart slaps resounded. Jarred awake, the fellow shook his head, looked about him with startled eyes, and kept going.

By seven in the morning, the whole sky was ablaze. And by eight, the atmosphere vibrated with heat, as if tiny globules of light condensed, slid up and down a while, crackled in tiny flames and burst. And the feet kept swinging, swinging, endlessly. Feet swinging in the tireless stride that had tolled off the miles in the jungles, over the mountains, across the plains of four con-

tinents. And these men resembled the others, formed a vision of the past—feet that had marched into Sevastopol, over the stricken fields of Italy and France, into Mexico City, into Lang-Son on the Chinese Frontier, into Chateau-Salins after a victorious war. They had been marching a hundred years, and they would never halt.

"Ain-Zeft!"

Bobbing in the distance, like a mirage, rose the leafy crest of the palm grove, sharp and clear against the ochre hills. And the panorama was unchanged for those who had seen it before. They felt surprise because of this, for those two words "Ain-Zeft" had been hammering in their brains, had become a fabulous goal, a shrine, a Mecca!

"Look out!"

There was a bristling of rifles, as a man rose suddenly before the detachment. He was an Arab soldier, a survivor of the first attack, on the morning before. A halt was called, officers and sergeants listened to his story. It was incoherent, filled with brief, horrible details.

The natives had rushed the Intelligence Service Residence at dawn. One officer had been killed immediately. The soldier had seen him dragged away, decapitated. In seeking to help him, he had been wounded himself: He parted his bloody tunic to show a hole in his shoulder.

HE had seen the Legionnaires arrive, twenty of them at least, in time to save his other officer, who had been cut about the head and neck with long knives. But he had been unable to join them, and he had fled north.

"Were any Legionnaires killed?" Kerrellys asked.

Yes, he had seen two fall. Coming up, their guns had driven the natives

away for a moment, but all the way back, they had had to fight with the bayonets.

"You can ride on a mule, come along," Kerrellys said. He ended the halt with a sharp blast and called out: "Flankers!"

A group marched left, a group marched right, away from the detachment, to progress along the near-by crests and avoid a surprise. The brief order had startled them all like an electric shock: Flankers meant that the enemy was near and that the first part of their task was drawing to an end.

Kerrellys dismounted, walked beside Lanahan.

"We cannot afford to fiddle long under this sun with the men in their condition. As soon as we take contact with the swine, we'll butt our way through and join Bayral's section behind the walls. And while we're going over their lines, we better not loiter to pluck daisies!"

Lanahan nodded understanding. The usual careful approach might give time to the enemy to form a screen of sharpshooters in good positions. The detachment then would be held in check in the open, with the men tired and thirsty. While this would ease the pressure on their comrades of the Ain-Zeft garrison, it would place Kerrellys' men in a sorry plight.

The sub-lieutenant dropped back, to communicate this plan to each group commander. He told the sergeant in charge of the pack-mules to advance with the rest and be prepared to salvage ammunition in case an animal was dropped. The rest did not matter, as there was water and food for a few days at the post.

"Lanahan—" Razkewicz hailed him. When the American was at his side, he made a familiar request: "If anything

happens to me—one never knows—mail letters left in my portfolio. And if the lad is safe, give him my regards."

"Right, Razky."

Lanaban trotted to overtake the head of the little column. Yes, it was strange to think that at this moment Morart might be dead. It was almost certain that he had been with the rescue party. If Bayral had asked for volunteers, he had shouted first. And if the officer, methodical as always, had designated those to go, he was sure to have taken Number One Group!

How completely one tiny pellet of lead could settle one set of problems for a number of people, and at the same time start an entire new series! And Razkewicz was right, he might be killed. In that case, he would have come a long distance on a foolish errand to find an unexpected death.

The hammering of an automatic rifle proved that Bayral's men were still holding. The Post came in sight, a mere shell of walls atop of a hill. Little movement could be seen, as both attackers and defenders remained under cover as much as possible.

THEIR presence had been discovered. Running men darted from the palm grove, vanished against the sand. The first flashes blinked, the first missiles hummed.

"Deploy!" Kerrellys called. The groups formed a single, long front, leaving wide intervals between men. For thirty seconds, they marched in silence: "Fix—bayonets!"

There was the rasp of the long, quadrangular blades snapped from the scabbards, the clicks as metal fitted metal.

"Line of direction—the Post on the hill—" and they walked, one, two,

A 2—28

three hundred yards. "Load magazines—" This was a mechanical order, as all rifles were already loaded. "At the double, march!"

The Legionnaires swung forward.

"March—" they slowed down: "Riflemen—fire at will."

The Lebels cracked along the line, the men firing as they moved. The automatic riflemen held their weapons ready for favorable targets. Kerrellys did not dismount, although he knew that he was a tempting target. His *kepi* was brand new, not covered with khaki cloth, and the three loops of gold braid scintillated on his head.

Across space drifted a bugle call—and the gray-haired bugler lifted his gleaming instrument, replied. All was as it should be, the Legion call had been answered.

Natives were running to meet the detachment, hastily forming a skirmish line to cut it off from its destination. The fusillade increased. Until then, no one had dropped, the Legionnaires had seemed invulnerable.

And before their remorseful advance, the natives fell back. A man fell, another bent to look at him, straightened and walked on.

The enemies were puzzled by this recklessness, vaguely awed by this unhurried, steady onslaught. Long since, according to past experience, the Legionnaires should have crouched, sought to take advantage of the tremendous fire of the automatics. They broke once more, and ran back. Now, they were mingling with their comrades circling the post. They must hold their ground now, or be pushed up-slope under the guns of Bayral's section.

"Steady—forward—steady—"

The captain rode in the center of his line, holding his nervous horse tight.

He sat erect in the saddle, no weapon save a riding crop held in his hand. He was superb and fearless. Perhaps he had acquired the creed of the desert men: What mattered if he died? He left sons to carry on.

As the missiles whined about him, Lanahan had the sensation that his broad chest, his tall body, filled the sky. But at the same time there was an exquisite sensation of living, of security in his mind. He felt a hundred pairs of eyes against his back, supporting him, pushing him on. Unlike Kerrellys, however, he swung a solid stick in his right fist and held an automatic in his left hand.

Tap—tap—A minute, two minutes—
“Charge!”

As in the old days, the precipitated notes hurled the Legionnaires upon their adversaries. They ran like hounds unleashed. And the quick, unexpected dash succeeded. Before the lunging blades, the natives' line split, was rolled back like a curtain to either side of the detachment.

LANAHAN had the satisfaction to overtake one of the fugitives, and knocked him down with a blow of the stick. Around him, there was a confused struggle. Men trapped between two fires fought desperately to save themselves. A brief, spasmodic mêlée, in which bayonets darted like the bills of cruel birds.

Then it was over: As the Makhnan Legionnaires tumbled into the enclosure, the automatics of the garrison slashed obliquely, screening the slope with flying lead. The wounded were carried in. Two men had been left behind, dead.

“Welcome, Captain,” Bayral saluted, grinned and offered his hand.

For the moment, danger was for-

gotten, wild elation swept them all, the men who had held on, those who had marched. Legionnaires rose from behind smoking guns to greet friends, hails resounded in all the tongues of Europe. Lanahan grasped extended hands, was pounded on the back.

“You came four hours sooner than we thought possible!”

“It was a walk! Where's Morart? Is he—”

A Legionnaire came forward, a half-naked, swarthy man with a bloody bandage on his shoulder. Soft beard curled on his dirty cheeks, but Lanahan recognized his smile. He patted him on the back, but had no time to speak. Morart had other friends to greet.

A few seconds later, Razkewicz was at his side. His bayonet was stained, there were flecks on his coat. But with the excitement of combat passed, he had an odd, half-apologetic manner.

“Which one is he?” he asked.

Lanahan indicated Morart. Razkewicz shoved his way through the excited, milling men, touched the Legionnaire's sound elbow. As Morart turned, he wordlessly offered his hand. Lanahan was watching the scene curiously, as he felt somewhat responsible for this meeting.

Morart's first gesture was to accept the hand, believing he was greeting a comrade. And he was shaking hard, shouting and laughing, when his eyes lifted to the taller man's face. At first, his expression was puzzled, as he doubtless tried to place a name on a familiar face.

Then surprise overcame him, and his hand went limp in the other's grasp.

“Hello, Frank!”

This was the critical moment. Morart had such unexpected twists of mind that Lanahan was not certain

whether he would free his hand to strike, or whether he would make peace. Razkewicz himself smiled almost timidly.

The young Legionnaire's hesitation lasted only a second.

He needed no explanation, no guarantee: This man had been allowed to come with the Legion. He was grin-

ning, laughing, pumping the hand he held up and down vigorously, yet something was making clean streaks down his grimy cheeks.

The English words came clearly to Lenahan, above the tumult of rejoicing men.

"You here? For the love of Mike! For the love of Mike!"

THE END

Crime Oddities

CONVICTS in German prisons are compelled to wear black masks when leaving their cells for exercise, in order that they may not be recognized by other prisoners.

In England, Lynch Law was formerly called Lydford Law; in Scotland it was known as Cowper Law.

Monsieur de Paris is the nickname of the French executioner. Charles Henry Sanson was the first headsman of Paris, and his family has carried the title for generations. He was succeeded by his son in 1820 during the advent of the guillotine. As sole executioner for continental France, his yearly salary was \$1,200, and \$2,000 additional for the care of the guillotine, with an annuity upon retirement of \$200 a year.

In Egypt, persons placed under police supervision, and unable to find security demanded for future good behavior, are employed, if they so desire, in cultivation or other work at a daily wage.

The well-meaning Puritan Fathers of New England during the seventeenth century always presented pilloried law-breakers with a devotional book entitled, "Hooks and Eyes for Unbelievers' Breeches."

In England, nearly 30,000 persons are arrested annually as drunk and disorderly.

Finns are so law-abiding that a police system is not necessary in their native country.

There are no money lenders or loan sharks in Abyssinia, and the authorities penalize personal lending and borrowing by chaining together the two parties involved in such transactions, until a friend or relative of the borrower comes to the rescue and pays off the obligation.

Witches were never burned at Salem, Massachusetts, despite the fact that the place of "burning" is frequently pointed out to visitors. In the outbreak of the anti-witch fanaticism of 1691-92, nineteen persons were hanged, but not one was burned.

The Bishop of Verdun, who invented for criminals the "Iron Cages," too small to allow the person imprisoned in them to stand upright or lie at full length, was the first to be shut up in one.

—Kenneth P. Wood.

Half-Million Murder

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

Author of "The Lavender Lamp," "The Prophet of Death," etc.

Major Tom Eagle, Cherokee Indian district attorney of New Jersey, was more than that—he was a relentless tracker of murderers

CHAPTER I.

ONE MAN'S TRACKS.

RAIN lashed him as he raced through the woods. He could see nothing. His outstretched hand groped desperately to avoid bruising himself against trees. He was drenched to the skin; the brim of his hat sagged and dripped. His boots were slimy. In spite of a sultry fore-

night, he had not foreseen this sudden squall of rain. Tracks! Deep and damning tracks he left now at each stride of flight.

To his left lay the lake. For the first half mile of his retreat he had kept to the rim of it. He had even waded out knee deep into the water and paralleled the shore for a hundred yards. But that, he knew, would not deceive pursuers. Quickly they would pick up his tracks at the point where he had emerged from the lake. Emerging, he had turned a little way into the woods with the hope that the ground would be less soggy under the trees.

He was still leaving tracks, though, as he plunged madly onward. He could hear the rain drumming on the lake,



Veede's left hand touched a phone receiver

could feel it slicing through the boughs to drench him even here. Then he heard another sound which stopped him for a moment, cold and shivering. Hounds! He could hear them baying, far back of him.

In a fresh panic he plunged on. He bumped into a tree, swerved to the left and in a short while again found him-

at Lakehaven, he would at the worst be only one of five. Whereas if found alone and aflight through the woods, he would most definitely be one of one.

Lakehaven loomed before him in a little while, a broad, three-story house set between the lake and the Kittatinny golf course. A terraced lawn dipped from it to the water's edge. A night



Eagle was more interested
in feet than in fingers

self on the lake's edge. It was less than a mile across that lake. He could swim it, he knew. But what good? With dogs and lanterns they could circle the lake and see the place where he emerged.

No, his best ruse was to make swiftly for his snug bed at Lakehaven. Found

light left burning on the front veranda made it now, through the dark, dimly visible. The fugitive raced toward it, with rain beating upon him. Even here on the lawn he knew he was still leaving tracks. Rain might confuse the hounds to some extent, but it was only making his tracks deeper. There was

no help for it. His guilt, with a fervid desperation, sought company. And four other men, he knew, were sleeping here at Lakehaven.

He circled to the rear of the house and mounted to a porch there. Now, under cover, rain no longer struck him. But of course his muddy boots were defiling the boards of the porch. With a gloved hand he took from his pocket a latch key. Then he unlocked a door, opened it, peered into a dark kitchen.

The house was quiet. Naturally, at this hour of two in the morning, it would be. He did not enter immediately, for tracks must not lead to his room. Tracks must end on this sheltered porch.

Therefore he removed his unionalls, his underwear, his hat, his socks, his boots. He made a ball of these garments and threw them as far as he could into the rain. They were not his own. Just after sundown, he had smuggled them from the garage. Presumably they were a garb used by the Lakehaven chauffeur on occasions of washing or greasing cars.

Having hurled them far into the rain, the man on the porch removed his cotton gloves. These also he threw into the rain. Then he crept naked into the house.

HOURS earlier he had spotted a flashlight on a shelf to the right of the door. A soiled dish towel hung from a rack near it. The intruder groped until his hand touched the dish towel. With this shielding his finger tips he found the flash. The beam of the flash exposed the facilities of a well ordered kitchen.

Condiments were on a cabinet shelf, and from them the intruder selected a can of black pepper. Standing in the open doorway, he strewed the pepper

on the porch floor. Then, still standing with feet bare and dry in the portal, he threw pepper can, flashlight, towel and latch key far out into the rain.

When he closed the door, he did so with his elbow. The night latch clicked. He made his way forward then through the pantry and dining room to the rug of a front hall. From here broad stairs ascended. Half way up those carpeted stairs the man paused to listen. The only sound was his own beating heart. Guests on holiday in the country, he thought, are apt to be sleeping soundly at two in the morning. Especially after a day of fishing and golf, followed by poker until midnight.

And especially since they were all men. With a houseful of women, the man who crept nude up the stairway would have been more fearful. But he knew that the women of the party had clanned together for a shopping spree in the city, and were staying overnight to see a new Broadway show. For that fact he was grateful. Women, he thought, were more psychic than men; and they slept like cats. Now there were none of them in the house with the exception of a Swedish cook in her quarters at the rear of the third floor.

Reaching the darkness of the second floor hall, the fugitive made his way silently along it. In a moment he entered his own room. It had a private bath. The tub there was half full of water, just as he had prepared it. Into the water he now introduced bath salts.

At full length in the tub, he lay with a sense of almost stunning relief. Through the open window he could hear a faint voice of hounds. Swiftly they would come to this house. In it they would find five men.

Better five than one!

In a few minutes he was out making himself dry. It left a towel damp, but what of it? He could admit, if necessary, that he had taken a bath before retiring. He went into the bedroom, put on clean and soft pajamas. A pint of Scotch stood on the dresser. He drank all of it.

Then, after removing the plug from the bathtub, he got into bed. Faintly he could hear the water draining from the tub. But what of it? Suppose some sleeper awoke and heard water draining from a tub! Each guest room here had its private bath, so in any case how could such a one be sure from which tub water was draining.

In two minutes even that slight sound stopped. Other sounds, though, became each moment more audible. Up the lake, hounds were baying. Closer they came and with an accusing persistence, nearer each dreadful minute to this house.

CHAPTER II.

THE ALARM.

BECAUSE the Swedish cook spent much of the year alone as caretaker at Lakehaven, there was a doorbell in her room on the third floor. When the bell aroused her this night, she supposed that the Mesdames Standeven, Rice and Crider must have changed their minds about remaining until morning in New York. They must, she thought, have decided to motor back directly after the show.

Hilda Neillson was rawboned and fifty, with generous hips. She got crossly out of bed and snapped on a light. It was two-thirty, she saw. A fine time for decent folk to be getting home! And why couldn't they have

taken along a latch key? Eric Pitt, the chauffeur, should have thought of that, even if those women didn't.

In slippers and dressing gown Hilda padded down to the second floor. When she turned on a hall light there, she saw that all the doors on this floor were closed. Beyond a door just to her left she could hear Mr. Crider snoring. The pig! He had been well along in his cups, she recalled, quite early in the evening. Small wonder he wasn't now able to hear the persistent ringing of a bell.

The others were sleeping no less soundly, Hilda thought, for all of the bedrooms were quiet. She herself moved forward to the top of the front stairs. Then she heard more than the ringing of a bell. A restless whining of dogs came from just outside the house. Dogs? There were no dogs at Lakehaven.

Now she became aware that the front doorbell was not only ringing, but that someone was kicking there with a boot. The fact startled Hilda Neillson. Robbers? No, robbers did not come with dogs and kick upon locked doors.

Hilda went down to the front hall. She lighted a globe there, called discreetly through the door, "Who is it?"

"It's the State of New Jersey," a gruff voice answered. "Open up."

When she opened the door she saw a short, stout man in corduroys standing there. Dimly she recognized Sam Pryde, a deputy sheriff of this county. On the porch steps beyond she saw two other dripping men, each with a whimpering hound on leash. Beyond these she could see a dark slant of rain.

Pryde, muddy feet and all, was now inside on the hall rug. He turned to call back: "Smith, you watch the front. Locke, you keep an eye on the rear. Don't let anybody out."

Then he closed the door and faced Hilda. She gasped, "What you think you're doing, Sam Pryde?"

Pryde squared his shoulders and stood with his short legs wide apart. His eyes were peering alertly up the staircase.

"Say, Hilda, who was it came bouncin' in here a little while ago?"

She stared at him. "I think you're crazy, Sam Pryde."

"Where's the Senator?"

"He been gone away two weeks," she said.

DEPUTY PRYDE drew from her that Senator Cass Foxheart, the master of Lakehaven, was off with his family on a yacht, cruising the Caribbean Sea. That Mrs. Foxheart, in her absence, had loaned the use of this country house to an intimate friend named Mrs. Kimberly Rice. And that Mrs. Rice, an extremely convivial lady, had brought along with her a house party which in all included eight guests.

"How many men?"

"Five," Hilda said.

"And three women?"

"Hey, what's going on down there?"

This question was shouted from the top of the stairs. It was followed by the descent, two steps at a time, of a tall, youngish man in lavender pajamas.

For a moment Pryde ignored him. "You heard no one come in during the last hour?" he asked the cook.

"I been asleep the last three hours," Hilda said.

"Who," Pryde asked sharply, "are the five men staying here?"

"Mr. Standeven, Mr. Weatherbee, Mr. Crider, Mr. Sherrill and Dr. Rice."

"When did you last see them?"

"At ten o'clock, when I went to bed."

"What were they doing?"

"They been play game of poker—all but Dr. Rice."

"Dr. Rice was out, was he?"

"No, he was here. He sit by talking with Professor Veede."

At mention of the name Veede, Pryde became doubly alert. "You mean Luther Veede, do you, who lives in a cottage at the upper end of the lake?"

"Of course she does," the young man in pajamas interrupted. Pryde whirled to face him. The man was, he saw, pink-cheeked and wore a faint blond mustache. He was lighting a cigarette. The odor of liquor was on him, Pryde noticed, and his eyes were a trifle bloodshot.

"My name's Sherrill. Jimmy Sherrill. Professor Veede called here just after supper, if the fact interests you. He talked science with Doc Rice until about ten thirty, then he left."

"Did he leave alone?" Pryde asked.

The young man smiled. "Naturally he did. Why? Did he need a bodyguard or anything?"

Sherrill blew a cool wreath of smoke. His reddish eyes failed to waver as they met Pryde's.

"About an hour and a half ago," Pryde announced, "Professor Veede was shot dead."

CHAPTER III.

MAJOR EAGLE.

AARON CRIDER was the last man down. He found Paul Standeven arguing furiously with Deputy Pryde. "This is absurd, man," Standeven was shouting, "routing us up like this. Veede murdered? Tracks to this house? You must be crazy!"

"Tracks don't lie," Pryde stolidly

insisted. "Anyway, not in mud." He turned to confront the heavy, bald man with puffy eyes who had just entered. "You're Mr. Crider, are you?"

"Who do I look like?" Crider snapped peevishly. Almost everyone knew Aaron Crider, a Philadelphia banker and ex-Congressman.

Pale and slim little Willis Weatherbee stood by, whispering hoarse inquiries at Hilda Neillson. Across the room, the bulk of Dr. Kimberly Rice overflowed a chair on whose arm perched James Sherrill.

"They been muddy up my house cellar to attic," Hilda was heard to complain shrilly. Other deputies and constables having arrived by now, the tread of a general search came from upstairs. They were poking in all areas of the house for the man whose tracks led here from Veede's. Smith and Locke, with dogs, were still keeping guard outside.

Sherrill was still in his lavender pajamas. "And to think," he grinned to the room in general, "that the girls went in to see a show! They took in a lousy Broadway show and missed this!"

Standeven compressed his lips bitterly. He was a lean man of forty-five or fifty years, with a narrow, weathered face and a cleft chin. "It's the nuttiest thing I ever heard of," he said. "If a man pulled off a shooting job, why would he beat it over here?"

Dr. Rice, used to emergencies and now showing no excitement whatever, turned his fat, bland face toward Pryde. "Undressed on the back porch, you say, and chucked his duds out in the rain?"

"And scattered pepper over the porch," Pryde said.

"Well, that's easy." Rice's small eyes became shrewd as he placed five

pudgy fingers against five. "Having befouled his scent, he sneaked in here naked, stole a new outfit of clothes, then sneaked out again."

But no one reported the loss of any clothing.

"And no tracks lead away," Pryde argued. He turned as a constable entered and asked, "Find any stowaway, Bill?"

Bill shook his head. "Everybody in the house," he reported, "is right here in this room."

Pryde by now had learned that the three ladies of the party were in New York for the night. Eric Pitt, whose quarters were over the garage, had driven them in.

"What hotel," Pryde asked Rice, "are they stopping at?"

"The McAlpin."

"Bill," Pryde directed, "ring up New York. Talk to the night clerk at the McAlpin. Ask him to tell Mrs. Rice, Mrs. Standeven and Mrs. Crider to round up their chauffeur and come home. He can say there's been an accident here, and they're needed. Just that much, Bill, and nothing else."

STANDEVEN exploded with a protest. "What's the idea of dragging the women into this?"

Crider echoed him: "Are you mad? I won't have it. I'll not have Loretta dragged into a damned bloodhound murder mystery. I'll get your job for this, sheriff." The banker ex-Congressman, who was still a power in politics, shook a fist in Pryde's face.

"It's this way," Pryde defended. "The man who killed Veede ran straight to this house. He hasn't gone out. I show up and find three married men and two single men asleep, each in a separate room. That means we got to ask plenty questions."

"But why," Standeven demanded, "question the women?"

"To get a line on the motive," Pryde said.

"He insinuates," Sherrill offered cheerfully, "that one of us bumped off old Professor Veede. If the motive wasn't money, then there's a *femme* in it."

Willis Weatherbee, youngest man in the room, said huskily: "Well, this can't possibly concern me. I'm going back to bed. Any objections?"

"Go anywhere you want," Pryde said, "as long as you don't leave the house."

Weatherbee went upstairs. They heard his door slam. Then Bill came in and reported that he had been given a prompt connection. He had given the message to the McAlpin clerk.

"The ladies are registered there, are they?"

"Yes," Bill said, "and the chauffeur too."

"That leaves 'em out of it, doesn't it?" Crider growled. "I mean it's an alibi, because it's sixty miles to New York."

"Still," Pryde contended, "Major Eagle'll want to ask questions of everybody."

"Who," Standeven asked, "is Major Eagle?"

"He's the D. A., and as sharp as an arrow," Pryde said.

Sherrill spoke behind his hand to Dr. Rice. "I've heard of this eagle-eyed D. A. A grad of Harvard Law School, they say, but he missed his calling. By rights he ought to be head of the secret service. They claim his eyes can see through steel plates."

"The sharper the better," Rice said, then yawned. In a moment he added, "An outsider, of course, shot Veede, and in the rain those cur pups lost his

trail while he was dodging around this house."

Aaron Crider, the only one of the aroused sleepers who had come down fully dressed, stood jerking nervously at his watch fob. His bald head was moist. His three chins glistened. Standeven came close to him and said, "I suppose we're in for it, Crider."

"Up to our necks," Crider conceded. All the bluster had left him at mention of Major Eagle. He knew Eagle—knew the man's brilliant war record as well as his enviable ability as a prosecutor.

Now he followed gloomily as Pryde went down the hall to the telephone. He heard Pryde say:

"Is this you, Major? This is Pryde at the Foxheart place, Lakehaven. Yes, Major. Veede was shot at his cottage about two hours ago, and the tracks lead here. What? Veede had made an appointment with you for tomorrow, had he? Yes, of course, I posted a guard over the body. Sure, Major. You can probably accomplish most by coming directly here."

EAGLE! In a little while he would be here, and Aaron Crider could already feel himself being turned upon a grill. Not that Eagle would be in any manner harsh. Tom Eagle was never harsh. He was, Crider knew, a mild man, indeed almost shy. One would never guess that he was the same Tom Eagle who twenty-five years ago had been a famous All-American fullback, the greatest all-round athlete of his day, and twice a decathlon winner at Olympic games. Crider knew those facts about Eagle, and he knew that the man had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for distinguished conduct at Belleau Wood; that since then he had been a brilliant

prosecutor here in this county, building success largely through a genius for reading his own clues from the tracks of crime.

Aaron Crider took out a cigar, bit the end of it viciously. In a little while he went into the library and joined the others. For a dismal hour, then, they waited for Prosecutor Eagle. Crider paced, while the beads grew and glistened on his baldness. Standeven stood with a hard face, talking to Rice. Sherrill sat on the small of his back with bare feet resting on a table, exuding an ill-becoming nonchalance.

"Why," he quipped to Pryde, "don't you bring in the hounds for a whiff of us?"

The mantel clock said four in the morning. The room, to Crider, was stuffy, like a Turkish bath. He raised a window with a jerk, heard rain pelting the porch roof.

Then he heard a taxi coming. Eagle, of course.

Pryde met Eagle at the door, conferred with him there for a minute, then brought him in to face Crider, Standeven, Sherrill and Rice.

What most impressed Rice, who had never seen him before, was the straightness of Eagle. The man was straight and tall and square and dark, with high cheekbones. Close to fifty years old, Rice thought, yet with the erect carriage of a cadet. He had arrived bare-headed and the rain had wetted his raven-black hair. It was straight hair, and the widest part of it hung low on his forehead.

Eagle shook his head to clear it from his right eye. The eye, Rice thought, lacked the flashing brilliance he had been led to expect. The prosecutor's gaze, in fact, was mild and friendly, his approach to this company deferent, if not outright apologetic.

Pryde said, "The tracks lead here, Major, and then stop."

"Tracks," Eagle said softly, "never stop." His half-embarrassed smile moved from Crider to Sherrill to Standeven. The crease of it deepened as he turned toward Dr. Rice.

"These tracks," Pryde was insisting, "stopped in pepper."

"Tracks," the district attorney repeated, "never stop. They go on and on. Either to success or failure. To escape or to prison. To acquittal or conviction. If there are man tracks, the man will make more. We must follow them, Mr. Pryde."

This man Eagle was psychic, Rice decided. His mild gaze concealed some strange prescience. There was another attribute of character, too, which Dr. Rice half sensed, yet could not quite pin down.

He was puzzling about it when young Willis Weatherbee came racing down the stairs.

Apparently the suspense had been too much for Weatherbee and had drawn him from the seclusion of his room. He must have posted himself at the stairwell above and from there observed Eagle's entrance. It was plain that he had heard this talk about the inevitable march of tracks.

Pale and agitated, Willis Weatherbee clutched Eagle's arm.

"Listen, Mr. Eagle, you can't do this. You can't hold people like us. We're not criminals. We represent the best, the oldest families. Why, my own people have lived in this country for two hundred years."

Eagle smiled down at him. "And mine for two thousand," he said.

"What do you mean?" Weatherbee stared incredulously.

"Yes, sir. That long and longer. I'm a Cherokee Indian," Major Eagle

explained. Again he shook his head, to clear the hair from his eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRAW HAT.

ALREADY he knew one thing about these five male guests at Lakehaven. It was that the blond young man in lavender pajamas would be the easiest to interview. Very little, he thought, was likely to be extracted from those thin, stubborn lips of Crider. Standeven had the manner of being stiffly on the defensive. Rice seemed cautious rather than resentful. This Boston boy, Weatherbee, was on the verge of hysteria. Only Sherrill appeared to be amiably inviting.

But first a word with Pryde. "Will you excuse us a moment?" Eagle led Deputy Pryde across the hall to a study den.

"It's open and shut, Major," Pryde said when the door was closed. "One of those birds shot Veede."

"Two of them, perhaps."

"Two of them?" Pryde was astonished. "But there was only one set of tracks."

"I have," Eagle admitted, "the advantage of you. At eleven o'clock Professor Veede called me on the phone. I was out. He left word for me to call him when I came in. I reached my apartment a little before one, saw the note, and called him."

"Gee, Major, then you must have heard the shot. We found him slumped forward over his desk with the receiver off the hook, and his hand on it. Someone must have plugged him while he was answering your call."

"No," Eagle said, "but again I have the advantage of you. I finished my talk with Veede and heard him hang

up. Later, after you had called me from here, I asked Central the exact minute of my connection with Veede. They say it was at 12.56 A.M. They also say that a minute or so after concluding his talk with me the professor again lifted the receiver from the hook and asked for long distance."

"That so? Now we're getting somewhere, Major. What long distance call did he make?"

"None," Eagle said. "He simply asked the local operator for Long Distance. Then, while the girl was plugging in Long Distance for him, Veede was killed."

"Gee!" Pryde said. "If we only knew who his L. D. call was intended for, we maybe could line up a motive."

The district attorney agreed with him. It was quite evident that Veede had not been on the point of telephoning this house, because both the Veede cottage and Lakehaven were on the local circuit.

"You said there might be *two* in on it," Pryde said.

"Veede himself suggested that much. On the telephone at 12.56, he asked for an appointment at my office tomorrow morning. I had an important case on, and so asked him to postpone the appointment."

"What did he say?"

"That his case would surely prove more important than mine. He said that it concerned murder by two conspirators, for the motive of stealing a half million dollars."

PRYDE whistled. "Did he name the conspirators?"

"No. He said they are people of prominence, but the whole matter was too involved and delicate to be discussed over the telephone. Especially, he said, since he lacked definite proof.

But he said he expected to have the proof by morning. For that reason he wanted the appointment."

"You made the appointment, then?"

"Yes, and I heard him hang up. A minute later he asked Central for Long Distance, and was shot."

"His housekeeper," Pryde said, "lives in a bungalow across the road. She heard the shot, but thought it might be a car backfiring. In a little while she got up and went for a look out. The professor's porch light was on. She saw a man in a black hat and yellow unionalls duck out and dart away in the rain."

"She didn't see his face?"

"No. But she crossed the road to warn Veede that a prowler was about. Instead of that, she found him dead."

"And immediately called you?"

"Yes. I picked up Bob Smith, Joe Locke and Les Biddle. Smith has a couple of good dogs. We left Biddle to watch the body, and to notify Sheriff Jarlow, while the rest of us followed tracks here."

"Did Veede," Eagle asked, "live alone in the cottage?"

"He did until about a year ago. He's a retired professor from some western college. A widower. Has a high-flying son about twenty-one years old—Alec Veede. Alec was fired out of three or four schools, so the professor brought him home and tried to tutor him himself. Didn't have much luck, they say. Alec was all the time running out on him."

"Was Alec there tonight?"

Pryde shook his head. "The housekeeper says she hasn't seen him for the last four days."

"Veede had money?"

"Comfortably fixed, I think. Royalties from some chemical patent he worked half his life on."

Rain was still pattering outside. Because of it no dawn light was showing, although it was now 4.30 of a summer morning.

"Will you please ask James Sherrill in here?"

Sherrill came in grinning cheerfully. Pryde remained out in the hall.

"Cigarette, Major?" Sherrill offered a package.

"No, thank you."

The blond young man sat down, crossed his pajamaed legs. Eagle continued to stand. Always he preferred to stand at an inquiry.

"Professor Veede," he asked, "called here last evening?"

"Sure. He dropped in just after supper and stayed till ten."

"Whom did he come to see?"

"Nobody in particular, as far as I know. He just dropped in."

"Which of you had known him before?"

SHERRILL, tamped his cigarette out and answered: "None of us."

That is, none of us knew him until the evening before that, when he called about the straw hat."

"A straw hat?"

"Sure. He came over all hot and bothered night before last and wanted to see Senator Foxheart. Hilda answered the door and told him the Senator's family were off on a cruise."

"You mean Veede didn't know about that?"

"He didn't know it. As I get it, he didn't mix with his neighbors much. He was surprised to find the Foxhearts gone, and that our crowd had been installed here for a week."

"You say he was excited? Why?"

"He had come to insist that Senator Foxheart open the outlet valve through the dam, and drain the lake."

It's an artificial lake, you understand, and part of the Foxheart estate."

A keen flash came to Eagle's eyes. "And why," he asked, "did Veede want to have the lake drained?"

"He had a water-logged straw hat in his hand. He said it looked like his son's hat, and that it had floated ashore near his cottage. His son Alec, he claimed, had been missing four days."

"Were there initials in the hat?"

"No. But the prof said Alec was wearing a straw of that shape when last seen. The boy might be drowned in the lake, he said."

"When he found the Senator wasn't here, what did he do?"

"He swore he'd open the valve himself. He had a moral right, he said, under the circumstances. Then our bald-headed banker friend stepped up and identified the hat as his own."

"You mean Mr. Crider?"

"Aaron Crider. He said he'd gone fishing in a rowboat the second day we were here. The wind blew his hat off, he said. Since it was an old hat, he didn't bother to recover it."

"Then?"

"Professor Veede was immensely relieved. He was introduced all around. That was evening before last, you see, when the ladies were here. Zella Rice roped him into a bridge game with the Standevens."

"He went home on good terms with everyone?"

"Yes. And last night called again."

"Still worried about his missing son?"

"He didn't mention the son. Most of the time he talked chemistry with Rice. The rest of us played poker."

"What time yesterday did the ladies leave for New York?"

"About noon. In the Crider limousine."

"Who drove them?"

"Pitt. He's the Foxheart chauffeur and stays here all the time."

"Who suggested the trip?"

Sherrill cocked a surprised eye. "It was Loretta Crider, I think. She's always going places."

"Thank you, Mr. Sherrill. Shall we join the others?"

They crossed the hall to the library. There Eagle spoke to the banker, Aaron Crider.

"About the straw hat you lost in the lake, Mr. Crider."

The bald man gave him a cold stare.

"Well, what about it?"

"May I see it?"

"What for?"

"Lacking initials," Eagle said, "one water-soaked straw hat might be mistaken for another."

"Dammit, I know my own hat."

"What did you do with this one?"

Crider grew red with irritation. "What," he exploded, "would I naturally do with a water-logged hat? I threw it away, of course."

"Where?"

"Well, if you must know, it's burned. Hilda was taking trash out to the incinerator, and I tossed the damned hat on the pile of it."

Major Eagle turned toward Pryde. "We may," he said quietly, "have to drain the lake yet."

CHAPTER V.

TRACKS UNDER WATER.

INTERVIEWS with Standeven, Rice and Weatherbee brought no new information. Eagle, confronting them in a group, engaged himself more to read their characters than to the weighing of replies. A guilty man, he knew, would not be telling the truth.

In Paul Standeven he saw the hardy out-of-door man, a lean and seasoned traveller who looked like he might ride a horse or drive a motor boat with equal precision. The man's answers were brusque and unfriendly. Finally he flung out of the room and went upstairs.

From the landing he called back to Hilda: "When my wife comes in, tell her I want to see her right away."

Hilda at the moment was inspecting an exhibit being displayed to her by Pryde. Pryde then brought to Eagle a pair of muddy boots and a bundle of rain-soaked clothes.

"The killer wore these," Pryde said. "Took 'em off on the back porch and heaved 'em away. Hilda says they belong in the garage."

Someone, Eagle agreed, must have borrowed these garments for an errand of murder. With full premeditation. Conceivably the guilty man had spotted the clothes in the garage and had taken them up to his own room. After midnight, with the house quiet, he could have put them on and made a quick round trip to Veede's.

On several counts Pitt himself seemed out of it. In the first place he had probably occupied a New York hotel room all night. Also, the chauffeur would hardly be classified as a "prominent person." Veede, over the telephone, had accused two conspirators of prominent station.

Two, Major Eagle considered, might mean a husband and wife. That was why he had inquired of Sherrill as to which of the three matrons had suggested the trip to New York. There might be a connection between the trip and the assault on Veede.

Or the conspirators might be two men. In one way or another, all five of these men were prominent. Socially,

professionally, or in business. Crider and young Weatherbee were rich; the other three, as far as Eagle could learn, were not.

Outside the patter of rain slackened, then stopped. Eagle opened the door and saw daylight, with clouds beginning to disperse. He was eager for a look at the tracks leading from Veede's to this house. Tracks! Tracks were a hobby of Eagle's. He was an Indian. He was keen to see these tracks of flight—footprints in the forest.

When the light was brighter, he set forth with Pryde. Pryde brought along the two muddy boots. Birds were chirping now on the lawn. On one side was the Foxheart lake, spade-shaped, with its concrete dam spanning a gap between two hills. In two other directions the view was wooded. On the fourth side, the house lawn merged into a fairway of the Kittatinny golf course. Eagle himself was a member of the Kittatinny Country Club, although duties of his office gave him only rare opportunity for play.

The tracks, which he now followed in reverse, led in the opposite direction. Eagle and Pryde were soon in the woods. Dogs and constables had overrun some of the fugitive's footprints, but many of them were still undisturbed. Eagle followed the line of them, and occasionally he stopped to match a boot with an impression. These same boots, he made sure, had made the tracks.

HIS eyes missed nothing. He picked up yellow threads from briars, torn from the unionalls worn by the fugitive. He measured spaces between tracks.

"The man was running here," he said. "Here he walked. Here he stopped, turned, listened."

He saw many things which Pryde could not see. Bent forward at the hips he walked on, eager, alert, not like a lawyer, not like a soldier, but like an Indian tracking some deadly enemy. Enemy? A murderer, surely, is the most hateful enemy of all the human tribes.

At last the tracks veered to the lake shore and there entered the water.

"He waded ashore here, Major," Pryde said. "Come along a little farther and I'll show you where he waded in."

A hundred yards down the water's edge they saw where the fugitive had waded in.

"He waded that far," Pryde said, "to hide his trail."

"Perhaps," Eagle said. "And perhaps not."

Pryde gaped at him. "But why else would he wade into the water a little way, parallel the shore, and then wade out again?"

"We must find out," Eagle said softly. "The lake is clear this morning. Submerged tracks should be visible from a boat. The lake is shallow for some distance from the shore."

"But what of it?"

"We must look at *all* tracks, in and out of the water. Can you bring a row-boat here?"

"Sure, Major."

"If you please, then."

Pryde walked back toward Lakehaven for a rowboat. While he was gone, Eagle resumed his back-trailing of the fugitive. Soon he came to a gravel road near the head of the lake. The stone cottage on one side of it was, he knew, Veede's. Directly across from it was a bungalow occupied by the woman who had served Veede as housekeeper.

The guard left in charge by Pryde

knew Eagle. "Nothing has been touched, Major," he said.

In the front room of the cottage Eagle found the body of Luther Veede. The elderly gray figure was seated, the head and chest slumped forward on a flat-top desk. Veede's left hand touched a phone receiver, which was off its hook. A telephone book was under his arm. Blood from a heart wound had stained the desk top.

The revolver on the floor, surely the murder weapon, was a .44. Evidently the assailant held no fear that it could be traced to him. Pryde had already assured Eagle that no fingerprints were on the gun.

A gloved murderer. But Eagle just now was more interested in feet than in fingers.

CROSSING the road to the housekeeper's bungalow, Eagle borrowed the telephone there and rang up his private secretary at her home.

"Miss Hope," he said to her, "please ask one of my assistants to take care of that prosecution this morning."

"Yes, sir," Nell Hope said.

"Then please get help and accumulate all the information you can about five men." Eagle named the five male guests at Lakehaven.

"What kind of information?"

"Anything which even remotely might supply a murder motive, such as a lawsuit, divorce, quarrel, or a disputed inheritance."

"I'll enlist my reporter friend, Charley Ross," the girl said.

"One other thing, Miss Hope. You might ask Charley Ross to make you a list of all unsolved murders which have concerned a theft of something like half a million dollars."

"Good grief! Was there *ever* one like that?"

"There was according to Professor Veede," Eagle said.

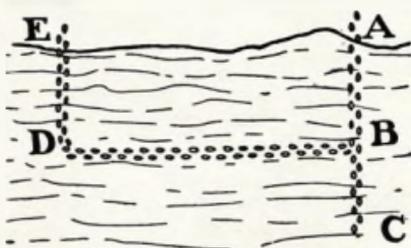
Certainly, he thought, the murder referred to by Veede could not have been a prediction of his own. There must now be two murders, an old unsolved one and Veede's.

It was time to meet Pryde with the rowboat, so Eagle returned along the line of fugitive tracks to the lakeshore. Pryde was there. When he stepped out of the boat, the district attorney stepped in.

With an oar Eagle pushed off, then paddled toward the spot where footprints entered the water.

Pryde stood on the bank and watched him. He saw the district attorney paddle carefully along each course of submerged tracks. He was bending low over the gunwale with the sunlight making a sheen of his bare, black head, and with his keen eyes piercing down into the water. Pryde had never seen him more alert. A warrior in a canoe, centuries back, might have held just such a pose.

But when Eagle stepped briskly from the boat, he was again the modern attorney. Promptly he produced a card and drew on it this sketch:



"The man entered the water at A," Eagle explained. "He waded to C,

where he was thigh deep. Then he retraced his steps to B, where he was only knee deep. He moved knee deep and parallel to the shore about a hundred yards, to D. There he turned shoreward, emerging at E."

"He went to C," Pryde suggested, "intending to swim the lake. But he lost his nerve."

"He was too desperate to lose his nerve," Eagle disagreed. "If he could swim he knew it."

"But if he didn't intend to swim for it, why did he go stampeding out to C?"

"There's a reason for all things," Eagle said. Then his eyes flashed. "Of course. He waded out to deep water to throw something into the lake."

"Throw what into the lake?"

"Not a gun," Eagle said. "He dropped the gun at the crime."

"You think he took something with him from Veede's house?"

"He waded thigh deep to C for some good reason. Suppose he took something from Veede's house. A thing incriminating. If he threw it away in the woods, he knew we'd find it. If he stopped to bury it, his muddy tracks would give the place away. He could hardly burn it in the rain. So why wouldn't he throw it far into the lake?"

"I see, Major. If he threw it from the shore it would land in clear, shallow water. But by wading to C he could throw it into deep water."

"It means," Eagle decided, "we must seine or drain the lake."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCRANTON QUARRY.

CORONER DEQUINCE and Sheriff Jarlow, with a staff of assistants, were at the Veede cottage when Eagle returned there. A

photographer was taking pictures of the room and body. He was followed by a fingerprint man.

"Tracks, Major?" Jarlow asked as Eagle entered.

"Tracks straight to Lakehaven," Eagle assented. "I'm helping Pryde in his inquiries there."

"Where's Pryde now?" DeQuince asked.

"He went after a seine. We think the murderer threw a clew into the lake."

"If he did, you got a fat chance o' finding it," the coroner said.

Sheriff Jarlow yawned back of his hand. "Go to it, Major, I'm for you strong." Jarlow was fat and lazy. Always he was well pleased to see Tom Eagle on the job. It was sure to save a lot of work for himself.

The fingerprint man reported plenty of prints, but he was sure they were all Veede's and the housekeeper's.

"What about young Veede?" DeQuince inquired. "He around?"

"Missing four days," Eagle said. He told them in detail the result of inquiries at Lakehaven.

"Well," Jarlow yawned, "if you and Pryde'll take charge o' that end, DeQuince can take charge o' the body and I'll take charge o' the gun." He picked up the .44.

"Help me raise the body," the coroner said peevishly.

Jarlow helped him raise Veede's torso to an erect position.

District Attorney Eagle then saw a thing which had hitherto been concealed. The thing he noted was the shape of the red stain which had spread on the desk top from Veede's wound.

"What kind of a clue do you think the killer heaved in the lake?" the coroner asked.

"I think it was something about nine

by fifteen inches," Eagle said. "We don't know how thick it was. But it's big enough to be caught in a seine."

They stared at him. "How do you know," Jarlow asked, "it was nine by fifteen inches?"

Eagle pointed at the blood-stained desk top. The victim's breast had covered an area there. But now it could be seen that Veede, although losing much blood on the desk, had nevertheless failed to stain a definite and precise rectangle. And this rectangle of unstained desk was directly under where the wound must have spurted blood.

WITH a rule, Major Eagle measured the clear rectangle, which was distinct because all rims of it were crimson. The measurements showed the unstained area to be exactly nine and a quarter by fourteen and three-quarter inches.

"A thing that size," Eagle said, "must have been on the desk when Veede was shot. He fell forward over it, and it kept a shape of that size from being stained."

Jarlow whistled. "Right you are, Major. And since nothing that size and bloody is in sight now, the killer must have packed it away. Threw it in the lake, you say?"

"He threw *something* into the lake."

"A ledger," Jarlow guessed, "would be maybe nine by fifteen. Veede mentioned big money over the phone to you, didn't he?"

"He spoke of murder for half a million, and said 'two of them' are in on it."

"You're guessing," DeQuince argued. Yet he admitted that a heart wound does not bleed long. If the murderer had busied himself for a few minutes in a search for something, it would have made time enough for the

wound to stop bleeding and thus stain only the rectangular obstruction and the area immediately around it.

The assailant might then have noted that the thing he wanted was under the victim's torso. When he raised the body and took the thing away it would leave the desk stained as now seen.

DeQuince thought that the bloody rectangle would be found somewhere in the room. His search for it was fruitless. However he did find another and challenging clue.

This was last evening's copy of the *Kittatinny Herald*, the most important county paper and the one to which Veede had subscribed. The paper, its disarrayed pages indicating that Veede had perused them thoroughly, lay on a broad window sill directly back of the desk.

What caught DeQuince's attention was a missing half column from page 3. It had been clipped out with scissors. The scissors themselves lay on the same sill.

"Now we're getting somewhere," DeQuince crowed. "Veede was so interested in a certain item of news last night that he clipped it. We can get a copy of this same issue and see what it was."

"If Veede clipped it," Jarlow drawled, "maybe the clipping's still on him."

When he searched the body for the clipping, he found it folded neatly in Veede's hip wallet.

The clipping proved to match exactly the missing half column from the newspaper. The coroner, now that he saw it, recalled having read it himself in last night's local paper.

He read it aloud to Jarlow and Eagle. In brief, it reported the finding of two unidentified dead men in an old quarry near Scranton, Pennsylvania.

One of the victims had been shot; the other's skull had been crushed with a club. No clue to the guilt, the item said, had thus far been discovered.

Major Eagle left the Veede place and walked swiftly down the lakeshore to join Pryde. Pryde had assembled four expert seiners and a seine. Three boats were now at the spot where last night's fugitive had waded into the lake.

"I've stuck up a pole at C," Pryde said. "We can drop the net about fifty yards farther out and drag it in toward C."

Eagle explained why he thought the sought article would prove to be nine by fifteen inches. "It may be thin and flat," he admitted, "and not catch on the seine. As a last resort, we can always open the outlet valve and drain part of the water from the lake."

"Jarlow and DeQuince on the job yet?"

Eagle said that they were. The coroner was now removing the body, he said, while Jarlow was off in full cry to Scranton, Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONCEALED WEAPON.

LEAVING Pryde engaged with the seiners, Eagle went on toward Lakehaven. Once more he followed the tracks, noting every print, marking every twig broken by the fugitive's flight. He determined definitely that the man had carried nothing in his hands after emerging from the lake. For twice he had tripped and sprawled flat with palms down. Those palm prints in the mud assured Eagle that the runner at these points had been empty-handed.

He came to the Lakehaven lawn

with sunlight breaking through on the golf course beyond and with birds twittering. Smith and his two dogs were not there. But Constable Locke was still stationed on the front steps.

"You mean I'm to stop anyone, Major, if he tries to leave?"

"We can't stop them," Eagle said. "But we can have them followed and picked up. I imagine they won't try to leave. Three of them are expecting wives here in a little while. And all of them must realize that running away would draw suspicion."

When Eagle rang the bell, Hilda let him in. Her charges, she said, were at breakfast. It was only eight o'clock.

"I'll not disturb them," Eagle said. He sat down in the library, his mind weighing the evidence against the five Lakehaven men.

Aside from tracks, he admitted, there was no evidence at all.

He permitted his eyes to stray about the library. They were eyes peculiarly competent to note slight details. Once he had seen a room, Eagle was likely to be immediately sensitive to any change or disarrangement.

Something changed or disarranged impressed itself on him now. For minutes he couldn't decide what it was. Then his attention centered upon the left of two heavy velvet portières which draped the archway between this library and the hall. A decorative cord bunched each of the portières at its center, holding it back gracefully to the side of the arch.

Yet the hang of these twin drapings was now not perfectly matched. The folds at the knot of the left appeared to Eagle slightly stiff and unnatural, with a faint bulge at the wrong place.

It had not been that way a few hours ago. Those folds, where the cord bunched them, had recently been dis-

turbed. Why? Eagle arose and went there. His hand delved into the folds inclosed by the cord.

His fingers touched steel there. What he drew out was a short-barreled, bone-handled pistol. A .38, and loaded. Immediately he knew that someone had concealed the weapon here within the past hour.

For what purpose? To shoot his way out, in the event of a sudden exposure? It was not the pistol, of course, with which Veede had been murdered. But it was a gun, and a murderer wouldn't want to be compromised with possession on his person of any gun at all.

It might, Eagle thought, go deeper than that. According to Veede, "two" were sharing the guilt of an old crime. Two of these five Lakehaven men? If so, one might fear exposure by the other. A bullet could silence that other. Was that why a pistol was cached conveniently in this fold of drapery?

NO one was in sight. Hilda Neillson had gone upstairs. Eagle could hear breakfasters conversing in the dining room. He himself moved to the front door and beckoned Locke.

He took Locke to the portiere and explained where he had found the gun. After unloading it, he replaced it in the knotted fold from which he had taken it.

Locke asked, "What's the idea?"

Eagle led him out upon the front porch. At one end of it, and near a library window, was a bench. Eagle moved the bench slightly. When he then sat upon it he could look through the window pane and diagonally across the library. He could see to good advantage the portiere in which the .38 was hidden.

"You sit here, please," he said to Locke. "Keep your eye on that drapery. Don't seem to watch it. Presumably you're just watching to see who leaves the house."

"Okay, Major. I'm to spot whoever picks up that gun? When he does, do I nab him?"

"Just take the gun away from him. Then call me."

"Okay."

With Locke at his post, Eagle reentered the house. He saw Hilda at the top of the stairs and ascended to her.

"Which," he asked, "is the room of Dr. Rice?"

She took him into a bedroom. Pryde, Eagle knew, had already searched the rooms to no avail. There was no indication that a man had entered during the night, naked and wet, from a murderous expedition.

In this room Eagle saw two sets of baggage. There was wearing apparel belonging to both Rice and his wife. There was a private bath. Several of the towels were damp. The doctor's shaving tools were set out on a washstand.

With Hilda guiding him, Eagle went next to the room of the young Bostonian, Weatherbee. Here again there was a private bath. The personals in sight were those of a fastidious young bachelor.

The next room had twin beds. It was the Criders' room; the frilleries of Loretta Crider were about. Eagle noted a man's straw hat. Its sweatband bore the initials "A. C." The baggage did not include a hat box.

How could Crider, without trunk or hat box, have arrived with *two* straw hats? And why would a man have initials in only one of his two straw hats? It all suggested that Aaron Crider had claimed a hat not his own. The

result of his doing so had been to hush a suggestion that the lake be drained in a search for the missing Alec Veede.

Could one of the two unidentified casualties at Scranton be young Veede? Jarlow, on the way there now, would soon know.

EAGLE moved to the room of James Sherrill. Here again were the accouterments of a well-dressed single man. James Sherrill had taken a bath this morning, and had neglected to let the water out of the tub. The bare footprints of the bather were still visible on a rug.

Last Eagle inspected the room assigned to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Standeven. The baggage labels here indicated that the couple had traveled extensively abroad. One of the bags had been checked less than a month ago at a rail station in London. A menu on the dressing table, dated ten days ago, indicated that the Standevens had been crossing the Atlantic on that date.

Eagle was about to emerge when he heard someone ascending the stairs. Waiting within the room for a moment, he caught the voices of Dr. Rice and Willis Weatherbee. They were subdued voices. When he looked out he saw the pair reach the upper hall and proceed to the door of Rice's room.

There they stood whispering. Young Weatherbee was pale, was gesturing wildly. The doctor's face was bland and his manner calm. In a moment the two entered the Rice room. They closed the door. Eagle heard a bolt click.

That pair, he sensed, had something in common. Then he recalled a Boston address on one of Rice's bags. Weatherbee was also from that city.

Eagle had a gift of moving quietly, and did so now to the head of the stairs. Looking down into the lower

hall he saw Paul Standeven alone in the library archway. The man's elbow was within inches of the hidden pistol. His posture, Eagle thought, was intensely alert. Had he caught a glimpse of Locke out there on the bench?

In a moment Standeven moved on and out of sight. Eagle descended and went to the dining room. Sherrill and Crider were at the sideboard there. Crider was pouring drinks.

"Have one?" he asked gruffly of Eagle.

"No, thank you."

Sherrill arched a wise eye. To Crider he said: "The Major no doubt has a racial prejudice against it. One of his ancestors took a drink, you remember, after which some Dutchman slicked him out of Manhattan Island for a measly twenty-four dollars."

The telephone rang then. Eagle answered it and heard the voice of his secretary, Nell Hope.

"I've rounded up some info, Major."

"Good. What did you find?"

"First, about James Sherrill. He's a spoiled darling of Broadway and stony broke. A sponger. Is known as a professional house guest and takes his fun where he finds it. They say he gives plenty."

"What else?"

"Aaron Crider is a Philly banker, an ex-Congressman, and is still neck deep in Pennsylvania politics. His wife, about forty years old, flirts outrageously."

"Next?"

"Next the Standevens. They call themselves amateur explorers but are really just inveterate globe trotters. She goes everywhere he does. Hard as nails, both of them. He's done a few articles for *National Geographic*."

"And Willis Weatherbee?"

"He lost his shirt in the 1930 mar-

ket, but recouped a year later when his father left him a million in life insurance."

"What did his father die of?"

"Typhoid."

"Very well. What about Rice?"

"He's from Boston. He was the doctor in attendance when the elder Weatherbee died."

Eagle hung up, then stood for a moment in deep thought. "Two of them," he could hear Veede saying. And murder for half a million.

Were the two Weatherbee and Rice? Had the Weatherbee million been split two ways?

CHAPTER VIII.

THEIR NIGHT OUT.

CHAUFFEUR ERIC PITT brought the limousine to a snappy halt in front of the Lake-haven door. When he alighted to let his passengers out, it was an effort to suppress a grin. They looked so subdued this morning. Yesterday they had been gay enough, like schoolgirls on a holiday.

Had old man Crider got wind of something? Was that why they had been aroused at three in the morning and summoned abruptly home? Well, as far as Pitt knew, only one of them would need to do any explaining. And if she kept her mouth shut, she'd be all right.

The other two wouldn't give her away. Married women, when they went out together, never gave one another away.

"And it's a cinch I won't," Eric Pitt thought.

The three husbands, he saw, were lined up on the porch. As solemn as churches. Wasn't that Constable

Locke over there? What was going on around here, anyway?

The eldest of the ladies asked shrilly that very question. Her husband, Paul Standeven, said, "Murder."

"Be serious, Paul. What really is the matter? Why should we be dragged out of bed at three in the morning?"

"Murder," Standeven repeated. His tone changed to bitterness. "We're all being stalked by a Cherokee Indian. He thinks some of us did it."

There was a chorus of inquiry. Eric Pitt himself yelled, "What? Somebody bumped off?"

"Professor Veede was shot," Aaron Crider explained sourly. "And the bum who did it came trailing by here."

"How terrible!" cried Loretta Crider.

"Ghastly!" echoed Zella Rice.

Amy Standeven demanded, "What do you mean by an Indian?" She was a tall, rugged woman with stringy hair and an unlovely complexion.

Eric Pitt remembered about the bundles. There were a lot of them, all in the wrapping of Markles' Department Store. While inquiries were being exchanged, he gathered up the bundles and took them to a table in the front hall.

He had to make two trips.

Hikda was in the hall. She helped him carry the bundles upstairs. The owner's name was pencilled on each purchase. Hilda and the chauffeur took the proper packages to Mrs. Crider's room. Others they took to the Standeven room and others to the room of the Rices.

Pitt then went downstairs. Loretta Crider was taking off her impudent little hat there. She was a chic and pretty brown-bobbed woman, and her eyes were soulfully innocent as she

looked up at the bald banker whose name she shared.

AARON CRIDER scowled at his watch, snapped it shut, and rasped, "It's eight forty-five. Did it take you five hours to drive sixty miles?"

"Of course not. Don't be unpleasant, Aaron. We had to dress, didn't we? And eat breakfast. And how did we know there was a murder?"

"You had no business," Crider complained, "going in at all. If you'd stayed here, I'd have an alibi. As it is, every man in this house was in a room by himself."

"You poor thing!" Pitt saw that she was an expert coaxer. She was smiling wistfully, like a chastened cherub. "What an awful mess, dear! I'm so sorry I wasn't with you."

Crider's hand shot out and grasped her bare arm. "You didn't meet some man in town, did you?"

Pitt saw her wince of pain. When the grasp was released, there was a purple bruise on her arm.

"How perfectly absurd! A man! You're upset, Aaron, or you wouldn't suggest it. How could you?" Loretta began to cry on his shoulder.

"Well," Crider grumbled, "it was you who suggested the trip, you know."

"It was not. It was Amy Standeven."

"No," he corrected; "Mrs. Standeven only wanted to shop. It was you who suggested staying overnight to take in a show."

What a row there would be, Pitt thought, when he found out she hadn't gone to a show, after all!

The chauffeur now became aware of a tall dark man with high cheekbones who stood at the far end of the

hall. This man had not greeted the newcomers, but he was evidently alive to everything going on. His gaze was now directed upon the Criders.

Eric Pitt had no excuse for lingering longer. So he went out to the limousine, got in, drove it around to the garage. As he parked it there, he saw that mud had splashed on the fenders. He might as well wash the car now. Easier to get the mud off.

Where was that outfit he washed cars in? He began looking about for a pair of all old unionalls, boots and gloves.

"You're looking for these?" a mild voice asked.

Pitt saw the tall, dark man standing there with a friendly smile. He held a pair of bedraggled unionalls.

"Sure. Where did you find 'em?"

"They were worn last night by the man who shot Veede."

Eric Pitt lost color. "You don't think I—"

"No," Eagle said. "Not if you were in a New York hotel at one."

"I sure was, mister."

"When did you leave here yesterday?"

"At noon. We got to New York at two thirty."

"And first went where?"

"Markles' Department Store. I waited while the ladies went in to shop."

"How long were they gone?"

"Almost two hours."

"Did they return together?"

PITT thought a minute, scratching his head. "No, I think they came back separately. Each lady had an armful of bundles."

"Then where did you go?"

"To the McAlpin Hotel. Each of us took a room there."

"When did you next see the ladies?"

"At eight, when I brought the car to drive them to a show."

"You did drive them to a theater?"

"I drove Mrs. Standeven and Mrs. Rice there. Mrs. Crider at the last minute had a headache. She didn't go."

"You called again at the theater when the show was out?"

"No; they told me they could take a taxi back to the hotel. I was tired. I went to bed about ten o'clock."

"The hotel clerk called you about when?"

"About three. He said my party had to go home on account of some emergency."

"How long did it take you to get dressed and have the car at the door?"

"What is this—a court room? Well, it took about twenty minutes."

"The ladies appeared promptly?"

Eric Pitt was getting cautious now. "Well, no," he said. His eyes evaded Eagle's.

"Why did it take you until eight thirty to drive sixty miles?"

"We had a flat tire, mister. And we stopped for breakfast."

"Perjury," Eagle said, "is never wise. Isn't it a fact that when the clerk called the three ladies, he found that one of them wasn't in her room?"

Pitt stared at him. "How did you get wise to that?"

"I just called up the hotel and inquired. They were as reticent as you are, until I told them it was a case of murder."

"Well, yes," Eric Pitt admitted, "we did have to wait about an hour. About four thirty she showed up in a taxi with a man. She hopped out and the man drove on. I didn't see who he was. She said she'd been out with an old family friend, making the rounds

of the night clubs. Mrs. Standeven scolded her, I remember. Then they all got in my car and we started home."

"And the truant was?"

"Don't tell her old man I squealed, mister. But between you and me, she was the little brown trick, Mrs. Crider."

CHAPTER IX.

MAID OR MATRON.

JAMES SHERRILL grimaced ruefully at the flatness of his wallet.

He tossed the wallet on his bed and lighted a cigarette. Then he went out of his room and crossed the hall.

When he knocked on a door, a woman's voice said, "Come in."

"Hello, Jimmy," she said when he entered. The curtains were drawn and the room was dim.

James Sherrill thought of his flat wallet. "A fine day after the rain," he said with careful deliberation.

"Isn't it, Miss Emma Benson?"

"What do you mean?" She stood up rigidly with all color fading from her face.

"I mean it turned warm after the rain. Don't you think so, Emma Benson?"

The smoke from his cigarette made a cone in the dimness toward her. It was like the mystic vapor from a genie, changing this woman into a tense white pillar.

"Why," she said slowly, "do you call me Emma Benson?"

"Because Veede called you Emma Benson."

When she only stared at him, he shrugged, saying, "Well, what's a name between friends? It's no business of mine. Maybe I talk too much. But, listen, I got a heavy date tomorrow in

New York and find myself short. Could you lend me a couple of thousand?"

She gave a step backward, breathless, stood with her body stiff and her hands clenched.

"You've—you've—talked with that Indian lawyer?"

"Not a whisper. And shan't. But Veede took a cue at billiards with me night before last, while he was dummy in the bridge game. He dropped a few facts."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Facts. But all right. Just loan me a couple o' thousand, between old friends."

It was crude, he knew. He also knew she was Emma Benson.

"You're perfectly insane," she said.

"No. Just broke, and with a Follies cutie dated for tomorrow. Would you like to hear what Veede spilled?"

"You're making this up."

"I'm not, word of honor."

She retreated another step. Her back was now flat to the wall, like a tense shadow clinging there.

"Well, what did he say?"

"He mentioned a lady's name who masquerades as her matronly mistress."

"He made it convincing. A certain Mr. X, he said, once upon a time divorced his wife. Being rich and generous, in the settlement Mr. X assigned to his divorcee, Mrs. X, twenty-five thousand a year for the period of her life, without regard or restriction as to whether she married again. You follow me, Emma Benson?"

JAMES SHERRILL tamped out his cigarette, sat down, and lighted another. Emma Benson still stood as far away in the dimness as

she could, like a frightened shadow on the wall.

"Mrs. X, taking her personal maid with her, moved to a distant State. You were the personal maid. Soon Mrs. X married Mr. Z, after which she quite properly continued to receive each year twenty-five thousand dollars from X."

James Sherrill spoke swiftly now. This house was full of people, and there was a chance they might be interrupted.

"In time Mrs. Z died. By rights the annuity from X should have died with her. But Mr. Z wanted to keep it coming. So he conspired with the maid, Emma Benson, to conceal the fact of Mrs. Z's death. Perhaps he did so by installing the maid in some distant and quiet sanitarium, registering her there as his wife. The maid practised the signature of Mrs. Z until she could inscribe it expertly, and thereafter signed a receipt for the annuity check each year when it came in the mail from the far-away trust fund of Mr. X.

"After a number of years, Mr. Z brought the maid out of seclusion and introduced her as his wife, taking care always that she should not meet anyone who had ever known the genuine Mrs. Z or who had ever in the old days visited in the household of Mr. X. Motive, twenty-five thousand dollars a year for life."

"Do you know what I shall do, James Sherrill?"

"Yes, you're going to loan me," he said, "a couple of thousand."

"I shall call Major Eagle and denounce you for a cheap blackmailer."

"Go ahead."

She did not move. He knew she was bluffing.

"In fact," he said, "when Veede

recognized you night before last, you admitted you are Emma Benson. There was no evading that because Veede had been an intimate of Mr. X in a Western State, had known the X household well—master, mistress and maid. He also knew that Mr. X is still paying the annuity regularly and in good faith.

"So Veede called you aside and demanded an explanation?"

SHERRILL, extended a package of cigarettes. He knew she wouldn't take one.

"Go on," she said.

"You admitted you are Emma Benson. But you insisted that Mrs. Z, twice a divorcee, is still living, and that she herself is properly collecting the annuity. You offered to prove it."

"I did? If I offered to prove it, then perhaps I can."

"Perhaps you can't. But you had to gain time. You had to quiet Veede for a day or two, while you went to the city and drew cash funds for the fade-out. Otherwise it was prison for both you and Z. So you offered to give Veede Mrs. Z's present address, so that he could call her up and verify these three facts: that she had divorced Z on account of his attentions to her maid; that subsequently he married the maid, Emma Benson; that Mrs. Z is now living privately as a widow and legally receiving herself the annuity from X.

"Not one of those three assertions are true, but you offered to let Veede check them by calling up Mrs. Z. 'Very well,' Veede said, 'what is her address?'"

"You couldn't remember offhand. But you had a record of it, you said, at your New York apartment. Since you were going to the city shopping

next day, you could look it up. Veede agreed to wait."

"He told you all this?"

"Only part of it. But enough for me to piece out the rest. I could see that he suspected a murder of Mrs. Z by her husband and the maid. He pumped me in the billiard room for information. Picked me because I'm single, and would be less likely to start gossip by confiding with some chattering wife."

"You told him my first name?"

"I told him nothing. He went home unsatisfied, and popped back the next night. Sitting by the poker game, he must have heard one of the players refer to you not as Emma, but as—" "Stop!" she protested shrilly.

"You're a devil, James Sherrill. Two thousand, did you say?"

"If you please."

Emma Benson gave a hopeless gesture. Then she went wretchedly to her dresser. Packages were heaped there, all wrapped under the trademark of the Markles' Department Store.

She selected one of them. Unwrapping it, she stood with her back shielding the view from Sherrill. He must not see how much was in this package, otherwise he would certainly demand more than two thousand dollars.

She took two thousand from it. Rewrapping the package, she resolved to get it out of the house with no delay. Then she faced Sherrill.

"Take it. Now please go."

CHAPTER X.

THE OPEN BOOK.

MAJOR EAGLE shook the overhanging black hair back from his eyes; then, bareheaded, he walked briskly down the lake shore to

meet Pryde. It was still only nine in the morning. The seiners, he found, had made half a dozen empty hauls.

"The thing may be stuck in the mud," Eagle said. "Please make a few more tries."

He proceeded on toward the Veede cottage. A policeman was still on guard there, although Veede's body had been removed.

He sent the policeman for Mrs. Brady, Veede's housekeeper.

"Mrs. Brady," he said when she came in, "something about nine by fifteen inches is missing from this desk. You are familiar with everything here. What could it be?"

"Belike a handkerchief," she hazarded.

"Blood," Eagle said, "would soak through a handkerchief." He indicated the unstained rectangle on the desk. "The thing wasn't mere cloth or paper. The man threw it into the lake, so it was of a density to sink."

Mrs. Brady looked about. She missed nothing which belonged in the room.

"Was the desk usually littered?" Eagle asked.

"No, sir. It was always bare, as neat as a pin. Not even a pad or a blotter."

"Mr. Veede may have been consulting a book. Did he keep a ledger?"

He had kept no ledger. "But since he was telephoning, maybe he had the phone directory in front of him," Mrs. Brady said.

But the phone directory had been under Veede's arm. It was a foot tall and ten inches wide.

The idea of a book, however, struck Eagle as sound. Books are things which men sit at desks with. Too, books are things which enclose information. And at the moment of his death Veede had

been seeking information. Too, the missing exhibit was important enough to have inspired the assailant to take it away with him and to throw into deep water of the lake. What, if not a book of information?

Eagle scrutinized a wall of the room which was lined solidly with books.

"The professor," Mrs. Brady said, "was always complaining that he hadn't enough shelf room for them."

"He was orderly with his books, was he? I mean, when he took a book down did he usually put it back in place?"

"He was," the housekeeper said, "a regular old maid about that."

On one shelf Eagle noted a gap of three inches. Space for about two books. There were no books loose in the room.

"Do you remember," he asked, "what books were in this space?"

On the point of saying no, Mrs. Brady hesitated. She stood thoughtfully before the shelf. "Belike it was a short, fat book bound in red leather," she said. "I dust here every day. And I remember that one because it was the only fat, red book on the shelf."

"A tall book, like this one?" Eagle pointed to an encyclopedia about fifteen inches high.

"No; a short book, thick and red. About this high."

The book she indicated was nine inches tall.

A volume that tall, Eagle thought, would in reasonable proportion be about seven and a half inches wide. If open, the width would be doubled. In all it would cover an area nine by fifteen on the desk.

The idea was sound. If a book were open to information incriminating to the intruder, and if his victim fell forward and stained that open page with

his blood, the intruder would most surely remove the book.

EAGLE searched all rooms of the cottage. He found no thick book bound in red leather. He returned to the three-inch space at the shelf. The other books on that shelf, he saw, were all handbooks of standard reference. Not encyclopedias. These, neatly in order, were on a lower shelf.

Major Eagle called his secretary on the telephone.

"Miss Hope," he said to her, "please step across the street to the public library. Go to the reference department in the basement. Locate the section devoted to standard books of reference. Pass up the encyclopedias. You will find a shelf or two devoted strictly to handbooks of general information."

"Yes, Major."

"Pass up everything which isn't bound in red leather. If you see a standard handbook of reference which is about three inches thick and nine inches tall, measure it. If you find one exactly nine and a quarter by seven and three-eighths inches, phone me the title of it."

Miss Hope's response came surprisingly soon. It had taken her only a minute to reach the library. The specifications having eliminated all shelves but a few devoted to standard handbooks of reference, she had been able to find almost at once a thick, red-leather book of the size specified.

When she gave Eagle its title, he immediately saw the significance of the clue. He instructed Miss Hope to check the book out of the library and take it back to the office with her.

Then he hurried down the lake shore to join Pryde.

"No luck with the seine," Pryde reported.

"Very well. Send one of your men to the dam. Tell him to open the valve. There's a twenty-four-inch out-let pipe, isn't there?"

"Right. And under a full head it'll let water out fast."

"Tell your man to stay there and watch for a signal. If we wave a white rag, he's to close the valve. That way we can save perhaps half the lake."

"And the fish," Pryde agreed.

One of the seiners was so instructed. He rowed away in a boat toward the distant dam. The other seiners rolled up the seine and went home.

"We can decide later," Eagle said, "about the last half of the lake."

"You mean we may have to drain it clean?"

"Yes, because young Alec Veede has been missing five days, and his hat was found floating."

"You think Crider was lying about the hat being his?"

"Probably he was. Sheriff Jarlow has broadcasted inquiries for young Veede. If he doesn't turn up, we must drain the lake completely. The top half of it, however, will drain it to the point to where last night's fugitive could have thrown the book."

"A book?" Pryde exclaimed. "What book was it, Major?"

"A current copy," Eagle said, "of 'Who's Who in America.'"

CHAPTER XI.

LOCKE LENDS A HAND.

THE district attorney went back to Veede's cottage and rang his office. Nell Hope, having had time to reach there, answered. Eagle asked her:

"The public library's copy of 'Who's Who' is at your elbow?"

"It is," she said.

"Look in it, please. This morning I gave you the names of five men. Standeven, Rice, Sherrill, Weatherbee, and Crider. Which of them are listed in 'Who's Who'?"

Eagle waited. In a little while he heard her say, "Only two of the five are listed, Major."

"Which two?"

"Dr. Kimberly Rice and Aaron Crider."

"Read the facts stated in those two biographies. See if there is, in either case, a mention or connection with Professor Veede. Or any other thing which might remotely be related."

Again Eagle waited. Rice, he reflected, would rate a listing in the book because he was a well-known authority in medical research. Crider would be in there as a financier and politician. Standeven might or might not have been listed. The two younger men, Sherrill and Weatherbee, might possibly be found in a social register, but hardly in "Who's Who."

"I've read both of the items," he heard Miss Hope say. "There's no mention of the name Veede. Or anything at all which seems to connect."

"Thank you," Eagle said, and hung up.

Rice or Crider! He felt reasonably sure that Veede's book had been open at one of those two names. If so, Veede's heart blood must have drenched that open page. No wonder the guilty man had hurled the thing into the lake. Rice or Crider? Of the five to whose door the tracks of crime led, only those two were in the book.

Impatience was not a part of Eagle, yet now he found it difficult to await the recession of the lake. By now the

valve was open, he knew. Looking from Veede's window, he could see Pryde at the shore. The water's edge had already receded ten or a dozen feet. In another half hour they should be able to gouge from the mud a book of red leather, soaked and bedraggled, with the blood of Veede gluing with stern incrimination two of its inner pages.

Another thought struck Eagle. It caused him to call Miss Hope again on the wire.

"Does either of those biographies," he asked her, "mention Scranton, Pennsylvania?"

"No," she said.

What about that Scranton lead, anyway? Jarlow had hurried away to check on it, but was it vital?

THE newspaper from which the item had been clipped still lay in disarray upon a window sill back of the chair in which Veede had been murdered. The pair of scissors still lay by it. It appeared as though Veede had read the item, had found it of peculiar interest, had clipped it and put the clipping in his wallet, tossed the newspaper aside on the window sill, and turned back to his desk.

But had he? Eagle picked up all the sections of the disarrayed paper. Doing so, he exposed the broad bare board of the sill—and on this he saw a track. It was a groove, the track of a bullet. The murder bullet.

After passing through Veede it had plowed along this sill.

Then how could the newspaper, if last touched by Veede, lie piled upon the bullet-plowed groove?

The answer, Eagle thought, was that Veede was not the person who had plied the sections of newspaper on the sill.

Who, then, had placed them there? The murderer himself, Eagle decided. Why? Then it struck him that the murderer might have clipped the item and put it in the dead man's wallet. Why would he do that?

Entry, Jarlow's men had discovered, was made by forcing a rear window. Probably the intruder had then crept forward through the house toward Veede, who sat at his desk. Possibly he had heard Veede ask over the telephone for an appointment with the district attorney, for the purpose of exposing an unsolved murder.

That was it! The man, after shooting Veede, must have schemed to make it appear that the mentioned murder was one which could not possibly implicate himself. On the desk lay the professor's evening paper. And the assailant would know that any issue of any modern newspaper inevitably refers in one or more of its columns to some crime or murder.

The man could have gone through this newspaper to select from it at random any reference to a murder. A mysterious murder would, of course, be preferable. The intruder could have clipped an item and planted it upon his victim. Tossing the mutilated paper carelessly aside on the window sill, he must have failed to note that he thus covered the track of his own bullet.

Such a solution now appeared reasonable to Major Eagle. If correct, then Jarlow was wasting his time at Scranton.

TWO miles from Veede's cottage, Constable Locke sat upon the Lakehaven porch. His gaze was fixed upon a certain spot of the window at his elbow. Through the pane he could see diagonally across the li-

brary to the knot which gathered folds of an arch drapery.

Faintly he could make out the slight sag there, caused by the hidden .38. Locke had been watching it alertly for a long while now. Each of the house guests during the past hour had passed through that archway, but he knew that no hand had retrieved the pistol.

Nor would it, Locke resolved, be touched without his knowledge. If it was, his orders were to advance and take the gun himself. Locke had a pistol of his own, and plenty of courage.

No one was in the library now except that pretty little brown one, Mrs. Crider. She seemed nervous about something. Locke saw her touch a lipstick to her lips and powder her nose. Then she came out upon the porch.

With a short, mirthless laugh, she sat down upon the bench beside Locke. "Are they going to arrest anyone?" she asked.

Locke kept his gaze fixed upon the window pane.

"I can't say, ma'am," he said.

"Who are you watching?"

"No one in particular, ma'am."

"Where's that good-looking district attorney? Is he really an Indian?"

"I think he's up at Veede's cottage."

Locke felt an appealing touch on his arm. He caught a rich scent of perfume as she leaned close. Her voice was coquettish and coaxing. "Have you a cigarette? I'm famished for a smoke."

Locke fumbled at a package in his pocket. Without taking his eyes off the window he gave her a cigarette.

"Did he ask anything about a straw hat?"

"Major Eagle? I think he did."

"Have you a light, please?"

Locke produced a match from his vest pocket. Then he became aware that she was extending her lips, with the cigarette between them, toward him. Evidently she was accustomed to having gentlemen light her cigarette for her.

It wasn't often that Constable Locke had a chance to so serve a woman as dainty and alluring as Mrs. Aaron Crider. No one was in sight in the library, or in the hall beyond. So for a minute he diverted his vigilance. He struck the match and held it to her cigarette.

The man in the billiard room picked up a billiard ball and emerged into the hallway. He moved quickly to the arch into the library. For an hour he had been aware of Locke's vigilance on the porch.

It meant, he assumed, that they'd spotted the .38 gun.

He might need to get his eyes on that gun any minute. For an hour he had been watching his chances. Here it was.

The constable was out there lighting a lady's cigarette. In six brief seconds the man by the drapery exchanged a billiard ball for a .38 pistol. He crossed to the library mantel, at which position he could not be seen by Locke. He reloaded the .38, hid it in an empty vase, and retreated by another door.

Mrs. Crider smiled sweetly.

"Thank you so much."

"You're welcome, ma'am."

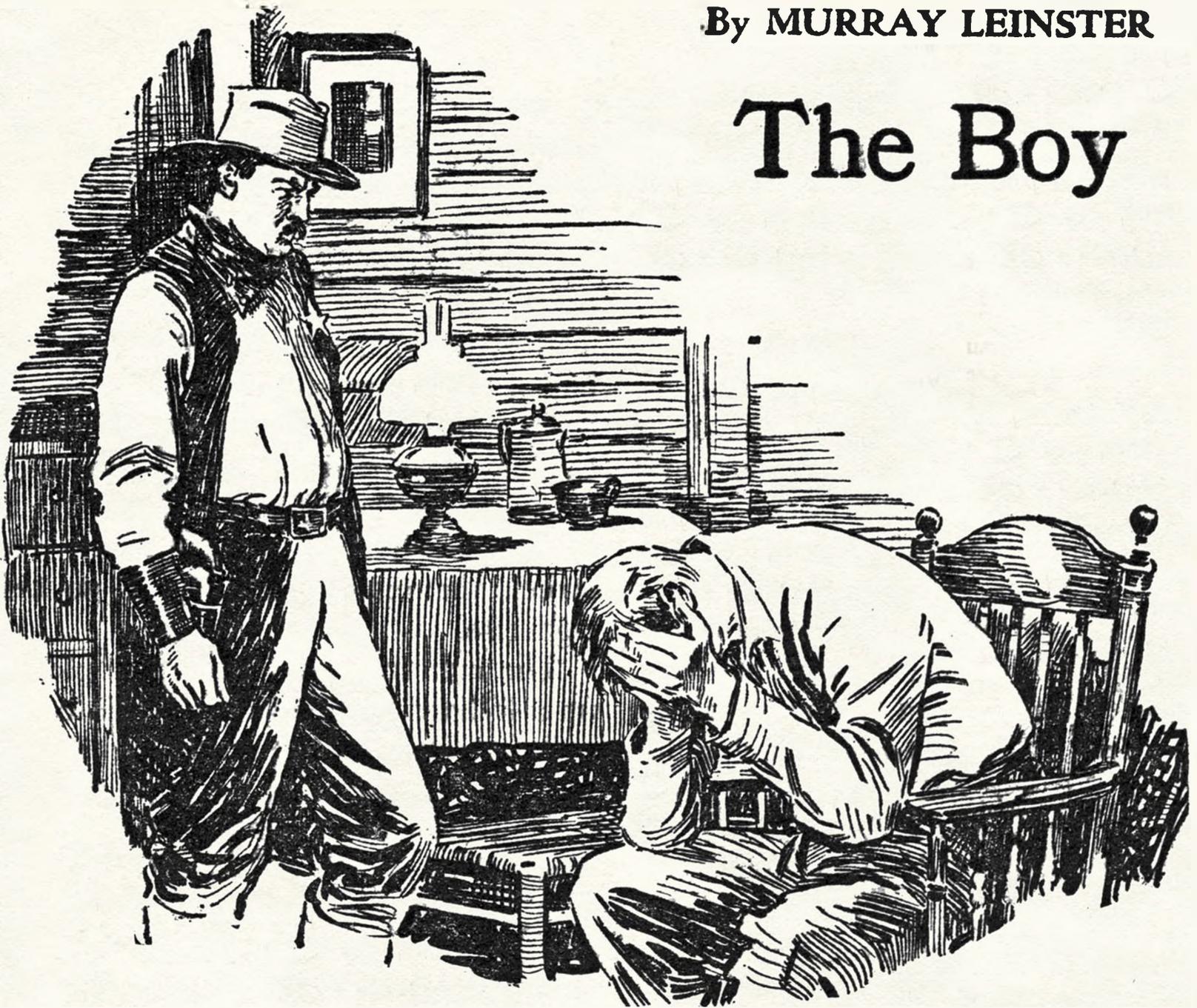
Locke again fixed his gaze upon the window pane, and through it he could still see the slight bulge at the drapery knot.

It assured him that the pistol was still there.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

By MURRAY LEINSTER

The Boy



"The boy's killed my Sally too"

He had thirty minutes in which to come out and die like a man—the trouble was he hadn't lived like a man

THERE was no sound anywhere except the cushioned thudding of the horses' hoofs. It was dark, and overhead a thin mistiness blurred the sky so that no single twinkling star was visible. The wind was still, and not even sage or mesquite made the little whispering noises which ordinarily sound so companionable in the dark hours. The horses went on, their riders silent. They made a drumming sort of rumble in the night, with now and again the creak of leather or the faint jangle of a bit, and, very occasionally, the

click of a steel-shod hoof against a pebble.

Then a light appeared. It was quite near at its first sighting. The men had reached a little rise beyond which a tiny ranch house lay, and they saw two windows which glowed from a lamp behind them. The leading rider reined in. The five regarded the house in silence.

"If he's theah," said a man grimly, "he'll be fightin', I'm guessin'."

The Sheriff shook his head in the blackness.

"I ain't expectin' a fight," he said quietly.

He stared at the twin-lighted windows, weighing something in his mind. One of the halted riders spat in the darkness.

"Y' mean he'd s'rrender to keep—uh—on account of his ma?"

The Sheriff shook his head again.

"She ain't beah," he said, regarding the windows steadily. "She's over in Jefferson, visitin' her sister." He paused a moment. "We know his horse got crippled, an' he's on foot. An' we know what kinda fella he is. He's gone home, expectin' his pa to help him out. You fellas scatter. I want you should be all around the house before I get theah, but clear of it. A coupla hundred yards away. I'm goin' in to talk to Pete."

A moment of restlessness. There was slow anger in the voice which protested: "Lookabeah, Sheriff! A dam' sneakin' murd'rer like he is, he'd dry-gulch you! Le's all go an' take him out! His ma's a good woman an' we' all sorry for her, but she's got to know some time!"

The Sheriff said quietly:

"That's what I'm doubtin', fellas. You let me handle this. Scatter like I said. If he tries to break away, shoot 'im. Meantime, let me go in."

He moved slowly ahead. Behind him the five riders muttered to one another, and the sound of hoofs began again. Some went to the right and some to the left. The Sheriff listened intently. He nodded to himself. Good men, these. There are times when neighbors are better law-men than mercenaries. These men felt as he did. They hated their job, but they would go through with it to the last and most unhappy detail because justice required it. They were not concerned with gaining public admiration or retaining public office. Neighbors do make a good posse when they do not hate the man they are hunting, but hate the thing he has done.

THE Sheriff trotted quietly forward through the blackness. Before he reached the house the others would be posted. No man could leave the ranch house and get away while the Sheriff was within. But it seemed bitterly strange to be riding up to Pete Sanders' house to hunt a murderer in it. Pete Sanders was the Sheriff's friend, and there had been a time when he and the Sheriff—no sheriff

then, but as swashbuckling a young stripping as Pete himself—were rivals for the hand of the same girl.

Trotting toward the ranch house, the Sheriff remembered somberly that he had always been proud that even Sally's choice of Pete hadn't been able to break up their friendship. It hadn't. For long years, now, that friendship had held. It was to the Sheriff that Pete had first told the marvelous news which provided the taste of bitterness now in the Sheriff's mouth. And it was the Sheriff who had agonized with Pete in these last ghastly years when a courageously smiling woman had ever to be reminded against excitement or exercise, because of a mysteriously recalcitrant "heart."

The lights of the house drew nearer. Sounds of the stock in the corral became audible. The curtains at the windows became visible, not merely as wisps of woman-stuff, but as things which allowed the Sheriff to see no more than a lamp and the corner of a table with a newspaper on it, inside the lighted room.

That was as he rode up to the porch. He made no attempt to go silently. He went up to the house as he'd done a thousand times before, and, swinging from the saddle to the ground, went up the steps and knocked on the door. The only difference, this time, was that for once his hand eased his gun in its holster.

There was a startled movement inside the house. Then silence. The Sheriff knocked again. Presently light showed about the door-cracks, and the Sheriff heard footsteps coming nearer. They were his friend's footsteps, Pete Sanders' footsteps, and the Sheriff noted with a grim lack of elation that they were heavy, were old, were the footsteps of a man who has received a numbing blow and does not quite realize what has happened to him.

The lock clattered. The door opened. A lamp came into view, held in the hand of Pete Sanders. It trembled a little as he looked into the eyes of the Sheriff.

"Howdy, Pete," said the Sheriff gravely. "Mind if I come in a while?"

Pete Sanders drew back from the door. "Hello, Dick! O' course! Come in," he said unsteadily. "What you doin' in these parts this time o' night? Want to bunk heah? Sally's over to her sister's in Jefferson, an' I'm bachin' it, but I reckon I can fix you some grub. Y' hungry?"

"Nope," said the Sheriff. He waited until his friend closed the door behind him. "Ain't goin' to stay long, Pete. Just wanted to talk somethin' over with you. Ridin' by, so to speak, an' I kinda need to get somethin' off my mind."

He was careful not to watch the face of Pete Sanders.

"Shucks," said Pete, with a world of relief in his tone. "I thought theah was somethin' serious! I reckoned maybe you'd got on to some o' my doin's."

He managed to smile as he led the way into the lamp-lighted room. His eyes sought the Sheriff's face.

"Nothin' on you, Pete," said the Sheriff soberly. "I aim to leave this house without arrestin' anybody."

Pete's look changed queerly for an instant. Just such a queer, speculative dread as might show in a man's eyes if—say—he knew that some day his heart would stop, and it had missed a beat at just that instant.

"Set down in that chair, then," he said gruffly after an instant. "Heah's a place to put y' feet, since Sally's away. Heah's tobacco. Could y' use a drink?"

THE Sheriff brought out his pipe and filled it slowly. His face was very sober. Pete Sanders watched him, making a show of normal behavior which gave the Sheriff a twinge of bitterness.

"What's on y' mind?" asked Pete gruffly. "Say it!"

"It's you, Pete," said the Sheriff soberly. "An' Sally. I got to do somethin', an' I don't know just how to set about doin' it. Do you remember that both you an' me wanted to marry Sally in years gone by?"

Pete nodded.

"We shook han's on it," he said as so-

berly, "that whoever lost, he wouldn't have hard feelin's. An' you didn't. I don't know whether I coulda kept the bargain, but you did."

"An' y' remember," said the Sheriff, frowning unhappily at the wall, "that when—uh—y' knew that boy o' yours was comin', I was the first one y' told?"

"Yeah." Pete looked sharply at the Sheriff, wreathed in his own pipe-smoke. "I remember."

"An' when Sally had that first trouble with her heart, it was me y' told about it?" The Sheriff made a baffled gesture with his hand. "Pete, we' been friends, ain't we?"

Pete nodded, watching the Sheriff intently. And the Sheriff smoked, and opened his lips to speak, and closed them again. He puffed, frowning unhappily. And quite suddenly Pete Sanders' face changed. There was the sound of someone else breathing in this house. It was plainly audible in the dead stillness all about. Someone was frightened. Half-panting in terror. Panicky.

Pete Sanders did not move a muscle of his body, but the blood drained from his cheeks and a glistening film coated over his forehead.

"About that boy," said the Sheriff at long last and in an altered voice. "He's been gone a long time, ain't he?"

"Two years," said Pete Sanders. He moistened his lips. "We ain't heard from him in all that time. Not a word."

The Sheriff stared at the wall.

"That was right tough on all of us," he said. "Pete, y' don't blame me for what I had to do, then?"

Pete Sanders swallowed.

"Nope. It was y' duty. Y' did more'n your duty, Dick. That boy o' mine—he wasn't raised right. His ma thought a heap o' him, an' when she—uh—when her heart went back on her . . ."

The Sheriff nodded.

"I know. You licked him once, an' it near killed her. She was in bed a couple months from that special attack."

"I near lost her," said Pete Sanders

harshly. "An' he knew it. If she ever s'spected the trouble he got in, her heart woulda stopped on her. If I let him get his jus' deserts, it woulda been the same as murderin' her outright. She thought he was a angel, Dick, She does now. I"—Pete Sanders swallowed again—"I hadda pay him to keep him from sassin' her. I hadda pay my own son to keep him from showin' his mother what kinda critter he was, so's she—she—"

The Sheriff puffed furiously.

"Yeah. An' when he shot up that Mex over a girl, why—Pete, that was just plumb somethin' that couldn't be hushed up. The Mex didn't die, lucky—"

Pete Sanders closed and unclosed his hands.

"I wish you'd get to what you' goin' to say," he said in a voice that was suddenly thin and brittle. "Sally's over in Jefferson. You give me warnin', the time that Mex was shot, because you knew she'd die if she heard about it an' the boy was arrested. I gave him money an' told him to get out because I couldn't help him any more. I told him if he ever come back he'd be murderin' his mother, 'cause you'd have to arrest him, an' he'd go to prison for shootin' that Mex.

"But—what'd you come heah to say, Dick? Sally's over in Jefferson. You can tell me."

The Sheriff averted his eyes.

"One more thing," Pete Sanders said soberly. "Sam Bodin. He caught the boy cheatin' in a poker game," he said in an utterly toneless voice. "Told everybody 'bout it. Gun-whipped him to boot, an' promised to lick the hide off him if he ever come in town again when he was theah. . . . That hurt the boy more'n anything else that ever happened to him, because it proved to eve'ybody that he was a thief an' a coward. Nobody ever tol' Sally, but it hurt the boy. I never knew any human to hate any other human like he hated Sam Bodin after that. He swore—"

"He swore," said the Sheriff soberly, "that some day he was goin' to get even."

SILENCE. Pete Sanders looked like a statue carved out of gray stone.

Sweat came out on his face in visible drops, which coalesced and ran down in ungainly streaks. He looked at the Sheriff, and his throat worked, and he tried three separate times to speak.

"But—"

The Sheriff nodded bitterly.

"He done it, Pete. Tonight. He rid up to Sam's house an' hid his horse. He crawled up to the house. Sam come out an' your boy let 'im have it—in the back."

The clock ticked very loudly indeed. A drop of sweat fell grotesquely from Pete Sanders' chin. He looked like a statue—a statue of anguish. The Sheriff went on with a remorseful gentleness:

"Sam keeled over. Your boy come out an' laughed down at him. He knew Sam lived by himself, an' had money in th' house. He went inside to get it. An' Sam dragged out his gun, an' with the life-blood drainin' from him, he started shootin' when the boy come out. The boy run. Sam thought he nicked him, but he heard the horse goin' away. An' Jerry Soames, he was passin' by an' he heard Sam's gun fannin' empty. It didn't sound like a man shootin' a coyote or aimin' at a target. He went over. An' Sam told him about it before he died."

Pete Sanders said in a terrible, pain-racked whisper:

"Sally! She's goin' to bear it! Theah ain't any way in Gawd's world I can keep her from hearin' it! An' her heart'll plumb stop . . . The boy's killed my Sally, too, same as if he'd stuck a knife in her. . . ."

The Sheriff went on soberly:

"He went away in a kinda panic. Jerry Soames heard a horse scream just before he got to Sam. It sounded like it was hurt. After Sam died he went to see. It was the boy's horse. He was ridin' blind, scared because he'd been shot at. He tried t' make the horse take a jump it couldn't make. It had a coupla busted legs, but the boy'd rolled clear."

Pete Sanders tried to speak. He shook his head, struggling to make his muscles

obey him. Huge tears rolled down his cheeks. He was unspeakably grotesque in his suffering.

"So he come heah," said the Sheriff very tiredly. "He didn't have a horse, an' he'd shot a man, an' he figured maybe that man would tell who killed him before he died. He needed a horse an' he needed help. So he come heah. He's in this house now."

Pete Sanders put his head in his hands and sobbed. The Sheriff watched him soberly. Then he heard a movement and an old, worn holster tipped ever so slightly. But the Sheriff did not look up. He gave no sign of alertness that could have been seen by someone—say—in the darkened next room.

Pete Sanders stood up, his mouth working.

"I—I'm right much ashamed of myself for breakin' down," he said unsteadily. "But I wasn't thinkin' of myself, Dick. It's Sally. I—I've been bringin' her letters every now an' then. From the boy. I wrote 'em. Tellin' her he was down in Juarez, workin' steady an' thinkin' of marryin' a girl like Sally'd ha' liked him to marry. An' now theah's this comin' up, an' she'll know he's a murderer an' the kinda sneakin' houn' that'll shoot a man from hidin' an' in the back . . ."

PETE'S throat closed convulsively. He choked. The Sheriff knocked out his pipe. He stood up.

"I come heah, Pete," he said soberly, "because it was the only thing I could do. He's heah, the boy. He's in the house. I heard him breathin' heavy just now. He's listenin' to every word I'm sayin'."

Pete Sanders—his face a mask of pure anguish—said through stiff lips:

"But—Sally, Dick! You can't help what you doin', but—it's goin' to kill her . . ."

The Sheriff said bitterly:

"Don't I know it, Pete? My Gawd! Don't y' remember we shook han's once an' swore that no matter who was the lucky one, we'd stay friends? Ain't I

done it? An' do you think I ain't sufferin', thinkin' of what's comin' to her? My Gawd, Pete! Y' don't think I stopped carin'—just because she married you?"

Pete Sanders spread out his hands helplessly. He spoke with tremendous effort.

"I know, Dick. I know! But—what's you goin' to do?"

The Sheriff frowned.

"All I can, an' more," he said steadily. "I said when I come in that I was aimin' to leave without arrestin' anybody in heah. I'm leavin'. For half an hour. Then I'm comin' back to hunt for th' boy, Pete. I'm hopin' he ain't heah when I come."

Pete Sanders said hopelessly:

"What you mean, Dick? You ain't goin' to let him get away? He's a murderer an' a sneak an'"—he sobbed, a dry and racking sob—"he's a coward, too, Dick. He's my boy, but—"

"If he starts out from heah," said the Sheriff evenly, "inside of half an hour, he'll have just about one chance in a hundred of gettin' to the Border. No more'n that chance, but he'll have that. The men in the posse are my friend's an' yours, Pete. But they were Sam Bodin's friends, too."

He paused. "I'll be back in half an hour."

He went quietly to the door, down the hall, and out to the porch. He mounted and rode away from the house into darkness.

It was very dark. It was very still. Only the stock in the corral moved, in all the world, and the sounds from those animals were queerly placid in the soft blackness. Snortings, occasionally. Shiftings of weight from one hoof to another. Once an indescribable noise as of a body rubbed luxuriously against a fence-post for the scratching sensation to be obtained.

The Sheriff rode openly, at a steady trot, until a faint "click" came out of the darkness before him.

"It's me," said the Sheriff.

A figure materialized in the gloom. Horse and man came close.

"He was theah, Sheriff?"

"I didn't see him," said the Sheriff

briefly, "but he was. I heard him. Le's go gather up the rest."

Two riding figures trotted together. They picked up three more.

"We move off a ways," said the Sheriff. "I gave Pete half an hour."

A pause. A questioning murmur.

"I gave him half an hour," repeated the Sheriff quietly. "You fellas all know Pete Sanders. He's spent his whole life for Sally. An' she's one fine woman. I aimed, myself, to marry her, only she picked Pete out instead. An' it ain't her fault the boy is like he is. That kind's likely to turn up anywheah, in any family."

A voice said grimly:

"All the same, Sheriff, he killed Sam Bodin. Shot 'im in the back, too, from hidin'."

"Yeah," said the Sheriff steadily, "but we're aimin' for justice. I gave Pete Sanders half an hour to set the boy on a horse an' start him for the Border. I told him he didn't have more'n a chance in a hundred of gettin' through. He ain't."

Another voice:

"I get yuh. We'll beah him if he starts. We track 'im down."

Still another voice said:

"Listen!"

THE five men were silent. They listened grimly. There was a small commotion in the corral by the ranch house. Somebody had roped a horse. That somebody was saddling up. The Sheriff nodded to himself in the blackness.

"Yeah. Pete's fixin' a horse for his boy." He hesitated, and added coldly: "We got to make sure it ain't Pete that starts ridin', to lead us off an' make a getaway for the boy certain."

One of the five said reluctantly:

"Out o' friendship for Pete an' his wife, I ain't grudgin' even a dog like that boy a chance. But what good's it goin' to do? She's got to find out some day anyways!"

The Sheriff listened. The horse was saddled, over there by the ranch house. It was led to the door. The door of the

house opened and closed. Somebody had gone in.

"It's goin' to do some good," said the Sheriff grimly, "if you fellas lie like you oughta!"

He told them how they ought to lie.

Five minutes later he meditated upon their response in a queer mixture of bitterness and pride. Neighbors. Justice. Americans are a queer people. These men were a posse, deputized to uphold the law. They hated their task because it meant the death of a fellow-man, if not at their hands, then at the hands of the public hangman. Yet they would not withdraw from that task though it meant anguish to a man and certain death to a woman innocent of all wrongdoing. Justice is always strange. In the guise of law it is sometimes strangest of all.

They waited, very patiently, for the swift rush of a horse's hoofs making away from the ranch-house. In the darkness they would not be able to see anything at all. Pete Sanders would certainly have picked a dark-colored mount for the son he could no longer own. He would give the boy every chance, hating what he was and what he had done, yet not hating him at all. And when those swift hoofbeats tore away through the darkness toward the Border, the posse would follow in grim and unrelenting pursuit. The boy would have such a chance as might be given even to a man who murdered from ambush, by men who were true friends to his parents. Yet a chance was all he would have.

But no swift hoofbeats came. The night was dark and still and silent. The five men waited very grimly, very patiently. Nothing happened. Nothing happened at all. The twin lighted windows gleamed through the darkness. No sound. No movement. Just once in the seemingly age-long vigil of the five, there was one tiny noise that could be ascribed to the house. It was a thin, muted cry, so faint that it was not even a syllable, yet containing panic, and pleading, and an incredulous stark terror.

Four of the five men stirred. But the Sheriff said somberly:

"He's still theah. The half-hour ain't up yet."

He continued to wait. His horse reached down and cropped at the grass. The posse watched the house with a dogged grimness. Sam Bodin had been murdered, from ambush, by a man within that house. They waited.

And nothing happened. And nothing happened. And nothing happened.

Then the Sheriff said bitterly:

"Time's up, an' he ain't got the nerve! Damn him! His ma—" Then he stopped. "I'm goin' down," he said evenly, "by myself. He might get some nerve if he only sees me. Maybe!"

HE went toward the house for the second time. And the night was very dark indeed. No single star gleamed upon him to show his features twisted by bitterness, and by the vision of what would happen when this boy's mother learned that all her belief in him had been illusion; that he was a murderer, an assassin, a thief, and worse . . .

There was a muffled explosion inside the house. Just one.

The Sheriff went white in the darkness. His hand went to the holster at his hip. His fingers were suddenly stiff. He rode on. He reached the ranch house porch. He dismounted. There was no sound within. The Sheriff tried the door.

Light came about the door-cracks. Heavy, shuffling footsteps sounded, drawing nearer. A fumbling hand turned the lock within.

The Sheriff looked into the gray, deep-lined face of his friend. Pete Sanders' eyes were the eyes of an animal which has been hurt. His throat worked convulsively. He made a gesture for the Sheriff to come with him. He led the way, shuffling, to the room in which he and the Sheriff had talked before. There he flung out his hand toward the open door which led to a yet-dark room beyond.

A voice which was sheer anguish came from his throat.

"Dick! He—he didn't have th' nerve. Gawd!"

The Sheriff went quickly into the next room. He was in there for minutes. He came back, his eyes very soft and gentle. Pete Sanders lay with his head in his hands across the table.

"Didn't have—the nerve!" he gasped. "Knowin'—Sally b'lieves he's a—angel—he didn't have th' nerve—an' he wouldn't b'lieve I hadda keep her from findin' out the truth about him—"

The Sheriff put his hand on Pete Sanders' shoulder.

"That's a young Mex in the nex' room, Pete," he said quietly. He steadied his voice. "That's a Mex in the nex' room, an' he's undoubted the man that killed Sam Bodin, because he's got some o' Sam's money on him. I'll get the boys to come in heah. They'll—uh—identify him as a Mex. Not your boy, Pete. A Mex. They'd—uh—decided on that before. An—I killed him. Not you. Me. Resistin' arrest. With five of us ready to testify to it, theah won't be any need to carry him in to town. We'll bury him in the hills, before dawn. You can come, if y'like.

"He was a Mex that none of us ever saw before, an' he killed Sam Bodin, an' he got killed. It's ended. Y' see? It's all over."

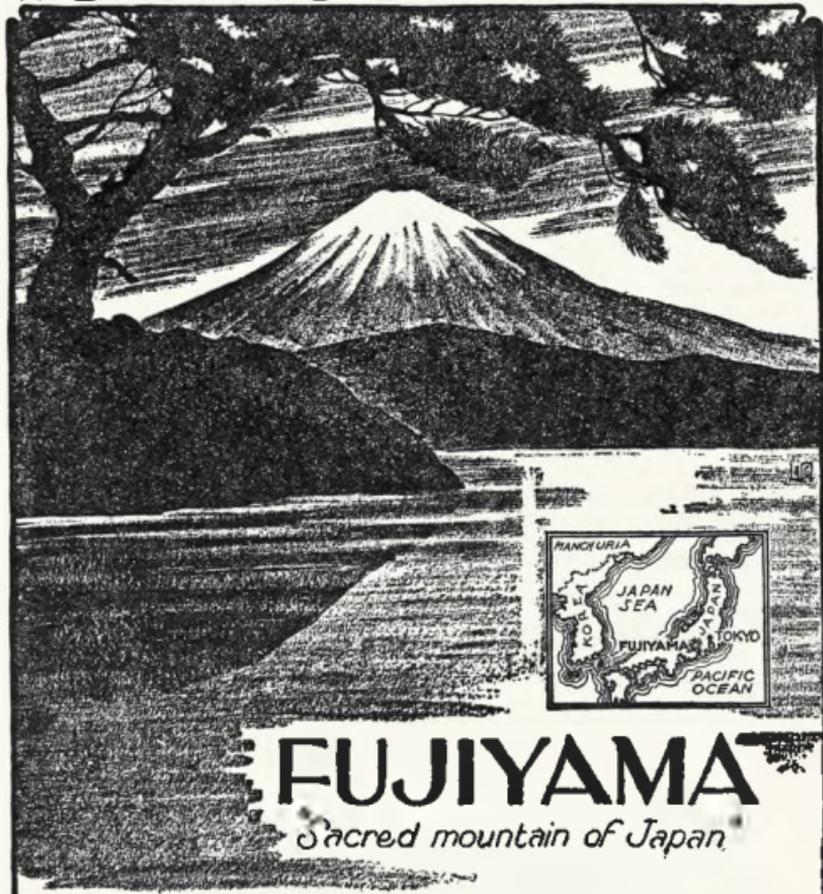
Pete Sanders raised his face. He was blinded by the tears a man sheds only in purest agony.

"I—I'm thinkin' of Sally—" he gasped. "Sally, she—b'lieves the boy's a—angel . . ."

The Sheriff happened by Pete Sanders' house again, three days later. He saw a letter lying open on a table there. Pete Sanders' wife was coming home after a visit to her sister in Jefferson. The letter was waiting for her. It was from her boy down in Juarez. He was working steadily, and saving a little money, and thinking about getting married to just the right sort of girl. That letter was going to make his mother very happy.

THE END

WONDERS OF THE WORLD



FUJIYAMA

Sacred mountain of Japan.

VIEWED from whatever angle, Fujiyama is a sight of rare beauty. It is a lonely mountain whose majesty is emphasized because it rises solitary above the sea with its long slopes of green trees and its graceful cone snow-capped the year round. Every Japanese reveres this holy mountain and if possible climbs at least once the arduous and toilsome twelve thousand feet to the top. It is a long, difficult ascent and an old Japanese proverb reads: "There are two kinds of fools, those who have never ascended Fujiyama and those who have ascended twice."

The followers of Buddha call Fujiyama "The Peak of the White Lotus," for to them it is the symbol of the flower which grows with green leaves at its foot to raise a chalice of beautiful white to the sky. The sacred mountain appears again and again as a familiar subject in Japanese prints and poetry.

Tradition says the mountain was suddenly upheaved during a single night in 285 B.C. At one time it was an active volcano, but no ominous rumbles have come from its crater since 1707.

Mysterious Don Miguel

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY



The bullet missed; the blade did not

The reckless highwaymen of Spanish California needed taming, said the night-riding Zorro, so—

LEADING UP TO THIS CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT

SENOR ZORRO was known in the days of old Spanish California as a friend of the poor and the protector of oppressed natives. In the town of San Diego de Alcála, Zorro unexpectedly appears at the local tavern and engages the unscrupulous Valentino Vargas in a duel, leaving on his cheek the mark of Zorro, a "Z." Vargas swears revenge.

There is talk of a native uprising fo-

This story began in the

mented by the mysterious Don Miguel, and both Vargas and his right hand man, Pedro Pico, plan to play their part in it. But Vargas has more immediate plans: the robbing of Don Felipe Ramon.

Don Felipe, a grandee if ever there was one, had lately arrived in the valley with his fair daughter, Carmelita, and an old duenna. They were to journey to Reina de Los Angeles, to be the guests of Don Argoay for September 21

Diego Vega and his father. It was whispered that Don Diego was to wed the fair Carmelita, if they took a fancy to each other.

Don Felipe, carrying much wealth with him, feared highwaymen and bandits. Meanwhile he waited in the guest house at the mission up the valley until Don Diego arrived. Inasmuch as Don Diego was the outspoken enemy of the governor, his father could not obtain an escort of troopers for his friends.

So some scoundrels of the road, of whom Vargas was one, now waited like hawks to pounce upon their prey. But Zorro, by clever artifice, persuades Captain Gonzales that he ought to accompany Don Felipe's party safely through.

CHAPTER VIII (Continued).

A BRAWL ON THE BEACH.

VALENTINO VARGAS and his friends had been waiting at San Juan Capistrano for the party to arrive. They were hiding in native huts, paying their way handsomely. It was the intention of Valentino Vargas to make a last attempt here to get the gold and jewels of Don Felipe Ramón, regardless of what Zorro had told him of Don Miguel's wish that Don Felipe go unmolested.

Vargas and Pedro Pico were in a hut at that moment, but their three friends were not. They had observed the party walking on the beach, and had crept down through the rocks to intercept them.

Señorita Carmelita wore jewels on her fingers and around her pretty throat, and Don Felipe himself had heavy rings studded with diamonds, and a scarf buckle heavy with precious stones. The three rogues decided to get what they could, and flee to the Canyon of the Cocopahs, for the night of the full moon was only two nights away.

Down from the rocks they had

dashed, one holding a pistol and the other two with naked blades in their hands. And when Don Diego rounded the point of the rocks he beheld Don Felipe being forced backward at the point of a blade, and another rogue keeping Señora Vallejo at a distance, while the third had grasped the *señorita* and was trying to get her jewels.

Though his raiment was that of Don Diego Vega, the spirit became that of Señor Zorro now. His eyes aflame at this indignity, Don Diego whipped out his blade as he ran forward. He gave a cry of rage and made for the nearest man.

The three turned to confront him, and one laughed.

"It is the weakling!" he cried. "Let us muss up his silks and laces."

They set about it, while Señorita Carmelita clung to Señora Vallejo's arm, and Don Felipe lurched forward, though unarmed, expecting to see Don Diego instantly slain by these ruffians.

But Don Diego Vegas appeared fully capable of caring for himself. He disarmed the first man and ran him through the shoulder neatly. The second discharged his pistol, and the ball whistled past Don Diego's ear, and the burning powder scorched the lace of his collar.

"Scum!" Don Diego cried.

His blade flashed, and came back red, and the man coughed as he collapsed to the sand, twitched, and was still.

THE third came rushing forward, howling curses, blade up and ready. Don Diego retreated a few paces before his wild rush, stumbled in the sand, and almost went down, but recovered in time to meet the attack.

This third man knew something of fencing, but not enough. In an instant, as soon as Don Diego got the feel of him, he knew he was undone. He retreated step by step, until he was on firm ground at the end of the mass of rocks. And suddenly he darted aside, turned his back, and ran.

"Scum!" Don Diego howled after him.

Don Felipe's cries had attracted the attention of some at the mission, and they came hurrying to ascertain the trouble, Capitan Gonzales among them. They saw a wounded man and a dead one, and one running away, and beheld Don Diego Vega cleaning his blade in the sand.

"Who says he is not a man?" Don Felipe Ramon was thundering. "Three against him, and he did not falter. What manner of country is this, where rogues may attack persons with a stone's throw of the mission? No doubt it has inferior soldiery."

"Pardon, Don Felipe, but I offered to accompany you on your walk," Capitan Gonzales said. "I feared something like this might occur."

"We had no need of the soldiery," Don Felipe told him. "Gentlemen know how to defend their ladies."

Señora Vallejo had dropped upon the sand, and was sitting there moaning and fanning herself. The *señorita* left her and stepped to Don Diego's side, and timidly touched his arm.

"Forgive me, *señor*, for some thoughts I have held concerning you," she begged, her eyes shining as she looked up at him. "They were wrong thoughts."

He smiled down at her.

"It distresses me that you saw me in a moment of uncontrolled passion," he replied. "But there are things which make a man grow turbulent and

cause him to resort to violence. Do you care to take a stroll with me along the beach? I have thought of another poem."

She clung to his arm.

"I'll be delighted to hear it, Don Diego," she said.

CHAPTER IX.

ROGUES AT LIBERTY.

SECLUDED in the native hut, Valentino Vargas and Pedro Pico heard the tumult and wondered what had occurred to cause it. They crept forth and joined the throng of natives and workmen hurrying down to the shore.

Before they reached the scene, they heard rumors of what had happened—that three ruffians had set upon Don Felipe and his party, and that Don Diego Vega, of all people, had turned red-blooded for a moment and had driven them off.

Valentino Vargas and Pedro Pico glanced swiftly at each other, guessing it was their three companions who had done this thing.

"Ha! They tried to steal a march on us, and have been punished for it," Vargas whispered. "Now we shall proceed as we have planned, and really cut the loot only two ways. Nevertheless, they were our friends, and were to join the enterprise of Don Miguel. So it is in my mind to punish this Don Diego at the first opportunity. He is on my list, Pedro Pico, along with Señor Zorro."

"You would slay half the men in the land," Pedro Pico said.

They came to the scene, to find one of their friends dead, and another wounded and held in custody, and the third flown. Capitan Gonzales was

shouting loudly, taking charge of the situation, and Sergeant Juan Ruiz was rushing about carrying out his superior's orders.

The sergeant turned and caught sight of them, gave a hoarse bellow, and charged through the crowd, and had them by their collars before they could escape.

"Ho, *capitán!*" he cried. "Here are the rogues who claim they saw Señor Zorro climbing the vine at the Pulido *hacienda*, and caused us to arouse the household."

Gonzales strode over to them and stood with his fists planted against his hips, glaring at them.

"We did see somebody climbing the vine, and he wore a mask," Vargas declared. "We thought we were doing our duty in telling the sergeant—"

"Who are you?" Gonzales demanded.

"Valentino Vargas, a trader, going now to Reina de Los Angeles. This Zorro fought with me and cut my cheek, and I certainly know the rogue. I saw him climbing the vine. If you did not catch him when you searched, that is no fault of mine."

"And you?" Gonzales asked Pedro Pico.

"I am a gambler, *Señor Capitán*, and this Zorro claimed that I cheated, and drove me out of San Diego de Alcalá. I travel to Reina de Los Angeles also."

"Two rogues, no doubt," Gonzales declared. "Ruiz, you will place them in custody at the mission, until I have opportunity to dispose of the case."

They howled their demands for release, but Sergeant Juan Ruiz prodded them with the tip of his blade, and threatened them with his pistol, and marched them up from the beach and to a small adobe building set aside

from the others, with a heavy door and metal bars across the windows.

Sergeant Ruiz opened the door and thrust them inside, not being gentle about it, for the affair at the Pulido *hacienda* had earned him a stern rebuke from the *capitán*.

"There, rogues!" he said, and closed the door and dropped the heavy bar into place on the outside. "No doubt the *capitán* will order you a hundred lashes each, when he gets around to it."

INSIDE the *cuartel*, Valentino Vargas paced around the little room and howled curses, while Pedro Pico sat on a bench and held his head in his hands. Some natives came to the windows to look in and taunt them, and Vargas cursed at them also. Finally, they tired of their sport, and went to see the dead ruffian buried on the hillside, where there was a burial place for such vermin, and they were left alone.

Came, then, another native, who peered in at them, and then glanced furtively around outside, to make sure nobody else was near.

"You have gold, *señores?*" he asked. "You would pay a man who told you how to escape your prison?"

"Would pay him generously," Vargas said, stepping to the window.

"Some moons ago, a friend of mine was confined, and I and some others aided him in an escape," the native said. "I can aid you in similar manner?"

"And how is that?"

"First, I must have gold."

"Rogue! I give you gold, and you'll laugh and run away, and tell us nothing," Vargas said.

"I promise, by the saints! Three pieces of gold—"

"One!" Vargas said.

"Three, *señor*, else you remain as you are, to be taken out and have your back lashed in front of all. Take your choice."

Vargas swore again, brought forth three pieces of gold, and gave them to the native through the bars.

"That bench in the corner, *señor*" the man at the window whispered. "Shift it, and lift the big flat stone upon which the bench now rests. You will find a tunnel which runs outside the patio wall and opens there in a clump of bushes."

Then the man darted away.

"Not yet!" Vargas warned, as Pedro Pico promptly started to move the bench. "It is the broad light of day, and everybody is rushing around in a state of excitement. Wait until their blood has cooled and they have gone about their business."

"But they may come to get us and whip us."

"Such things are always done in the cool of the evening, when all are at leisure and may watch, as you should know. We have nothing to fear now."

"When we get out, what shall we do?" Pedro Pico asked. "Get our horses and ride for the Canyon of the Cocopahs?"

"There are things to be done here, *dolt*. I still have my mind on the gold and jewels of Don Felipe Ramon. We know in which room they lodged him, and we saw the strongbox carried there. And there are other things, also. I desire to square accounts with this Don Diego Vega, because of the way he handled our friends, and also with this Señor Zorro, does he put in an appearance here. Not only did he denounce you and mark me, but also he is responsible for the plight in which we now find ourselves."

THEY sweltered in the *cuartel* during the midday, waiting for the *siesta* hour. The drowsy mid-afternoon found the mission slumbering. Natives slept in the shade of the walls, and even the friars of the mission had retired for rest.

"Now is the time," Vargas said.

They shifted the bench and lifted the flat stone, and the mouth of a small tunnel yawned before them.

"Go first," Vargas directed Pedro Pico. "I'll put the bench against the wall, and, after I enter the tunnel, will try to drop the flat stone into place. This is a secret which should be well kept, if possible."

Pedro Pico crawled down into the tunnel, sending back a cloud of fine dust. Valentino Vargas waited a moment, then dropped the flat stone into place and followed. It was a small tunnel, and there were places where Vargas feared he could not wriggle through.

He could hear Pedro Pico grunting and panting ahead of him. It was dark, stifling, dusty.

He heard Pico's exclamation of relief, finally, and crawled on and saw the light of day and got a whiff of fresh air. Pedro Pico was at the tunnel's outer mouth, holding back some brush so Valentino Vargas could crawl through.

They found themselves on the bank of a small arroyo, where they were hidden from the mission and the village. Crawling forth, they hurried up the gulch, away from danger.

"We'll hide until the nightfall," Vargas said. "Then we'll return, get our horses ready for the trail, hide them, do what we will, and escape. We'll make for the Canyon of the Cocopahs, and there await the meeting Don Miguel has called."

"You would rob Don Felipe Ramón, after being warned by Señor Zorro that Don Miguel would not like it?"

"I have told you my decision before, Pedro Pico. With the gold and jewels of Don Felipe in our possession, we need not concern ourselves with this affair of Don Miguel's. We'll make for the north and live like princes in Monterey."

A mile up the arroyo they went into hiding in a shady spot where the erratic breeze reached them at times, and stretched themselves out to sleep. When they awoke, the scarlet and gold of the sinking sun were streaking the distant sea and the breeze was coming in strongly.

"It will be dusk before we come to the mission," Valentino Vargas said. "Let us go. Perhaps we can find some native who will give us food for gold, and hide us until the time comes to strike."

CHAPTER X.

BLADES AND PISTOLS.

IN the room assigned him in the guest house, Don Diego Vega made his toilet for the evening meal. Bernardo assisted him, his eyes glowing as he served his master.

"Zorro may ride tonight, and he may not," Don Diego whispered to him. "However, does he desire to do so, he will expect to find his horse and costume in the arroyo."

Bernardo made a guttural sound and nodded that he understood and would obey.

"This is a merry business," Don Diego observed, smiling slightly. "I go me to San Diego de Alcalá to escort Don Felipe and the others. I am denied military escort, and highway-

men are prepared to pounce upon us. By a subterfuge, I get the escort, though I like it not. And by whispering that Don Miguel might not like it, were Don Felipe to be robbed, I hold off some of the bandits. Moreover, I arrange for the troopers to catch the white renegades who would upset the natives and lead them to certain slaughter and punishment."

Bernardo bobbed his head furiously, to show that he understood and approved.

Don Diego went then to the big room where the table had been spread, to find the others already there. Capitan Gonzales was endeavoring to pay court to Señorita Carmelita, and she was holding herself aloof with cold courtesy.

But when Don Diego entered the room her face brightened and she flashed him a smile, and Don Felipe, seeing it, and also the answering smile with which Don Diego greeted her, smiled slightly himself, for he was well pleased.

Friar Luis presided at the table, and native servants served. There were fruits, both fresh and preserved, and roast beef and roast mutton, pots of strained honey, olives, dishes of salads, and vegetables. Rich wines were served with the repast, for the mission had rare wines in its cellars, made from grapes grown near the mission of San Gabriel, and for which San Juan Capistrano had traded other wares.

Then, the meal at an end, they strolled in the moonlight in the patio, Don Diego with the little *señorita*, while Capitan Gonzales fumed, Señora Vallejo always watching, and Don Felipe talking with Friar Luis, who already had received from the grandee a gift of gold for the mission.

"We start in the early morning for

Reina de Los Angeles," Don Diego said, when they were all sitting beneath the arches again. "We shall make it by nightfall, for the highway is firm and well traveled."

"I am surprised we have come this far without having our throats cut," Don Felipe declared. "That affair on the beach reveals there are desperate characters in this country."

"Such vermin are encountered now and then," Don Diego said, loftily, "and needs must be disposed of."

"They were disposed of properly. It will please me, Don Diego, to tell your father of your proper conduct in the affair."

Don Diego smiled slightly. The news of his fight would not exactly startle his father, who knew that his son was Señor Zorro at times.

Capitan Gonzales bade the company good night, and retired to his own room, convinced that he could make no headway with the *señorita* as long as Don Diego Vega was basking in the bright light of hero worship. The ladies left also, and Don Diego sat for a time talking to Friar Luis and Don Felipe, then went to his own room, after giving his servants orders to be prepared for an early start.

BERNARDO was waiting, and Don Diego gestured for him to be gone. He slipped out through the patio, and hurried away to get the black horse in readiness. Don Diego stripped off his gorgeous raiment and dressed in plain clothing again, extinguished the candle, and presently crawled through the open window and made for the arroyo, keeping to the shadows.

Again he donned the habilaments of Señor Zorro, buckled on his blade, and put on his mask.

"Remain here and have the horse in readiness," he instructed Bernardo. "I may have need of him, and may not. Only the future can tell."

Back through the shadows he went to the patio wall, and there crouched for a time, listening. Some natives were singing around the huts, and a few fires were gleaming in the open air, and odors of cooking meat came to him.

He entered the patio cautiously, slipped along in the darkness beneath the arches, and came to the open window of Capitan Gonzales' room. A gentle snoring came from within.

Señor Zorro crept cautiously through the window. He gently dropped the tapestry down over the opening, while the *capitan* snored on. Through another window the moonlight streamed, but this window was on the outside, and high in the wall, so nobody on the exterior could see into the room.

Zorro drew his pistol from his girdle and stepped to the couch. He stood beside it, in the bright streak of moonlight, and prodded Capitan Gonzales gently in his ribs.

"Awake, soldier!" Zorro said.

Gonzales rolled over, grunting, trying to kick aside the bed covering and sit up. His wits were befuddled with sleep, and he was sitting on the edge of the couch before he realized what was happening. He opened his eyes, and saw the masked Zorro in the moonlight.

"You?" he cried.

"Keep your voice down, *capitan*, if you care to live. It is necessary for me to speak to you again."

"What now, rogue? I swear that one day I'll catch you and string you up!"

"Catch me first," Zorro suggested. "I wish to remind you of the meeting in the Canyon of the Cocopahs, night after the next. Do not fail to be there with the troopers from Reina de Los Angeles."

"We shall be there and catch the rogues, if they are present," Gonzales declared. "I think this is but a trick."

"There will be several present. You can tell at a glance, *capitán*, what men would turn renegade and follow this Don Miguel. And another thing, my *capitán*—a mistake has been made."

"Regarding what?" Gonzales asked.

"I did intimate to you, at San Diego de Alcalá, that possibly this Don Diego Vega and Don Felipe Ramón had something to do with the uprising. I spoke of catching big fish as well as small fry—remember?"

"I remember well, rogue."

"New intelligence has come to me. Of a certainty, neither has anything to do with this affair of Don Miguel. Neither is concerned in the planned uprising of the natives. I regret, my *capitán*, that my former words caused you to furnish military escort to persons to whom you did not wish to give it."

"Is this a trick?" Gonzales demanded. "You have made a fool of me! I have protected this party, with my sergeant, when undoubtedly it would have pleased the Governor to see them robbed, if not murdered. Who are you, fellow, who know so much?"

"I am Zorro!"

"AND who is Zorro, eh? It was whispered once that Don Diego Vega is Zorro, and I laughed at the idea. But, after what Don Diego did on the beach—perhaps the man has us all fooled. I shall look into this matter at once. If Don Diego Vega is Zorro—if you, *señor*, are Don Diego

Vega—I shall ascertain it, and see you properly punished."

"The moonlight," Zorro said, "makes you rave."

Capitán Gonzales started to speak again. But a sudden tumult stopped him. They heard a woman scream. They heard blades clash an instant. They heard the stentorian voice of Don Felipe Ramón howling for aid.

"Something's amiss," Zorro said. "This may be your business, *capitán*."

He jerked aside the tapestry and sprang through the window. Candles were gleaming in some of the rooms. The natives were coming at a run.

Zorro darted along the wall and got outside the patio, in time to see two men running toward the edge of the arroyo. From a window a pistol barked. Don Felipe Ramón, in his night clothing, crawled through and into the moonlight.

"Robbers! Thieves!" he cried. "There they go! They have my gold and jewels!"

Señor Zorro took after them, running swiftly over the rough dry ground, stumbling and staggering, but gaining on the two ahead, who were carrying the heavy box between them. A pistol barked as one of the two fired, but the ball went wild.

Señor Zorro fired his own weapon, stopping an instant to do so; they raced on.

His shot had missed. The two ahead dropped over the edge of the arroyo, and Zorro went on after them and dropped over also. Two saddled horses were there, and one man was trying frantically to lash the box behind one of the saddles. The other turned to fight.

He was Valentino Vargas.

"So, rogue!" Zorro cried.

"It is you, eh? The man who marked me! Now, *señor*, we shall have an accounting!"

Blades flashed in the bright light of the moon. The ground was uneven and rough, and delicate fencing was a perilous thing. Valentino Vargas, therefore, made a desperate attack, depending more on aggressiveness and strength than on fencing science.

"I marked you before, but I shall end you now," Señor Zorro cried. "Then I shall attend to your companion."

They fought desperately, for Zorro knew he had no time to lose. Men were rushing toward the arroyo from the mission. And he was not fighting now as Don Diego Vega, but as Señor Zorro, a so-called highwayman with a price upon his head, and at whom any man had liberty to fire pistol or present blade. Moreover, Capitán Gonzales would be coming, and his stout sergeant, Juan Ruiz, who was a man to be taken into consideration.

THE tip of Valentino Vargas' blade ripped Zorro's sleeve as the latter stumbled over a rock, and Vargas lunged forward to complete his work, thinking he had his adversary at a disadvantage, a cry of delight ringing from his lips. It was his last cry. He found the point of Zorro's blade at his breast, and Zorro promptly ran him through.

Zorro whirled, then, toward the other man, who had continued his work of fastening the strongbox behind his saddle. Now he was getting into the saddle. Men were arriving on the rim of the arroyo, starting to work their way down to the bottom. Zorro could hear Capitán Gonzales barking orders, could hear the strong voice of Sergeant Juan Ruiz answering him.

Pedro Pico kicked his mount in the flanks and started. But Señor Zorro was at his side instantly, reached up and grasped him, jerked him from the saddle and hurled him to the ground. Pedro Pico struck at him with a dagger, and Zorro had his sleeve ripped again.

"Scum!" he cried, and struck with his own dagger, using his left hand. Pedro Pico gave a cry and fell back. The wound was not mortal, but it put the man out of the fighting.

"It is Zorro!" Pedro Pico cried. "He escapes with the gold and jewels! I tried to stop him—he has stabbed me—"

Pistols barked. Sergeant Ruiz had reached the bottom of the arroyo, and came charging like a mad bull, blade out and ready.

"Hold, fellow!" he cried.

Zorro did not have time to get into the saddle, which was his purpose. He whirled, and his blade clashed with that of the sergeant. There was no time for proper fencing now. The others were rushing forward, and Señor Zorro found himself in danger of capture.

It flashed through his mind what capture would mean—the triumph of the Governor, death by the rope, shame and disgrace for the Vegas. The thought made him a madman. He attacked fiercely, knocked the sergeant's blade aside, ran him through the shoulder and saw him fall back, dropping his sword.

Into the saddle of Pedro Pico's horse, Zorro vaulted. He bent low and urged the animal down the arroyo through the heavy sand. More pistols barked behind him, but he rode unscathed through the semi-darkness. Around a bend, and he was safe for the moment.

Bernardo was waiting there with the black horse, and Zorro quickly sprang from the steed he rode, and mounted his own.

"Leave this horse here. Get out and away," he ordered Bernardo. "You must not be found here. I'll leave the black horse at the upper end of the arroyo, behind the storehouse."

He compelled his mount to ascend the slope, and for a moment revealed himself in the moonlight at the top, so that that those behind saw him. He sent a wild laugh ringing down the wind, then rode madly.

First, he made for the highway, and clattered along it with as much noise as possible. But soon he turned aside, riding with extreme caution, and cut back around the mission, hearing other riders going past in futile pursuit. He left the black where he had told Bernardo, for the servant had not yet arrived at the spot. He stripped off the habiliments of Señor Zorro, and hurried through the shadows back toward the mission.

CLOSE behind the storehouse he crept. The patio was alive with men. The voice of Capitán Gonzales came to him:

"Where is Don Diego Vega, then? Out riding, as this Señor Zorro! It has been suspected for some time."

"You are mad," Don Felipe Ramón replied.

"We shall see as to that. Every other man had returned to the patio. Where is Don Diego Vega?"

"Perhaps the robbers hurt him when he pursued them," Don Felipe defended. "He may be out there somewhere now, wounded. We must search for him."

"We do not know he pursued the robbers. He shall have some questions

to answer when next we meet. He is under suspicion. I shall make it my business to investigate well."

"This Zorro slew one thief and wounded another," Don Felipe pointed out. "He left the horse, with my strongbox on him, down the arroyo and went away on his own. I cannot find it in my heart to blame the man much. I understand he has done naught but befriend the helpless—though that did not always please the Governor."

"Being a friend of the Vegas, it is expected you would talk treason," Capitán Gonzales said, angrily. "Perhaps it would not be amiss if I investigated you, also, *señor*."

Don Felipe Ramón sputtered his rage at the insult, and turned away.

"But this Don Diego Vega comes first," Gonzales roared. "He has questions to answer. Where is he?"

"I am here, *Señor Capitán*," said the voice of Don Diego close behind him.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE CANYON.

GONZALES whirled to face him. Don Diego Vega stood there, only partially clad, brushing his scented handkerchief across his nostrils. He looked at Gonzales, and yawned.

"What is all this tumult?" Don Diego asked.

"He accuses you of being Señor Zorro," Don Felipe replied.

"Indeed?" Don Diego said. "I am flattered, Capitán Gonzales. This Zorro seems to be quite a man."

"Where have you been?" Gonzales demanded. "Give an accounting of where you have spent your time!"

Don Diego Vega lifted his head, and his eyes flashed. "I do not relish the tone of your voice," he said. "There is something of disrespect in it."

"As an officer of His Excellency, I demand that you make reply," Gonzales said.

"I was awakened by the tumult, *señor*. I rushed around as did everybody else, trying to discover the reason for all the turmoil. Then I returned to my room."

"You were not there when I searched for you."

"Possibly not. You may have searched before my return. It appears to me, *Capitán Gonzales*, that you and your sergeant are not proper soldiers. During the day I was compelled to fight off rogues who attacked Don Felipe and his daughter, and during the night *Señor Zorro* had to fight off thieves. Everybody does the fighting, it seems, except the soldiery."

"Beware, *señor*, lest you try my temper too far!" Gonzales cried.

"Do not bluster so much," Don Diego begged. "Surely, there has been enough tumult for one night. And we must start on early in the morning. Are we to have the pleasure of your escort again, *capitán*?"

"Beware!" Gonzales roared again. "I am not a novice with a blade."

"Are you, by any chance, challenging me to a duel by the light of the moon?" Don Diego asked. He beckoned to one of his native servants standing near. "Go to my room, and bring me my sword," he directed.

But Don Felipe Ramón hurried forward to prevent this.

"You forget yourselves, *señores*," he said. "Both of you have better things to do than fight each other. Drop this for the present, I beg of you. The accusation of *Capitán Gonzales* is

absurd unless he has better facts upon which to base it, and it is beneath the dignity of Don Diego Vega to notice it when it is made."

Friar Luis came forward, speaking in his gentle voice, and urged them to remember that they were at the mission, and that there had been enough violence and blood-letting for one day, so they turned away, each to go to his own room.

At dawn, the carriages were made ready and loaded, and they began the last part of the journey to *Reina de Los Angeles*. The highway was firm, and there were few hills, and the horses kept up a good pace.

At midday, they stopped at a rancho where Don Diego was known, to eat and rest for a time, sitting in the cool patio where a fountain splashed and scarlet blossoms ran riot over the adobe walls.

"'Tis but a few miles more," Don Diego said to the *señorita* and her father. "There are some splendid houses in *Reina de Los Angeles*, and people of the best. But my father's *hacienda*—there is the place! Only a few miles from the town, a place of calm retreat. I spend many days at a time there."

SENORITA CARMELITA seemed to be dreaming. There was a far-away look in her eyes and she was smiling faintly. Don Diego glanced at her, and her father saw the glance, and dreamed also that his wishes would be fulfilled, and his family be linked with that of Vega through marriage.

When the *siesta* hour was over, they went on. *Capitán Gonzales* rode beside the first carriage again, and held speech with *Señorita Carmelita* whenever the horses slowed, but knew he was making scant headway.

This irked him, and built in his breast rancor against Don Diego Vega greater than had been there before. He was thinking, however, of what Señor Zorro had told him regarding the meeting in the Canyon of the Cocopahs. If he had not been misled, soon the air would ring with his plaudits, and he would be the hero of the hour for preventing an uprising of natives, and then, perhaps, Señorita Carmelita would give ear to him.

Through the late afternoon they traveled briskly, until the dying sun stained the tumbling waves of the sea again. They came to a range of small, rounded hills, and followed the highway over them, and at dusk topped the last, and saw the pueblo of Reina de Los Angeles below them, lights already commencing to gleam in the houses and torches in the huts.

Down the slope they rushed with the carriage horses at a gallop, to come to the corner of the plaza, where the Vega *casa* stood. One of the outriders had gone ahead, and they were expected.

The door flew open, and gray-haired Alejandro Vega, Don Diego's august father, stood there with his arms outstretched in welcome. With two natives carrying torches on either side of him, he advanced to the first carriage, out of which Don Felipe got quickly to embrace him.

"My old friend! My old friend!" Don Felipe said, his eyes growing misty.

"Welcome to my poor home!" Don Alejandro replied. "Did my son conduct you in care and safety?"

"He got us through, and my property also, though there were divers and sundry tumults," Don Felipe said. "He conducted himself in those as a *caballero* should."

Capitan Gonzales paid his respects

and galloped across the plaza and toward the soldiers' barracks, with Sergeant Juan Ruiz close behind him. The *capitán* at once went into conference with the present *commandante*, whose office he was to take, and spoke of what Señor Zorro had told him.

"We'll catch the rogues!" Gonzales thundered. "We'll take every man, save a couple left to guard."

"It is a small box canyon, and we have to bottle up the mouth, and we have them," the *commandante* replied. "Tomorrow night is the night of the full moon—that is the time. I, too, have heard some rumblings concerning this Don Miguel. His identity is a question."

"Perhaps, when we take him, we shall be astonished," Gonzales said.

BUT, in the great *casa* of the Vegas, there was no talk of war and violence. The Ramons were made at home, and Don Diego went to his own quarters on the upper floor, and dressed in his very best. And when he descended the wide, winding staircase to the great living room, where the table was spread, there was an odor of perfume about him, and he held a book of poetry, and to look at him one would think he did not know how to handle a blade.

On the morrow he played host, for the blooded ladies of the town came to pay their respects to the Señorita Carmelita Ramon, and many of the young *caballeros* also. Then came the *siesta* hour, and they rested, and in the evening was a feast of welcome.

There were many guests, so that a man became lost among them, which was as Don Diego desired it. They filled the house and strolled in the patio, and it was difficult for one person to find another.

Don Diego slipped up the stairs to his own room, where Bernardo was waiting.

"The horse is ready?" he asked.

Bernardo nodded assent.

"Get to him at once, and I'll follow. Then do you await my return. Have any of the troopers left the barracks?"

Bernardo, who had been watching, nodded assent again, and opened and closed his hands twice.

"Twenty?" Don Diego asked; and once again Bernardo nodded.

"Fair odds!" Don Diego said, chuckling as he stripped off his rich garments, and left them so he could don them quickly again.

He got into his plain clothing, slipped along the hall, went to an open window, and descended to the ground by means of a clinging vine. Through the shadows he went swiftly, like a shadow himself, until he was behind the natives' huts. Bernardo was waiting there with the horse behind some rocks.

Working swiftly, he put on the costume of Zorro again, and the mask, and his weapons. Then he gave Bernardo a pat on his shoulder, and mounted the big black. He rode away through the night, going slowly so there were no resounding hoofbeats.

He did not follow one of the trails, but cut across the open country, traveling with caution, careful not to get against the skyline where he might be observed against the moon. The Canyon of the Cocopahs was but five miles from the town, but by the route Don Diego followed it was seven.

For he did not go directly to the canyon's mouth, judging that the troopers would be on guard and watching there. He judged, also, that Capitan Gonzales would allow any who wished

to enter, but bottle up the canyon so they could not escape.

Señor Zorro, however, knew another route into the canyon, down one side through the tangle of brush which covered the jutting rocks. He made for the canyon's rim, going slowly over the rough ground.

Down the slippery slope he urged the horse, pausing every few feet to watch and listen and let the animal have a breathing spell. Half way down, he came to a tiny clearing, and there he stopped again, and looked below.

Two tiny fires were gleaming, and men were around them, and horses were tethered to trees a short distance from the fires. Down the canyon rode two more men, to dismount at the nearest fire and tie their mounts and speak to the others.

Señor Zorro rode on down the slope, slowly and cautiously. Reaching the bottom, he stopped behind some high brush, where he could not be seen.

He was wondering how soon the troopers would advance from the mouth of the canyon. Capitan Gonzales would be eager to be at the kill, he supposed. He listened intently, and on the slight breeze which came in from the canyon's mouth he heard the snort of a horse and the rattling of accouterments.

They were coming, then. They would easily catch these white renegades who were ready to follow Don Miguel in an uprising. It would mean fire and theft for a time, much loot for the white men. Then the soldiers and loyal natives would get organized, and the malcontents be hunted down like wild beasts, and slain or punished.

Señor Zorro waited a moment longer. Down the canyon, he caught sight of a blade reflecting the light of the moon. He rode out into the open,

between the fires and the advancing soldiery.

"Ho, señores!" he cried.

CHAPTER XII

FIGHT, AND FLIGHT

THOSE at the fires whirled to look toward him. They could see him plainly in the bright moonlight, sitting his black horse, the mask concealing his features, his naked blade held high over his head.

"It is Senor Zorro!" some native cried.

"Where is Don Miguel?" Zorro shouted at them.

"None of us know, señor," one cried back at him. "We were told to meet him here tonight. Perhaps he will come later. Are you one of us?"

Zorro had been watching toward the mouth of the canyon, and from where he sat his horse he could tell that Capitán Gonzales had spread his troopers in a thin line across the canyon's floor, and that now he had stopped them, wanting to listen to what was said.

"No, I am not one of you!" Zorro cried in answer to the question.

"What do you here, then? Why do you ask for Don Miguel?"

Señor Zorro's wild laugh rang among the rocks.

"Fools!" he cried. "There is no Don Miguel! He is but a figure of my imagination. Some time ago I started these rumors of an uprising, and contacted cleverly a few men, who passed the news on to other rogues. The thing grew and grew, without aid from me."

"How is this?" somebody shouted.

"All of you who answered the call—it shows what you would do, were there really a Don Miguel. Renegades! Ready to lead the stupid natives in a

revolt, to certain slaughter, for the sake of what loot you may gain! Every man of you stands guilty of treason and conspiracy—and you are without a leader!"

They were grumbling now, and some of them started toward their horses.

"You are entrapped!" Zorro shouted at them. "Even now the troopers from Reina de Los Angeles are creeping upon you from the canyon's mouth. You will stretch rope—"

They howled at that, panic claiming them, and rushed for their mounts, jerking the reins free, springing into their saddles. The horses, frightened at the tumult, plunged and kicked and disconcerted them.

Down the canyon, Capitán Gonzales barked a command. The troopers swept forward, jumping their horses over brush and rocks and making toward the fires.

Zorro swung his horse aside. Pistols began barking over behind the fires, and the soldiers answered the fire. But this was close business, where there was scant time in which to reload, so it was a time for steel rather than pistol ball.

Some of the renegades rode madly straight at the soldiers, in an effort to break through the line and get away, and they clashed in the moonlight. Others tried to get up the slopes of the canyon, and turned back because their horses could not make it.

Back in the shadows, Zorro moved his horse forward a short distance, then waited to watch.

"At them!" Capitán Gonzales was shouting above the din. "Capture or kill every one! Catch me this Señor Zorro, too!"

It was time, Zorro judged, to get away from the scene. He had finished his work. He had decoyed the rogues

to the canyon, and the soldiers could do the rest. He turned his horse and started up the winding slippery trail to the top.

BUT he came to a quick stop. No doubt he had been seen riding along the canyon's rim, and followed by some trooper. For now a rider was coming down from the top, following the narrow, slippery trail.

Zorro knew he would be at a disadvantage if he fought there. The other would be above him, and there was not room for two horses to pass. And the fighting would be heard from below, and some would ride up and take him.

He turned his horse and retreated to the floor of the canyon. There was desperate fighting in the clearing now. Two of the renegades broke through, and the troopers gave immediate pursuit. Others were making a stand, though they knew it was futile, preferring to die on a soldier's blade than be captured and strung up by the neck.

Zorro waited in the shadows a moment, watching the scene, waiting for an opportunity to ride through the line. But that line was broken now, as the troopers fought the renegades.

Suddenly, he bent low over his horse's neck, drove home the big spurs he wore, and dashed out from his place of concealment. He was seen instantly, and a cry arose. Between him and the mouth of the canyon were several mounted troopers, and some on the ground, and Capitán Gonzales was there, also.

Zorro got past the first few without taking a sword cut or giving one, merely by superb horsemanship. But he found his way barred by Capitán Gonzales, arrogant in this moment of victory.

"This man is mine!" Gonzales howled. "Attend to the others."

As he spoke, his horse swerved and crashed against that of Zorro. They circled, and their blades clashed.

"I'll wound you, see your face," Gonzales shouted, as they fought. "I think I know the countenance behind that mask."

"Beware your own face!" Zorro cried. "Best call some of your men to help."

"I need no aid!"

He said it bravely enough, but, even as he said it, Capitán Gonzales was worrying a bit. He had heard tales of Zorro's swordsmanship, and now he had the feel of Zorro's blade, and knew the tales were true. The perspiration popped out on his forehead as the horses circled in the moonlight, and they continued fighting.

From the corner of his eye, Señor Zorro saw one of the dismounted troopers drawing near, holding a sword ready. His left hand brought his pistol from his girdle, and as his horse wheeled, he fired. The trooper gave a screech and fell.

"I am fighting an army," Zorro said.

"Stand back! This man is mine!" Capitán Gonzales howled.

He started to press the fighting, while some watched the mounted combat from the distance, and others were too busy fighting themselves to care what happened to their *capitan*. Zorro's big black was forced backward a distance, and they turned, and Zorro forced the fighting in turn.

"I did not like your manner when last we met," he said. "I cannot change that, but I can make of you a thing the ladies will despise."

"Fight, rogue!" Gonzales howled.

"I have no wish to kill you, *capitán*. To disgrace you will be enough."

HE pressed the fighting again, and suddenly the *capitán's* blade flew from his hand to strike the ground a short distance away. The *capitán*, mad with rage, dropped a hand to get his pistol. Zorro had discharged his, and it was empty.

"You would fight unfairly?" Zorro cried at him. "This must be your punishment, then."

His blade darted forward. Capitan Gonzales felt scorching fire on his cheek. A cry of rage escaped him, for he knew what had been done to him. He would bear that jagged letter Z, the mark of Zorro, to the grave with him.

Then Zorro was bending from the saddle, clasping him and tearing the pistol away, to hurl it to the ground. He tossed Capitan Gonzales out of his saddle and to the ground also, gave a wild laugh, wheeled his horse, bent low, and raced down the canyon.

"After him! Shoot him down! Do not let him escape!" Capitan Gonzales was screeching, as he struggled to get back into the saddle again.

Madly, Zorro rode, the big black horse hurdling rocks and clumps of brush. Behind him, pistols barked, and bullets flew near him, but none struck home. He approached another and larger clearing, and saw trouble ahead.

Not all the force of troopers had been led deeply into the canyon by the *capitán*. Here were a few kept in reserve, to capture any trying to flee.

Señor Zorro saw four men before him, all mounted, and now they began riding forward, converging upon him. His pistol was empty, he had only his blade. He rode straight toward them, but pulled rein slightly and slackened speed.

"One side, señores!" he called.

But they came on at him, and behind

him Capitan Gonzales and some of the others broke from the brush in pursuit. Señor Zorro was between two fires.

He dug in with his spurs again, and swerved to the left, and the troopers in front swerved in that direction also.

With a quick pressure of knees and touch of the rein, Zorro swung his horse abruptly back to the right.

He bent low and dashed at them, past them, a pistol exploding almost in his face as he rode. A blade flicked out at him and ripped the collar of his blouse. His horse staggered as another bumped against him, but kept his feet and raced on.

More pistols exploded behind him. One bullet whistled past his ear. There was a drumfire of hoofbeats as the pursuit began. Capitan Gonzales was howling commands:

"Drop everything else and catch this rogue! He is worth all the others!"

Rage gave the *capitán* strength in that pursuit. He knew that his handsome face had been marked forever, that the fair ladies would turn from him in scorn, not that he bore a scar as a result of sword fighting, but because that scar was a mark this Señor Zorro gave to men he did not deem worthy of slaying.

Capitan Gonzales howled his orders, and the pursuit settled into a race, with Zorro's wild black horse leading and gaining slowly. But there were good horses in the troop, too, that of Capitan Gonzales especially, and the pursuit hung on.

Zorro was racing across rough land to get to the highway, where the going would be better. His horse was laboring in the soft ground.

And suddenly he stumbled and fell, and Señor Zorro went over his head to land in the dirt.

CHAPTER XIII.

SWIFT PURSUIT.

HE sprang up instantly. His horse was struggling to his feet, and Zorro called softly to him, and hurried toward him. The frightened animal drew back at first, and Zorro lost precious time coaxing him near enough so the reins could be grasped. He got up into the saddle again.

The pursuit had gained during all this, and was too close for comfort now. Another pistol was fired, and the ball came so near that Zorro caught himself flinching. He judged that would be all of the shooting. Those behind could not reload while they rode so madly after him.

He bent low over his mount's neck again, and raked with the spurs, and the big black responded with a wild burst of speed. Señor Zorro had in mind what he had to do, and now it seemed difficult of accomplishment, unless he could gain on them more.

He reached the highway and turned down it, and gained swiftly for a time, until those behind reached it also and could make better speed. He was riding toward Reina de Los Angeles, particularly the spot where Bernardo would be waiting.

As he neared it, he began shouting phrases which none but Bernardo would understand. Madly he raced around a curve, glancing back just before doing so and estimating the distance between him and his foe.

As he neared a jumble of rocks, somebody sprang out into the highway and waved his arms. Bernardo had heard him, and had obeyed.

Señor Zorro skidded the horse to a stop and sprang from the saddle.

"Mount! Ride on, furiously! Make your escape!" he ordered the native.

Bernardo sprang into the saddle, grasped the reins and kicked with his bare heels. The big black plunged onward. Zorro dropped behind the rocks.

Around the curve swept the pursuit, led by Capitan Gonzales. They raced past Señor Zorro's hiding place and continued after the black Bernardo was riding. Zorro darted across the highway and traveled swiftly through the shadows.

He came, in time, to the cluster of huts behind his father's *casa*, and went through the darkness along a wall and to the vine by which he had descended from the house. Grasping it, he began the ascent.

Half exhausted, panting, perspiring freely, he got to the window and pulled himself through. There had been no time for him to change from the habiliments of Zorro, and the mask was still concealing his face.

He reeled back against the wall, steadied himself, and began hurrying to his own quarters. From below came strains of music, ringing voices, feminine laughter. Possibly he had not been missed.

TEARING the mask from his face, he hurried along the corridor and let himself into his own room. A basin of water was waiting, and soft towels. He stripped off the clothing he wore, and hid it in a closet, deep beneath a heap of other things, and the weapons of Zorro with it.

Washing face and hands in the perfumed water, he dried them quickly, and swiftly dressed as he had been when the reception had started. His breathing had returned to normal now. He grasped a silk handkerchief, slipped quietly out of the room, went along the mezzanine, and descended the stairs.

Don Alejandro met him at the bottom.

"Where have you absented yourself, my son?" he rebuked. "Some have been looking for you."

Their eyes met, and Don Diego smiled faintly.

"I have been about. Perhaps they did not look in the right place," he said.

"They are dancing again in the patio. Perhaps you will find the *Señorita Carmelita disengaged.*"

Don Diego Vega smiled again, and went out into the patio, where the *Señorita Carmelita* was waiting.

"I wait to see you dance *El Sombrero*," she told him.

"You'll honor me by dancing it with me?" he asked.

"If you like."

The music changed, and they danced. When it was over, and they had bowed in acknowledgment of the applause, Don Diego led her along the side of the patio toward a bench packed with cushions.

"For quite a time, I did not see you," the *señorita* said.

"It pleases me that you looked, and that I was missed."

"And then, quite suddenly, I saw you again," she went on, her voice lower and softer. "But you were not dressed as you are now, and you were taking a black mask from your face. But do not be disturbed, Don Diego. I am quite sure that I understand. The things *Señor Zorro* has done—I approve of them. But he should not always court so much danger."

"Perhaps he would court it less, did he have heavy responsibilities, such as, say, the head of a family," Don Diego said, boldly.

There was a sudden tumult at the front of the *casa*, natives shouting in

fright, men calling to one another, horses stomping. There came a thundering demand for entrance at the door. The guests, startled, ceased their merrymaking. Servants rushed to the big front door, but waited for the command of Don Alejandro to open it.

Don Alejandro took up a commanding position in front of it, gestured, and two natives pulled the massive door open slowly. *Capitán Gonzales* stood there, gripping *Bernardo* by the arm, and behind him was *Sergeant Juan Ruiz* and some of the troopers.

"What means this intrusion, *Señor Capitán*?" Don Alejandro demanded. "I am giving a reception here this evening, and you have startled my guests. You are the new officer in *Reina de Los Angeles*, are you not?"

"Is this fellow a servant of yours?" *Gonzales* demanded.

"He is body servant to my son, Don Diego."

"Ah, ha! So he is! *Señor Zorro* was abroad tonight, *señor*. We were chasing him. He was riding a big black horse. At a certain spot during the chase, he was obscured a moment. We continued chasing the horse, and caught him, and riding him was this man."

DON DIEGO drifted forward, brushing his nostrils significantly with his scented handkerchief.

"Pardon me, *capitán*," he said. "That horse, if it is the big black, is a spirited animal. I often have *Bernardo* exercise him in the cool of the evening, out on the highway."

"And where have you been all this night?"

Don Diego drew himself up stiffly. "Am I accountable to such as you for my comings and goings, *señor*?" he barked. "You affronted me at San

Juan Capistrano, saying you had suspicion that I might be this Señor Zorro. Do not so affront me now, or I'll forget my station and do you the honor of matching blades with you. But it appears you have matched blades with somebody already. There are a series of cuts on your face, my *capitán*. Been playing in the briars, mayhap?"

"This fellow of yours would not answer questions I put to him."

Don Diego smiled. "For good reason. He is a dumb mute, and all in the town know it. He could not answer did he desire to do so."

"A convenient sort of servant to have sometimes," Gonzales hinted.

"I find him so. Pardon me, Capitán Gonzales, but it would please my father, I am sure, if you would take your uniformed ruffians elsewhere. I am quite sure that they, and you, have no business here."

Gonzales' eyes flashed. "Sooner or later, Don Diego Vega, we cross blades," he said. "I have a feeling that it is to be—or has been."

"If it has been," Don Diego observed, "you will not want to cross blades with me again. A cut on the face is bad enough, my *capitán*, however you received it. But a cut in the heart—ah, that is the finishing touch! Good night, *capitán!*"

"Good night!" Gonzales growled the words, and motioned for Ruiz and the men to retire. At the door, the *capitán* turned. "I grant you that this Señor Zorro is clever. But if he rides on, he will ride into trouble, and a rope."

"If I ever see him," Don Diego observed, "I'll tell him as much. No doubt you are correct. But from all accounts, he is a stubborn fellow—and something whispers to me that he will ride on, as long as there is need!"

Then Don Diego turned his back, and the big front door was closed, and Don Alejandro motioned for the musicians to resume their playing. Don Diego took the hand of Señorita Carmelita and tucked it inside his arm, and led her across the big room.

"There is a pleasant nook in the corner," he observed. "Señora Vallejo may watch us—from a distance. There has been so much turmoil to-night. Let us rest for a time in this cozy nook. I have just bethought me of another poem."

She looked up at him from a radiant face. "I shall be glad to hear it, Don Diego," she said.

"This poem is of my own poor manufacture, *señorita*. It has to do with a mysterious Don Miguel, who never existed, yet had his uses, nevertheless."

THE END

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Not satisfied with ousting Henry as sheriff, his Arizona enemies seem determined to ruin him as a rancher



The distant rider fired one shot

The Sheriff of Tonto Town

By W. C. TUTTLE

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN Henry Harrison Conroy went west to claim his inherited J Bar C ranch in Wild Horse Valley, Arizona, somebody thought it would be a good joke to run the old vaudeville actor for sheriff. To everybody's amazement, including his own, Henry was elected. He appointed Judge Van Treece, an old law-

This story began in the Argosy for September 14

yer, as his deputy, and named Oscar Johnson, a wild and woolly Swede, as jailer.

From his headquarters at Tonto City, Henry watched the country develop rapidly as mines were started near by. Jack West, already wealthy, was one of the leading mine developers, and he practically ran the town. The Tonto Saloon was his headquarters. There, Doc Sargent was head gambler, and a girl, Lola, dealt faro.

Years before, Jack West had started his fortune by cheating his partners, Parke Neal and Tom Silver, out of the Three Partners mine. Silver, unrecognized by West because of a large scar on his face, took a job as swamper in the Tonto saloon to be near West, in the hope of eventual revenge.

A shipment of gold was reported stolen from the Yellow Warrior mine, belonging to West, and Henry was asked to resign as sheriff, which he did, retiring to the J Bar C ranch, where Danny Regan was fore-

CHAPTER IX.

THE MISSING GOLD.

LOU JAMES lost no time in taking over the sheriff's office. He was tall, raw-boned, hard-faced, and had a slight limp in his left leg. In appearance, he was the ideal type of Arizona sheriff.

Danny Regan made a trip to Scorpion Bend, and came back to the J Bar C full of information.

"Lou James owns the LJ spread at Scorpion Bend," he told Henry. "He bought out the Rafter A, a short time ago, and registered his own brand. It's a script brand, connected. Not a very big outfit, they told me. James has contracted to furnish Werner all his meat, and Werner has the contract to furnish all the meat to West's outfit. Henry, they've cut us out entirely."

"Not entirely, Danny," replied Henry gently. "They still use our beef."

"If those yearlin's was branded J Bar C—yes," admitted Danny. "Anyway, somebody had a taste of good veal. Slim and me are goin' to take a ride this afternoon, and see what we can see."

Armed with rifles, in addition to their six-shooters, the two cowboys went into the hills, first visiting the spot where the two yearlings had been slaughtered. There was no evidence of any further butchering in that canon; so they rode north, cutting back through Smoke Tree Cañon, which they examined closely.

"Over there near Crazy Woman springs might be a good place," suggested Slim Pickins. "That old corral is still pretty good, and it's kinda hidden away."

"I've been thinkin' about that," nodded Danny. "On account of the heat and flies, they'd butcher about sundown; so it may be that we're a little early."

"Mebbe we better kinda saunter," suggested Slim. "Man, wouldn't I like to notch a sight on a rustler."

"I hope to tell yuh," grinned Danny.

"Danny, how does Henry feel about bein' kicked out of office?"

"I don't reckon anybody will ever know, Slim. Henry covers it all with a laugh, even when it hurts. I used to laugh at him. No, I never laughed openly—but I laughed. He still don't know beans about the cow business—but he's square and white, Slim."

"He shore is," agreed Slim warmly. "Do yuh reckon he'll marry Mrs. Harper?"

"I hope he does. She's mighty glad he's out of office. I reckon we all are, as far as that goes. The only thing that worries me is the fact that West is goin' to boss this valley. Oh, yes, he is, Slim. In another year or two, he'll

be tellin' us who to vote for. He'll be the dictator of Wild Horse Valley."

"Unless somebody shoots him, Danny."

"Well, that might happen, of course."

"You still owe him for that punch on the ear."

"I reckon Swede squared that up," laughed Danny. "He hurt West almost as much as West hurt me; and then he added to the score by slappin' Doc Sargent silly. Oscar Johnson may be a dumb Swede, but he sure can fight."

THEY came to the cañon below Crazy Woman springs, and were riding along the brushy south side, when Danny suddenly drew rein. He lifted his head, sniffing the vagrant breeze from up the cañon.

"Wood smoke!" he exclaimed. "Hell's bells, I wonder if somebody started a fire in here! This stuff would burn—"

"Look!" grunted Slim, pointing across at the opposite rim, and a trifle to the west. "A rider on the rim, over there, Danny!"

The rider, clearly silhouetted against the sky, lifted a rifle and fired one shot. Danny and Slim instinctively ducked, but there was no sound from the bullet.

"A warnin' shot!" exploded Danny. "C'mon, Slim!"

They spurred along as swiftly as possible, but with the rocks and brush it was difficult to make speed. The rider was gone from the rim now. They broke out of the brush, galloped across a fairly open space, and came to the cañon rim just above the springs.

Two riders were far up the cañon, streaking away. Danny dropped off his horse and sent two bullets in their direction. But the distance was too great for accurate shooting, and a moment

later they swept around a bend in the cañon, and out of sight.

"They had a lookout posted this time," grinned Danny as they crouched on the rim of the cañon. "Look! Over there by the corral. They've got a critter hog-tied. And there's their fire, too."

"Brand blotters, this time," said Slim. "They don't need a fire to do butcherin', Danny."

"It shore looks like brand-blottin'," agreed Danny. He looked all around, seeking a trail down into the cañon.

"There's a little trail over there," said Slim, pointing. "But don'tcha try to take a horse down there. I tried it, and we shore had a hell of a mixup. Yuh can go down on foot all right."

"All right, I'll go down. You stay here with the horses, and I'll have a look at that critter. Keep yore eyes open, feller; I don't want 'em sneakin' back on me."

"I hope they try it," laughed Slim. "Go ahead; I'll be watchin'."

He sat on the rim and saw Danny appear at the old corral, where he examined the animal, and then went over to the little fire. Then he went back and looked at the animal again, but made no move to release it. Finally he came slowly back toward the foot of the trail, and out of Slim's sight. He was so long in climbing back to the rim that Slim became worried.

Finally Slim left the horses and walked to the top of the trail, just as Danny came panting to the top.

"Didja git lost on yore way back?" queried Slim. "I thought yuh'd never git back."

"No, I didn't get lost," panted Danny. "But I found somethin'. C'mon, Slim; I'll show yuh why I was a long time comin'."

"But what about that critter?"

"Oh, yeah, I forgot. It's a J Bar C yearlin', with its throat cut."

"The hell it is! What was the fire for?"

"It's got me fightin' my hat, Slim. There's a runnin'-iron in the fire."

That trail was too narrow and steep for conversation. About halfway down it wound past some irregular shelves of rock, where a ledge of sandstone protruded from the hillside. Danny stepped off the trail onto one of these ledges.

"On the way up," explained Danny, "I happened to look over here and I seen somethin' glistenin' in the sunlight. Here it is."

HE took a silver concha from his pocket and handed it to Slim.

It was of Mexican manufacture, about two inches in diameter, and apparently of solid silver.

"Some puncher mourns his lost finery," said Slim. "Prob'ly dropped off the leg of his chaps. But what about it?"

"Yeah," agreed Danny. "But what would a puncher be doin' over here on that ledge of rocks?"

"Go ahead," grinned Slim, "I'll bite."

"C'mon."

For about thirty feet more Danny led the way over the broken ledges to a little cave, not over six feet in depth, and less than that in width. A slab of sandstone slanted down over the front of it, concealing it from anyone not on the ledge.

Danny dropped on his knees, reached into the cave and drew out a weighted gunnysack. Again he sprawled forward and drew out another, while Slim stood there, wondering what it was all about. Reaching into one of the sacks, Danny drew out a small bar of pure gold.

"My Gawd!" croaked Slim. "What in the devil—"

"That's jist what I said," grinned Danny. "Look at the mark on that brick. That Y. W. means it's the missin' gold from the Yellow Warrior."

"But that was a dummy package, Danny."

"Well, I dunno about that. They said the shipment would weigh 'bout a hundred and twenty-five pounds; and there must be about sixty, seventy pounds in each sack."

"Great lovely dove! What'll we do with it?"

"Well," sighed Danny, "as much as I hate Jack West, we've got to take this gold to Tonto City. Mebbe he'll at least buy a drink."

"Gosh, it's a shame to have to take it back. I've allus bragged about my honesty—but I didn't realize what temptation meant. Don't you feel kinda sorry 'bout takin' it back, Danny?"

"I am gettin' me a few pangs," admitted Danny. "But imagine what them robbers will feel like when they don't find their loot."

"Or when they hear that it's been recovered," added Slim.

"Well, there's no use foolin'—they might come back. Grab a sack and head for the rim, feller. We're wealthy for a few minutes, anyway."

It was a hard climb back to the rim, and they went panting back to their horses, where they dropped the sacks on the ground and sat down on a rock to catch their breath.

"Been workin' hard, boys?" drawled a voice behind them, and they jerked around to see Lou James, the sheriff, and his new deputy.

The big sheriff had a revolver in his hand, while the deputy held a handy rifle.

"We was ridin' around, kinda lookin' things over," explained the sheriff, "and we heard a couple, three shots fired over thisaway; so we moseyed over and found yore horses. I don't b'lieve I've ever met either of you fellers. I'm Lou James, the new sheriff."

"Huh-howdy," gasped Danny. "My name's Regan. This is Pickins."

"Oh, yeah—Regan— Yo're foreman of the J Bar C, ain't yuh?"

DANNY nodded. The deputy picked up a sack, spread the mouth and looked in on the gold bullion. He dropped the sack quickly and stepped back.

"I reckon it's that stolen gold, Lou!" he exclaimed.

"It shore is," agreed Danny. "We just found it—down there in a cave."

"Oh, yuh just found it, eh?" said the sheriff. "That's nice. In a cave, eh? Did somebody tell yuh where it was?"

"I can explain jist how I happened to find it," said Danny. "Yuh see, I—"

"It's gittin' late, Regan," interrupted the sheriff. "Anyway, yuh can tell that to a judge, I reckon. Mebbe we better put bracelets on 'em, Mike. Git their guns first; I've heard that Regan is kinda fast with a shootin'-iron."

"You don't need to put any bracelets on us," said Danny. "We never stole that gold. I can explain the whole thing, if you'll listen."

"Don't bother 'bout it," advised the sheriff. "Git the horses, Mike. We want to git back before it gits too dark."

"Wait a minute," begged Slim. "If yo're such a hell of a good sheriff, I'd like to tell you that down in that cañon is a J Bar C yearlin', with its throat cut."

"Well," drawled the sheriff, "I can't do much when they're in that sort of a fix. What didja cut its throat for?"

"Yuh might as well keep still, Slim," said Danny. "We should have left the damn stuff alone, and let Jack West recover his own gold. He's out to get us—and the sheriff is West's man—so we may as well call it a day."

"Yo're showin' some sense, Regan," grinned the sheriff. "I've got yuh where the hair is short; so yuh might as well smile and take yore medicine."

"I'll smile," replied Danny, "but you ain't the one that deals out the medicine—remember that."

The deputy brought their two horses, and started to fasten one of the sacks behind his saddle. Suddenly he dropped the sack, and his right hand flashed back to his gun; but before he could draw his gun, a rifle cracked wickedly, and the deputy was fairly flung against his frightened horse.

The three men turned quickly. Not twenty feet away were two masked men, who had stepped out from the brush, and two rifles were covering the startled sheriff. Slowly he lifted his hands above his head.

"Yo're smarter than yore deputy," said one of the men, as they came forward. The black masks were sack-like, entirely covering their heads, with only eye-holes.

One of them covered the sheriff, while the other went over and examined the deputy. He took his guns, and came over to the sheriff, also removing his guns.

"That deputy never knowed what hit him," said the man. He turned to the sheriff, and said:

"You've got the keys to them handcuffs, ain't yuh?"

"Well?" queried the sheriff.

"Unlock these two punchers."

Grudgingly the sheriff removed the handcuffs from Danny and Slim. The masked man laughed, and said to Danny:

"Pick out yore own guns, feller."

"We're shore much obliged," smiled Danny.

"Yo're welcome as hell, feller. Now, if yo're all through around hère yuh might as well pull out—you two—unless you'd like to kick this tough sheriff in the pants."

"I'd rather do it when he's got a gun," replied Danny.

"Yeah, and I'd rather see yuh do it. He ain't bad—he's jist cheap."

"I'll git somebody for this deal," snarled the sheriff.

"Yea-a-ah?" drawled the masked man. "If you make too many cracks, we'll lay you out beside yore deputy. One more killin' don't mean a thing to us. All right, you two waddies might as well drift."

"Thank yuh kindly, pardner," said Danny. "If yuh ever need a favor, you know where to come."

DANNY and Slim swung into their saddles, and with a wave of their arms, galloped away toward the J Bar C. Over a far ridge, they drew rein and rode side by side.

"Danny," said Slim seriously, "didja ever see such hair on a cat?"

"Never in my life. Listen, Slim. The sheriff is the only evidence against us. We're two to one, sabe? I mean, it's two of us against one of him, in case he tries to arrest us again. He's lost the gold, and his deputy is dead—but remember this—we never seen any gold and we never seen them men shoot that deputy. It's our only chance."

"I know what yuh mean, Danny. But who the devil are them two masked men?"

"Who knows? But I'll betcha this much; they're the fellers that butchered that yearlin'. They had that gold cached. Mebbe they got back on that opposite rim, where they could see us at that little cave. One of 'em had a pair of field-glasses tied to his saddle."

"Yeah, I seen them glasses," nodded Slim. "Mebbe yo're right. Well, I ain't sheddin' any tears over that deputy; he was a bad boy. And as far as the sheriff is concerned—I don't reckon he'll even try to put any deadwood on us—not now."

Henry and Judge listened in amazement to their tale. Both of them supposed that the robbers had only taken a dummy treasure; but this looked as though it had been the real thing.

"You two boys did not exactly act as law-abiding citizens," said Judge severely. "Why didn't you, after you had your guns, turn on the masked men, recover the gold and turn it over to the sheriff?"

"In the first place, Judge," replied Danny, "we don't *know* that the stuff was stolen gold. In the second place, them masked men had guns in their hands—and they proved to us that they'd shoot. And in the third place—we're not doin' any favors for that sheriff."

"In only one respect, Danny," said Henry, "did you two fail to act as normal human beings in this matter."

"When was that?" asked Danny.

"When you failed to kick the sheriff in the pants, as offered."

"I am very much afraid that you two are in for trouble," said Judge. "Even if you did not steal the gold and—"

"Wait a minute, Judge," interrupted Danny. "We were not even there. We don't know a thing. In fact, we don't know what they're talkin' about. Re-

member, Judge; the sheriff is the lone witness."

"The law might possibly accept his statement."

"After him serving two years for a hold-up, Judge?" asked Henry.

"Yes, that is true enough. Well, I wash my hands of the matter."

"You never had any hand in it," said Henry. "I shall be interested in knowing what became of the sheriff. Oscar went to Tonto City, possibly to see Josephine, and to get the mail. He may bring us some interesting news."

"Grub-pile!" yelled Frijole. "Come and git it, before I throw it out!"

Henry seemed very thoughtful as he slowly ate supper. Finally he leaned across the table and said to Danny:

"Just what do you suppose the sheriff and deputy were doing out there, Danny?"

"He said he was just lookin' around."

"Looking around for what? That is part of the J Bar C range. Why would a new sheriff be riding around in the hills?"

"Well, lookin' at it thataway, it is kinda funny," admitted Danny.

"Rather queer," said Henry. "And to think that all six of you should gather at that same place. You were on your own range. Then why did that sheriff and deputy draw their guns on you—before they could even suspect that you had gold in those sacks?"

"Yes, I realize now that it is strange. Could it be that they were coming to recover that gold?"

"And," added Slim, his mouth full of mulligan, "which couple cut that yearlin's throat?"

"Well, that's kinda hard to say," laughed Danny. "The only thing I'd swear to is that me and Slim didn't do it."

CHAPTER X.

THE INQUEST.

ABOUT an hour later a buggy arrived at the ranch, and in it were Doctor Bogart, the coroner, and Edgar Nolan, the prosecuting attorney. Henry and Judge welcomed them warmly.

"We came to have a talk with Danny and Slim," stated the doctor.

"I will call them," said Judge. "I believe they are in the bunkhouse, playing cards."

He brought the two boys in with him, and Doctor Bogart went straight into their reasons for being there.

"A short while ago Lou James, our sheriff, rode into Tonto City, seated behind his own saddle, his hands handcuffed to his saddle horn, while roped to his saddle was the dead body of Mike Haley, his deputy. Haley had been shot down. It—"

"This is incredible!" exclaimed Henry. "Shocking!"

"It is true," replied the attorney stiffly.

"The sheriff told a queer tale," continued the doctor. "He says that he and Haley discovered Danny Regan and Slim Pickins with the missing gold from the Yellow Warrior, and arrested them. Then two masked men stepped into the scene, shot down the deputy, forced the sheriff to release his two prisoners, gave them their guns, and—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Danny seriously. "Is that new sheriff crazy?"

"Crazy?" parroted the doctor. "I—I don't—well, I haven't given that much thought, Danny."

"When he tells a story like that, he ought to be examined."

"Well, isn't it true?" queried the prosecutor.

"Why, I didn't know there *was* any missin' gold!"

"No one else did," admitted the lawyer, "until Doc Sargent admitted that there was."

"Well, he's sure tellin' a strange story," said Danny. "Don't it sound kinda queer to you fellers?"

"It does, to me," agreed the doctor.

"Then," said the lawyer, "you deny his story, Regan?"

"Would a man have to deny a crazy statement like that?"

"It kinda looks t' me," said Slim, "as though he mebbe knocked off his own deputy, and used that scheme to square himself. Anybody could pile a dead man on a saddle, climb up behind him and lock his own hands to a saddle-horn."

"But why try to implicate you two boys?" asked the lawyer.

"West hates this outfit," replied Danny. "He used his influence to get Henry out of office, and had his own man put in. Oscar Johnson knocked him down and threw him out of the office. West knocked me out with a pair of brass knuckles. Don'tcha suppose his hired man would try to put the deadwood on some of the J Bar C?"

THE lawyer nodded solemnly and got to his feet.

"I suppose we may as well go back, Doctor. You try and have a talk with the sheriff. The man may have a queer kink, you know."

"It wouldn't surprise me a bit," agreed the doctor.

"Just in case you don't know it," said Judge, "Lou James, the sheriff, served two years for a holdup about twelve years ago. It was a deputy's bullet which gave him that permanent limp."

The lawyer looked keenly at Judge and drew a deep breath as he picked up his hat.

"In that event," he said, "I can't applaud Mr. West for his choice."

"In the parlance of the theater," said Henry, "none of Mr. West's acts have exactly been wowed at the J Bar C. We shall be interested in hearing further about the mental condition of the new sheriff."

"The inquest will be held at ten o'clock tomorrow morning," said the lawyer. "You might all attend."

"Delighted," smiled Henry. "But, as a word of caution, you really should have the sheriff watched—or disarmed—especially during the inquest. One never knows, does one?"

"I suppose that is true," agreed the doctor. "Well, good-night, gentlemen."

"Good-night, Doctor," replied Henry. "There is always a cordial welcome to either or both of you here, and at any time."

Henry bowed them out and watched them drive away.

"Danny," said Henry, "the world lost an actor when you became a cowboy."

"It gained a liar," said Judge dryly.

"Danny did not lie. He never denied being there, Judge. When that lawyer asked him if he denied it, Danny asked him if a man would have to deny such a charge. I really believe they think the sheriff is crazy."

"If he isn't," said Judge dryly, "he will be when he finds out that Danny and Slim deny being there."

AND Judge Van Treece was not far wrong. Next morning, an hour before inquest time, Lou James sat in Doc Sargent's office at the Tonto Saloon, and Lou James was filled with

impotent wrath. His flow of profanity had been weird and wonderful, but his vocabulary was nearly exhausted, when Doc said:

"All that is damned expressive, Lou; but it don't help matters. I've talked with Doc Bogart and Nolan, the prosecutor. They went out last night to talk with Regan and Pickins, who not only denied ever being out there with you, but suggested that you are as crazy as a sheepherder. Not only that, but both men believe Regan and Pickins."

"Them dirty liars!" wailed the sheriff. "Them dirty liars."

"Exactly," agreed Doc Sargent. "But, if you'll stop to think it over, Lou—your story does sound damned fishy."

"You, too?" queried the sheriff, almost crying with rage.

"Not me," denied the boss gambler. "I believe you."

"Well, what the hell!" wailed the sheriff. "If they don't believe me, what'll I do? I've got to tell the same story at the inquest."

"Can't you think of a better one?"

"And make myself out a liar on the first one?"

"Well, that's up to you. By the way, that prosecuting attorney asked me what penitentiary you lived in for two years, doing time for participating in a holdup twelve years ago."

"Aw-w-w, hell!" snarled the sheriff, getting to his feet. "That ain't none of his damn business. They'll keep shootin' off their mouths until I get mad and lead up a few of 'em. Got any whisky in here, Doc? I shore need a shot right now."

Doc gave him a drink from his private bottle.

"You better be rather careful what you say at that inquest, Lou," said Doc.

"They think you're a liar; so if you talk too much, maybe they'll know you are."

"But, Doc, I'm not lyin'."

"I guess you're not, Lou; but I'll bet that you and I are the only ones in Tonto City who believe you are telling the truth."

HENRY had a talk with the prosecuting attorney, before the inquest was opened, and the lawyer made a few notes to give to the coroner. The courtroom was filled to capacity when the sheriff was put on the stand to testify. He tried to be dignified and defiant, but was visibly nervous, as he began his rambling tale of what happened on the rim of Crazy Woman canon. He went into detail, and the crowd was silent, listening to the queer story.

When he finished, the coroner glanced at a piece of paper, cleared his throat, and said:

"Sheriff, you haven't told us why you and your deputy were out in those hills."

"I told yuh, we was jist ridin' around."

"For no reason whatever, Sheriff?"

"No!" snapped the sheriff.

"I see. You heard some shots, and searched for their origin?"

"That's what I said."

"You and your deputy were standing near the rim of the canon, when you say you saw Danny Regan and Slim Pickins come over the rim of the canon, each of them carrying a gunny-sack?"

"That's exactly what I told yuh."

"Yes, I believe you did. Then, you and your deputy covered them with your guns, took away their guns, and then looked at the sacks?"

"That's what I told yuh."

"Correct. Now, Sheriff, did you

know that the gold was hidden in two gunny-sacks?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Did you suspect that the gold was put in gunny-sacks and hidden in a little cave on the canon rim?"

"How the hell could I suspect such a thing?" flared the sheriff.

"Then why did you and your deputy cover these two men with your guns and take their guns, before examining the sacks or their contents? What right had you to do this?"

"I—I—well, damn it, they had that gold!"

"And you didn't even know it was in gunny-sacks?"

"Well—no. But it—"

"That is all, Sheriff. In my opinion, you are the only witness. There does not seem to be anything for the jury to do, except to bring in a usual verdict of death, caused by a party, or parties, unknown."

"Ain't you goin' to put them J Bar C fellers on the stand?" asked the sheriff.

"It would be only a waste of time for them to refute your testimony, Sheriff; you did it very well yourself."

"Yuh mean that I'm a liar?"

"Well," smiled the doctor, "I am not making any hair-trigger decisions regarding your veracity—but we did not quite believe your story. Has the jury arrived at a verdict? Thank you, gentlemen."

After the inquest was over, Henry remarked to Danny:

"I wish that you and Slim would ride over to Crazy Woman canon and see if that dead yearling is still there."

"Why, shore," agreed Danny heartily. "But I don't see—"

"Neither do I, Danny; it is merely a queer notion of mine."

The yearling was there, with a flock

of hungry buzzards, and the running-iron was still there in that dead bed of coals. Henry smiled and rubbed his red nose when Danny reported.

IT was late that night when Jack West came to Tonto City. Doc Sargent told him all about the inquest.

"Lou James is plain dumb," declared Doc.

"Dumb enough," agreed West wearily.

"Do you believe his story?" queried Doc.

"Certainly. But Lou bumped into too many brains when he bucked up against that J Bar C. Van Treece used to be one of the smartest lawyers in the West. It was two-to-one, and they whip-sawed Lou James—and the gold is still missin'. All right, Doc; round up the men I sent down here, and bring 'em here. I'm goin' to tell 'em to put that J Bar C outfit out of business—and I don't care how they do it."

"All right. I've been keepin' an eye on this office lately, watching for somebody to leave another plain envelope."

West's jaw tightened for a moment, his eyes searching the desk-top.

"I haven't seen any more," said Doc. "The only person I've ever seen come in here, when the office was empty, was that scar-faced swamper, who says his name is Tom."

"Yeah? I've noticed him. Where did yuh get him, Doc?"

"He drifted in here and asked for the job."

"How long has he been here?"

"Let me see. I think the first time I saw him was—why, it was the day Parke Neal died, if I'm not mistaken. Yes, I'm sure it was."

"The day Parke Neal died, eh?"

Doc nodded thoughtfully. "I've had

an eye on him for quite a while. He's off shift at nine o'clock, and comes back at five in the morning. I don't even know where he sleeps."

"I'll have one of the boys trail him, Doc. That thousand dollar reward is still good. He'll have worse than a scarred face if he's mixed up in this deal."

Doc went out to find West's gunmen, and a shadowy figure moved away from the rear window of the little office. The figure circled the building and came around in front of the Tonto, where the illumination from the window disclosed the scar-faced Tom Silver.

He stood there for several minutes, smoking a cigarette, but finally crossed the street, went down past the sheriff's office, and struck off across the hills in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

OPEN WARFARE.

THINGS were quiet in Tonto City next day. Doc Sargent spent most of his time keeping an eye on Tom Silver, and on the door of his office. West had detailed Lee Vane, a gunman, to watch Tom Silver, but Vane liked his liquor too well to be of much use as a lookout.

When Doc went to supper, he locked the office door. Not only did he lock it, but he arranged papers on the floor in such a way that no one could enter in the dark without disturbing them. Doc was not exactly sure that someone did not have a key to either the front or rear door.

He came back from supper, unlocked the door and examined the papers, by the light of a match. Satisfied that no one had been in there, he was about to turn away, when the matchlight showed

a plain envelope, almost in the center of the desk.

Doc lighted a lamp and sat down at the desk, where he picked up the envelope. No one could have entered the room—and still, there was the letter. And Doc could swear that it was not there when he locked the office. Doc had no compunction in opening the envelope. Inside was a single sheet of paper, on which had been printed with a pen:

YOU ARE IN THE SHADOW OF THE GALLOWS AND ONE OF THESE DAYS THE ROPE WILL BE READY. THE SCAR-FACED MAN KNOWS NOTHING OF THIS DEAL. IF YOU HARM HIM, THE BLOW WILL FALL SOONER.

There was no signature. Doc leaned back in his chair, trying to puzzle out how the writer of that warning knew that the scar-faced man had been suggested, and how on earth the letter had been left on that desk.

Doc shoved the note in his pocket, lighted a cigar, and sagged back, blowing rings toward the rough ceiling. He would not dare let Jack West know about this note. At least, not let West know he had opened and read it. West would kill him for doing that. Suddenly a disquieting thought caused him to blink violently. Suppose the writer of the note knew that Doc had opened this note—and might tell West, in another communication.

"But how could they?" Doc asked himself. "Both doors are closed, a curtain over the one window."

He inhaled deeply of the cigar-smoke and blew it ceilingward. For a moment or two he remained motionless. Then he swung out of his chair and went to the door. His eyes roved swiftly over the room, and he smiled slowly as he

closed the door. The orchestra was practicing in the honky-tonk, making a terrific din, as he sauntered over to the stairway. He went slowly upstairs to a narrow hallway. Turning to the left, he went down a short hall and stopped before a door. Without hesitation he opened the unlocked door, and stepped into the room.

Lola was standing in front of a dresser, clad in a dressing-gown arranging her hair. She turned in amazement to see Doc inside the doorway. He softly closed the door and came toward her.

"What are you doing in here?" she asked. "Walking in, without even knocking. You know well enough that—"

"Now, now," soothed Doc. "We won't argue about that, my dear."

"Well—sit down," she said and turned back to the mirror. With her left hand she patted one side of her hair, but her right hand dipped into a partly open drawer of the dresser.

"No, I don't believe I'll sit down," laughed Doc.

"Suit yourself."

"That's right, sister."

DOC moved quickly to the center of the room, and with a flick of his patent-shod foot, kicked aside a Navajo rug. Lola whirled, and her beautiful face went gray in the lamplight. Doc looked at her and laughed softly.

"I figured it all out, my dear," he said triumphantly. "Only the old flooring between here and my office—and the rug covered a crack big enough to let you drop a letter. And it gave you a great chance to listen, too."

Lola's eyes narrowed dangerously, but Doc did not heed.

"West promised me five thousand

dollars to show him who put those clippings on the desk," he told her. "That is real money; but I'd rather play the game with you."

"Play the game with me?" she said dully.

"Yes—play the game with you. I've got you cinched, sweetheart. And you'll play the game the way I want it played, too. Why, you little fool, one word from me, and West would have your pretty throat slit. It might have been your game—once; but it's my game now."

"What right have you?" she asked slowly.

"Right? I caught you, didn't I?" Doc laughed harshly. "If I didn't think I could nick West for a thousand times that five thousand, I'd squeal on you—and take the five. Maybe I will—if you—if—"

Doc's voice broke. The lamplight flashed on a small, nickel-plated revolver in Lola's right hand, and it spat wickedly as she pulled the trigger. Doc Sargent went to his knees, and slowly slid forward on his face, without a word.

For fully a minute Lola stood there. Faintly she could hear the rattle and bang of the orchestra, and it suddenly occurred to her that the report of the gun might not have been heard downstairs. With a trembling hand she shoved the gun inside the waist of her gown.

She had no regrets over killing Doc Sargent. But how to get rid of the body, without incriminating herself? Forcing her nerves to do her bidding, she finished dressing and repaired her makeup.

Locking the door behind her, she went slowly down the hall. Tom Silver, a bucket and mop in his hands, stood aside for her to pass, but she stopped.

"Come to my room," she whispered. Wonderingly he followed her into the room, where she lighted a lamp. He went quickly to the crumpled body on the floor, and turned it over.

"You got him?" asked Silver, looking up at Lola.

"I had to do it," she said grimly.

"That's all right," he said callously.

Tom Silver got to his feet and looked around.

"Can't have 'em find him in here," he muttered. "Wait! I just swamped out Doc's room. You go downstairs. Take it easy, don't hurry. Let me handle this. Wait a minute. What'd yuh shoot him with?"

Lola showed him the gun. He broke it open and took out the empty shell. "Thirty-two, eh?" he grunted. "Gambler's gun! Go downstairs, and act natural; I'll fix this—if I'm lucky."

After Lola had gone down the stairs, Tom Silver picked up the body, took it outside and closed the door. Swiftly he carried it down the narrow hallway, and around to the left, where he opened the door of Doc Sargent's room. No one had seen him. The orchestra was busy again, and the drummer seemed to have a grudge against his bass, judging from the way he was beating it.

TOM SILVER placed the body near the bed, and went swiftly to a chest of drawers, where he took out a small Colt revolver. Quickly he removed a loaded cartridge and replaced it with the one from Lola's gun. He was going to try and make it look like suicide. It was the only thing he could do. He knelt beside the body, wondering just where to place the gun, when he heard the door creak open.

As quick as a flash he whirled around. Standing in the doorway was Lee Vane, West's gunman who had

been ordered to keep an eye on the scar-faced man.

As quick as a flash Tom Silver lifted the gun and fired. The hired gunman was falling as Tom Silver sprang to his feet, and he saw a black dot appear in the center of the gunman's forehead. The man had hardly crashed to the floor when Silver dropped the gun beside Sargent's body, stepped over the other man, who had fallen inside the doorway, darted around the corner, and was in Lola's room, when an alarm was sounded downstairs.

That last shot had been plainly heard in the saloon, because, just at that moment, the orchestra had decided to take a rest. Several men ran up the stairs. Lee Vane's legs were extended into the hallway, so there was little difficulty in locating the scene of the tragedy. More men crowded into the narrow hallway, and Tom Silver came from Lola's room, mop and bucket in hand. Due to the crowd, he was unable to reach the main hallway, but talked with the bartender and one of the gamblers. His alibi was perfect.

They sent for the sheriff and the doctor, who had difficulty in getting through the crowd.

"Both of 'em killed with a thirty-two," said the sheriff, after a short examination had been made.

"Apparently both killed with this one gun," said the doctor. "You can see that it contains two empty shells."

"And Doc done all the shootin'," nodded the sheriff. "It looks t' me like he shot Lee Vane, when Vane walked in on him, and then turned the gun on himself."

Doctor Bogart nodded soberly. "That seems to be the solution. Was there anybody else on this floor when it happened?"

"Nobody, except the swamper, that

scar-faced feller," said the bartender. "But he didn't see it. We was up here, right after the shot was fired, and he was down in Lola's room, cleanin' up. I know he was, 'cause we was crowded here in the hallway when he came from her room, with his mop and pail."

"I reckon we'll make it murder and suicide, Doctor," said the sheriff. Doctor Bogart nodded quickly.

"That is the way I see it," he replied.

There were plenty of willing helpers to take the two bodies down to Doctor Bogart's house. In making his official examination of the bodies, Doctor Bogart found the note. It puzzled him.

"And still," he told himself, "this might explain something about the tragedy. Perhaps this Lee Vane knew something about Doc Sargent, which might send Sargent to the gallows. Sargent suspects the scar-faced man of something, but this note says that the scar-faced man knows nothing about the deal. I shall turn this over to the sheriff."

When Lola went back to her room that night, she found that the floor had been carefully cleaned, and that there was a clean Navajo rug on the center of the floor.

TONTO CITY was shocked over the double tragedy, following so closely the murder of Mike Haley, the deputy sheriff. Lee Vane was almost an unknown in Tonto City. Jack West sat in the little office of his ex-boss-gambler and tried to puzzle the thing out. He was positive that Doc Sargent did not kill Lee Vane, and then kill himself. Sargent barely knew Vane.

The sheriff had given West the note that the doctor took from Doc Sargent's pocket, and this rather compli-

cated things. West was sure it was another communication from the unknown person who had sent him those two clippings. Either Doc Sargent was the author, or he had opened a letter intended for West. The mention of the scar-faced man proved that somebody had overheard their conversation, or Doc Sargent had exonerated the man they knew as Tom.

West had detailed Lee Vane to watch the scar-faced swamper—and Vane was dead. The bartender had proved an iron-clad alibi for the scar-faced swamper; so West was obliged to eliminate him. He did not know which way to turn. Judge and Henry were having a drink at the bar when West left the office.

"It's plain to be seen that you're legal adviser at the J Bar C," said West to Judge, who bowed pleasantly.

"Thank you, Mr. West. We came in to extend our sympathy in your hour of bereavement. It must be quite a blow to lose a gambler and a gunman in the same evening. We sorrow with you, sir; do we not, Henry?"

"Yes, we do—not," agreed Henry solemnly.

"Still bein' funny, eh?" said West coldly.

"Back in private life, you know," smiled Henry. "And, by the way, I want to thank you for your political efforts in getting me out of the public eye, when I was more or less of a mote, I believe."

"I didn't have a damn thing to do with it."

"You did not? Well, well! I must note the names of the three commissioners, in order to add them to my list of bald-faced liars. Why, Mr. West, they told me you had me removed. In fact, they also told me that you selected Mr. James to succeed me."

"That's news to me," growled West. "Maybe you have information on who killed Doc Sargent and Lee Vane."

"No information," sighed Henry.

"But," said Judge, "it merely follows out the old adage—those who live by the sword—you know. The same thing covers six-guns. Vane was a gunman, pure and rather simple—and Doc Sargent was rather in the same category. As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

"I suppose you have an opinion on who killed Mike Haley, too."

"Too?" queried Judge. "No, I haven't, Mr. West. Haley? Haley? Wasn't he the same Haley who was arrested twice in New Mexico, on a rustling charge. The name was the same."

"I never heard of anythin' like that, Van Treece."

"I may be wrong, of course; but I don't believe it. Of course, we do not believe Lou James' story of the two masked men."

"Incredible," murmured Henry.

"Well, I believe it!" snapped West.

"Not so loud," cautioned Henry. "There is talk of sending James to the insane asylum—and you surely don't want to go along."

Jack West snorted in disgust and walked away.

"That, sir," declared Judge, "was a well-placed shot. Shall we drink again?"

HENRY looked sharply at the poker-faced bartender, who had heard the conversation.

"Will you please open a sealed bottle of bourbon?" asked Henry.

"Sure," nodded the bartender. "But it's the same as you've been drinkin'."

"I realize that perfectly. But this saloon belongs to Jack West; and I'm taking no chances."

"You don't suppose I'd poison yuh, do yuh?" snapped the bartender.

"Guessing wrong has made a living for many a tombstone maker," replied Henry. "In this case, I like to see the seal unbroken."

The black-clad Nick Borden came sauntering in, spied West at a roulette layout, and went over there. West's greeting was a vicious scowl, but Borden smiled widely. From a side pocket of his coat he took a piece of ore, which he held out to West.

"Smoke Tree gold," he said. "Pretty good, eh?"

West looked sharply at the piece of rich ore.

"I've ordered a five-stamp mill," informed Borden. West gave him back the ore, and looked Borden over curiously.

"I had three of the best experts in the West look over that Smoke Tree property—and they reported that there wasn't two-bits worth of gold in the whole hill. I still believe 'em, Borden."

"Nothing strange about that," smiled Borden. "You believed what your sheriff told at the inquest, too, I understand."

"Suppose I did—what of it, Borden?"

"Oh, nothing. I understand that one of your gunmen and your boss-gambler shot it out between 'em. Or was it true that Doc shot the hired killer, and then bumped himself off?"

"What's yore interest in all this, Borden?" queried West.

"Oh, just natural curiosity, I suppose. I knew Doc pretty well, you see."

"Doc Sargent was a good man," said West.

"I suppose there is good in everybody, but I never found that quality in Doc Sargent. If you ask me, I think

he was a snaky little gambler, and as crooked as the track of a sidewinder. He was your boss-gambler, and you trusted him, I suppose, but he'd have cut your throat too damn quick, if there was money in the job."

"I'm not askin' for yore opinion, Borden. Yore rep ain't none too good, as far as that's concerned."

"I'm not bragging," laughed Borden easily. "I understand you used your influence to knock Conroy out of office. Were you afraid of him, West?"

"He's a damn fool," growled West. "Sheriff! That—that specimen!"

"Speaking of specimens," grinned Borden, "you should have heard your sheriff testify at that inquest. You might, at least, have put in an intelligent sheriff—or don't you deal in brains?"

"Lou James has plenty brains, and don't forget it, Borden."

"I suppose they'd look like a lot, if they were spattered around a room. I don't mean head-filling—I mean thinkin' brains."

"I suppose you think yo're smart?" queried the exasperated West.

"Smarter than your three experts," agreed Borden, patting his pocket. "I wouldn't trade for your Yellow Warrior—even."

AND while Henry and Judge visited Tonto City, Danny and Slim were riding through the hills around Crazy Woman canon, trying to find more evidence of rustling. They worked carefully, now, keeping to the higher ground, and using an old pair of field-glasses religiously.

Eventually they came out on the open rim above the old springs, where they dismounted and searched the bottom of the wide canon with the glasses. Suddenly Danny swore viciously.

"Somethin' wrong down there, Slim!" he exclaimed. "Get goin'!"

They rode swiftly down a dangerous trail to the wide bottom of the canon, where they raced down through the brush and up past the corral where the yearling had been killed. Three cows lay near the remains of the yearling, and more were scattered at intervals. Swiftly they searched the brush around the spring.

"An even dozen—and mostly old cows," said Danny. "It's the bunch that hangs close to water."

"But—but what killed 'em, Danny?"

"Some damn fiend has put poison in the spring. Mebbe cyanide. Oh, the dirty cowards! Twelve cows! Slim, it's the first move to put the J Bar C out of business. It means war, damn 'em. We've got to cover that water until we've got time to clean out the spring. C'mon—we've got to work fast. By sundown there'll be mebbe fifty head in here for water."

They tore down sections of the old corral fence, piling it on top of the spring so that nothing could get to the water. Dead crows along the muddy seepage below the spring attested to the potency of the poison.

"Do yuh reckon they'll poison Antelope Springs and Moses Well?" panted Slim, as they piled poles.

"Gawd, I hope not, Slim. We can't afford to keep a guard at the three waterholes. Even if we could, they'd prob'ly shoot the guards. There! I think that'll hold 'em. In the mornin' we'll ride to Moses Well and have a look. We'll bring Oscar and Frijole, and throw all these cows out of this range, down to Moses—unless that's as bad. We'll bring shovels and dig 'em all out clean—if we can."

"Do yuh reckon this is West's work, Danny?"

"If I knew it was, I'd go to Tonto City and shoot his gizzard full of holes. C'mon, let's get back to the ranch. But don't stop peelin' the old eye. A cow poisoner wouldn't hesitate to shoot yuh in the back."

Henry and Judge received the news calmly, but Oscar flared to a white heat.

"Ay skal ta'l you, Ay am going to kill somebody," he declared.

"Just who will you kill?" queried Henry.

"Ay don't give damn!"

"That is the worst feature of it, Oscar. Before any killing is done, we must find who is guilty."

"Yust let me get my hands on 'em," growled Oscar. "Ay'll choke de truth out of 'em."

"But you can't go and choke everybody in Wild Horse Valley."

"Va'l," admitted Oscar reluctantly, "Ay couldn't do it oll in von day, of course."

"Fortunately, Danny, I suppose this is the first move to ruin the J Bar C. It is a damnable way of doing it. However, we are not quite ruined—yet.

Judge and I will ride with you tomorrow. If Moses Well is still pure, we will stay there, while the rest of you drive the stock from Crazy Woman springs. It is the least we can do."

"Yah, su-u-ure," agreed Oscar. "You use de shotgun, Henry. Ay loaded some shells vit bockshot."

"No, I believe I shall pin my faith on a rifle. Judge is much better with the shotgun than I am. Or," grinned Henry, "would you rather quote law to them, Judge?"

"Under the circumstances, sir, I believe the shotgun method will get better results," replied Judge. "I hope and pray that I may not need to fire a shot."

"I hope and pray that I do," said Henry soberly. "In my own pleasant way, I feel myself going berserk. Sort of a fee-fi-fo-fum complex, I suppose. You remember that old nursery rime, something about, I'll grind his bones to make my bread. Pleasant thought, of course. Make much better hash, I suppose.

"If someone will dig up the jug, I believe I could use a drink. Reckless youth, I suppose."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Speed of Snakes and Eagles

SWIFTEST of North American reptiles is the red racer, which ordinarily makes about three and one-third miles per hour. Slowest is the California boa, with a touring speed of only one-quarter mile an hour. The scientist who measured these and half a dozen other snakes pointed out that they may go twice as fast when frightened, but no serpent in these parts can catch up with a human in good form.

At the other extreme is the eagle. Recently a Scotch naturalist with a stop-watch in hand had opportunity to gauge the speed of a golden eagle pursued by two peregrine falcons from a point near him to a cliff—a distance which he could measure, about three and a half miles. The eagle made 120 miles per hour, leaving the falcons far behind.

—Arnold Peters.

MEN OF DARING

ARTIST-EXPLORER

PAINTER OF COLORFUL, VIVID NATIVE TYPES, M. ALEXANDRE IACOVLEFF HAS TRAVELLED THOUSANDS OF MILES IN QUEST OF ORIGINAL SUBJECTS, BRAVING COUNTLESS PERILS IN SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST INACCESSIBLE PLACES.



THE SON OF A RUSSIAN NAVAL OFFICER, HE WAS EDUCATED IN ART AT THE IMPERIAL ACADEMY IN ST. PETERSBURG, AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION, IN CHINA AND JAPAN. IN 1920 HE OPENED A STUDIO IN PARIS, WHERE HE EXHIBITED SKETCHES OF ORIENTAL LIFE THAT ATTRACTED WIDE ATTENTION.

ALEXANDRE Iacovleff



ANDRÉ CITROËN, THE "HENRY FORD OF FRANCE," WAS SO IMPRESSED BY IACOVLEFF'S PICTURES THAT HE ENGAGED HIM AS ARTIST FOR HIS TRANS-AFRICA MOTOR EXPEDITION IN 1924. DURING THE 9 MONTHS IT TOOK THIS MOTORCADE TO TRAVERSE DESERT, JUNGLE, AND RUGGED UPLANDS BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOZAMBIQUE IACOVLEFF PAINTED DILIGENTLY WHILE EXPERIENCING HARDSHIPS AND ADVENTURES.

A True Story in Pictures Every Week



HE HAD TO OVERCOME SAVAGE SUPERSTITIOUS AWE AROUSED BY THE SAFARI'S CHUGGING TRACTORS. NATIVE CURIOSITY WAS OVERCOME. HIS DEFT PORTRAYALS OF THEIR LIKENESSES MADE THEM FORGET THEIR FEARS. IN THE JUNGLES IACOVLEFF TRILLED ALONG WITH A TRIBE OF YALINGAS AS THEY HUNTED ELEPHANTS, SKETCHING THE LIVELY PURSUIT AND THE KILLING. WHEN HE RETURNED TO PARIS HIS PICTURES WERE HAILED BY SCIENTISTS AND ART CRITICS ALIKE BECAUSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNFAMILIAR WHICH THEY DISPLAYED.



EVEN GREATER ACCLAIM GREETED THE PICTURES WHICH HE DID SEVERAL YEARS LATER, AS ARTIST FOR THE CITROEN-HAARDT EXPEDITION. IN THIS BOLD TRANS-ASIATIC VENTURE 30 EXPLORERS TRAVERSED TRACKLESS DESERTS AND SNOW-PILED HIMALAYAN PASSES, BLAZING A MOTOR TRAIL TO CHINA ALONG THE ROUTE TRAVELLED 500 YEARS BEFORE BY MARCO POLO. OFTEN IACOVLEFF HAD TO DO HIS PAINTING IN SUB-ZERO COLD, HEATING HIS COLORS OVER A FIRE TO KEEP THEM FROM FREEZING.

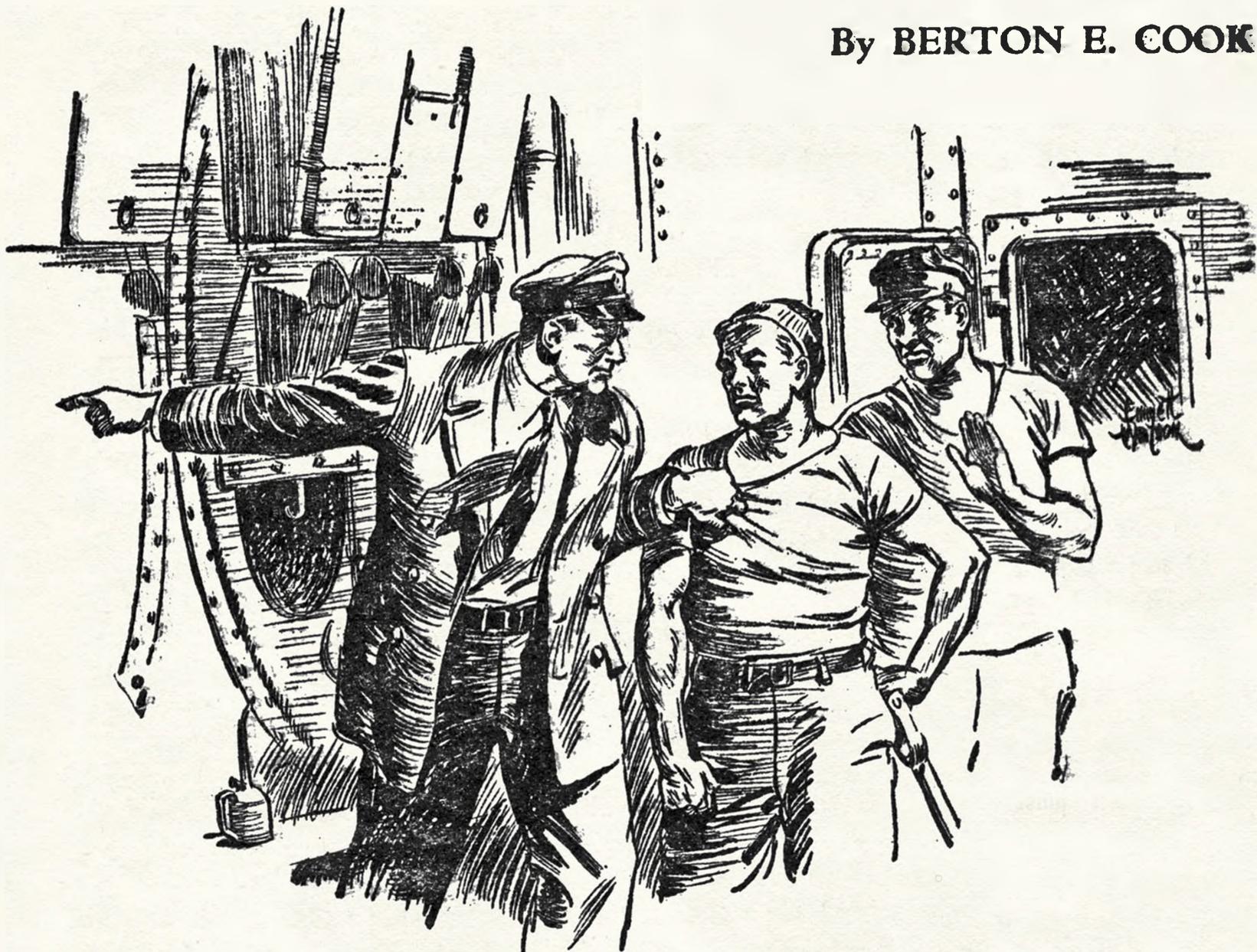


IN SINKIANG, CHINA, A GUARD OF SOLDIERS FAILED TO DETER HIM WHEN HE WANTED THE GOVERNOR TO POSE. IMPRESSED BY THE ARTIST'S COOL DISREGARD OF RIFLES, THE HARD-FACED OFFICIAL YIELDED AND DISMISSED HIS GUARDS. LAST YEAR IACOVLEFF CAME TO AMERICA TO TEACH AND TO EXHIBIT SOME OF HIS INIMITABLE ART.

Next Week: Jean Ellrich, Adventurer and Sharkologist

Salt in the Blood

By BERTON E. COOK



"Get to those feeds! Move!"

One misstep or one stroke of ill judgment and Captain Faunce's cargo was ready to create an explosion devastating a whole community

THE big fellow strode by in natural dignity. Preoccupation was his habit, he was inured to solitude. And besides, it was bitter cold.

Small wonder, then, that he did not respond when one of two fishermen touched his sou'wester in respectful salute in passing. But the older fisherman did notice the kid's gesture.

"Whut's the idea?" he demanded. "That ain't a woman."

"Yeh, you!" The lad wheeled his companion aboutface in the cold to stare at

that stately figure. "Lookit. There goes one o' the greatest skippers on the whole darned Atlantic. Cap'n Faunce. That's why I saluted him. You old hands always look down, don't you?"

"Whut the heck's he prowlin' this bleak waterfront fur if he's so darned important? Come along, le's eat; I never want to see fish on my mess tins ag'in. Where's Jake's joint? Me fer a steak."

The lad came along, but thoughtfully. "Maybe we know now why Cap'n Faunce's so big; maybe he roams the waterfront this way in common clo's, Angus, jest for to keep hisself down to brass tacks. You know, like us ord'nary salts. That's it."

"Faster, kid, ye're gittin' mushy. Too much o' cook's eternal fish's gone to yer head. Whut ship's that there Faunce got this winter?"

The lad ruminated all the cold way past two blustery corners.

"Hub? Y' ain't froze — not yer tongue!"

"Naw. I—I dunno what big liner he's runnin' nowadays. Prob'ly the same Appalachia he stood to wind'rd of us."

Deeman Faunce had no liner. Despite his innate composure, he cast longing eyes down every dock. He stared at white fruited, chesty coastwise cruisers, even the begrimed colliers looked good to Deeman Faunce today.

For the great sailing master was out of ship. Oh, perhaps next summer, if business came back or foreign lines slacked off. Perhaps, but Deeman Faunce could not wait. There were young career men in scores, good men he had schooled and certified and sent off to rescues in open boats to clinch their claims on advancement. They, too, were ravenous to leave dry land, and now their claims took priority over his.

It had not been Faunce's fault that he quit. His wife was not to blame. But their only son. Trip after trip in, Captain Faunce had rushed to his side, first at home, later to that famous hospital—until the boy had greeted him with the first smile in months. By the gods, he was on the mend at last. Weak, but better.

And he was. Deeman Faunce had lived and sailed just for that boy. The wife met him with tears of joy every trip home now.

Then came the cable. He got it at Cobb. He wirelessed back immediately, "Use that new serum. Work fast. Is he paralyzed yet? Reply at once."

No reply came at Cobb, but a messenger met him the instant he reached Liverpool. Deeman Faunce shook in his gold and blue when he read that message. He caught another ship, a fast liner to New York. He knew everybody on her, yet he saw nobody. He lived furiously between cabin and radio room. All the endless way across the Atlantic he prayed to his God of skies and tumbling seas and human destinies for that lad's life.

WHEN he reached home, the boy lay in permanent peace.

Deeman Faunce was a different man today; he knew not just how to betake himself into offices and apply for positions. He had changed. Oh, he laid it off to those hustling understrappers climbing up for command. Hank Corson, his executive officer, the crabbed old wolf, for one.

No, Faunce had not been called back. Nor would Faunce invite their refusal of his old berth by asking for it, not with fourteen long months between him and them.

In short, Deeman Faunce must be up and doing once again. He had drunk his fill of grim experience ashore. So he was on the waterfront, filling his eyes, his very soul, with the sight of ships; and he longed for another chance off the land. The cold Boston waterfront pulled at him as tides pull at breastlines and strain them, the spray-borne salt was in his blood.

This morning he took stock of himself in the cold. He spurred himself to the manner, the assurance that any master with his splendid record should assume. He who had sailed the great Appalachia, had made four famous rescues at sea, had never lost a trip in a decade, never been reprimanded, never haled before a board—he would take his flawless record where it counted.

The bustling office of Carey & Shuster left no doubt as to its business. Deeman Faunce strode in, well aware he was entering one of the enigmas of bigtime marine traffic, a brokerage of shipping charters—of sorts. These people were adept, super-efficient; they took over, they chartered and often sub-chartered, anything afloat that promised dividends. They themselves operated a line to the antipodes, another intercontinental line, a fleet of colliers. Even a brace of harbor tugs worked within their clutches. This Carey & Shuster crowd had the secret of success, they kept one good ear to the very ground for marine gossip. Gossip spelled business for them.

"Well, well! Looka here—hey, Mister Shuster . . ." The traffic manager for tugs and scows hurried into another room to explode his news; the great Captain Faunce from International Corporation was here. Master o' one of the world-beater liners. Big rescues last winter, three winters. Headlines . . .

He might be raving yet, but Mister Shuster interrupted him. "Last winter," he reminded, "not now. Faunce? He's no longer with International, Herm. But ten to one he's running something afloat, you don't see the likes of him in our office for nothing. What I mean, he's got a big deal to try on us, fat charter or something. Lead me to Mister Faunce, I smell contracts, Herm."

Faunce accepted the proffered chair. He satbomed the expectancy in Shuster's air, his pencil poised to jot down figures. Aye, Shuster had jumped to conclusions already, making it doubly hard for Faunce to break the ice.

"What is it, cap'n? Where to?" Shuster prompted.

"Where—oh, anywhere on earth—by water. Yes, anywhere."

Shuster peered at him quizzically. Had he heard aright? "But I don't getcha, captain. I don't—"

"No, I see you don't. Mr. Shuster, a master with my pilotage and license and record is not altogether commonplace, even in these times. You'll grant that, what?" The words burst from him, he flushed to hear them.

SHUSTER'S expression was something to behold. His pencil slipped through his long fingers, slowly he pushed the pad of paper aside. . . . So!

Faunce struggled against the lack of response, the change in Shuster. He suppressed mounting resentment within himself. "I was saying," he resumed, but—

"Yah. Yah, I gotcha, mist—captain . . . what you want is a job, a ship. And we haven't got no ship. We had a hunch you was op'rating you a fleet o'—maybe floats, see, or barges."

At this crucial moment came a perfunctory knock. The explosive traffic man blew in with importance and a memo on his tug-boats. Shuster scanned it importantly, then glanced impersonally toward Faunce.

"Here's a chance, such as it is," he declared negatively. "We gotta put us a new skipper aboard the Sunrise. You know what our towboat skippers get," he added deprecatingly, and waited. Slowly he recalled the case of this Faunce; boy died or something, quit his ship in Liverpool, International people hadn't taken him back, probably he'd just been turned down there. So! Shuster flashed critical glances.

Faunce guessed his thoughts and something hot turned upside down deep inside him. Blood surged to his head, his great hands clenched. They pounded the arms of his chair slowly, fiercely, while his teeth emitted grinding sounds.

"Well?" Shuster blurted. "What—where—how've you made out, captain, since you quit that Appalachia?" Thunderous silence.

Abruptly the great figure rose, fairly filled the room, then walked out. Not a word.

And Shuster tossed up two open palms. "Search me! What does all a man like that? You name it, Herm."

"Not me. That guy's not so good, what I mean. He's gone loco."

"Loco; that's an idea," Shuster admitted. He re-read the demand for a towboat skipper. He stared out over the wintry city. He put gossip and that idea together solemnly. Eventually alone, he reached for his telephone as one who has turned aside from the day's swift pace.

HELL had not yet sent in thermometer readings during that frigid week, but the mundane cold snap persisted. The spacious quarters of G. A. Transport, Inc., hissed steam from dignified radiators. Near the outer door sat a youngster in dapper uniform, surrounded by framed prints of G. A. T. ships. They ran the gamut from paddlewheelers of the sixties

down to Diesel palaces with the latest stern anchor ports.

One year ago Faunce would have chuckled at this array; but that was a year ago, when offices were haunts of landlubbers who stressed glamor and forgot fog. Today he tried to name some of these ships and their skippers. He was going to feel better in this atmosphere, it was formal, shipshape.

He knew old Cap'n Harley, too, and the cap'n would certainly recognize him. Why, Harley had attended that Bureau of Trade Club dinner when he, Faunce, had received the watch for rescuing those fourteen poor, frozen, half-starved devils from the sinking—

"... appointment, sir? I say, sir, you have an appointment?" The lad in uniform was insistent.

"Oh. Appointment? No, just announce to Cap'n Harley that Cap'n Faunce wants a few minutes of his time."

Deeman Faunce never had learned the grim, underdog art of waiting as an applicant for anything, he was not geared to wait. He stood poised at the inner threshold; Harley himself was an ex-cap'n, a graduate from the oil trade, he'd meet Deeman on at least a shred of common ground.

The door did not open so soon. That liveried youngster must have evaporated . . . Faunce could faintly hear someone in there telephoning. No, he couldn't walk right in, no cap'n tolerates interruptions.

He paced as he had paced his bridge a thousand times when dirty weather brewed. Coffee, too, had been brewed on those occasions; Faunce thirsted for a slug of it now; his throat was dry.

The silence became unbearable. He buttoned his coat with finality. To the devil with—the inner door opened and that boy was nodding his way. At last!

Deeman Faunce forgot all about leaving, forgot everything save his best approach. He, successful master of liners, was about to meet a man of his own high calling. Harley would understand . . .

Harley did. He understood somewhat

more than Faunce had dreamed he would. Faunce entered a room overlooking Boston Harbor. In the hard winter sunlight sat old Captain Harley behind a desk, just as though the desk had been shoved in front of him momentarily. Presently it must dissolve into a helm, a binnacle, maybe the for'ard dodger on some long flying bridge. You couldn't make an office recluse of a real skipper anyway.

Harley scrutinized Faunce's features, his eyes, his expression. Faunce smiled hopefully back at him. One tried to verify something amiss, the other missed the greeting he had expected.

"Well, well, Cap'n Harley!"

"Great weather for icing up offshore, eh?"

"Yes, but . . ." Faunce hesitated. He must start no argument, but he'd be delighted to ice up, heave to, or anything else within reason if only he were out there where such things happened.

Harley glanced from the haunted eyes to his padful of appointments, to the relentless clock on his desk. Others were accumulating out in the anteroom. "Er, you called to—to what, cap'n?" He seemed to flounder a bit, as though he knew too well the purpose of Faunce's errand. And how Faunce had changed!

Faunce cleared his vocals. "Cap'n, circumstances beyond human control forced me ashore fourteen months ago. I—I raced against death . . . I lost. Maybe you know; I lost my boy." He braced himself and plowed on with terrific effort to demonstrate his recovery from that experience: "Now I'm ready to get back to sea. Got to get back, and I came to see if you . . ."

THE old skipper heard him out, eyeing clock and pad and desk. Somehow it was hard to meet this man eye to eye, harder to tell him the truth. Yes, the truth; and it was bald. That phone call from Shuster had been startling but true. Faunce was scarcely recovered enough yet to entrust with a ship—and if he were, what could Harley do for him with seven

company skippers out of ship and four ships tied up out of charter? But the clock forced him to speak out.

"Cap'n Faunce, seven of our own skippers are dogging my everlasting heels for berths. Seven good men."

"I suppose so. I had the Appalachia, my record—"

Harley winced. He squirmed on his chair. "I know," he let go defensively, "I know, but that was more'n a year ago. You've—things haven't broke so well for you meantime."

"You mean?"

"Frankly, cap'n, there's not a line o' ships out of Boston that'd take you on today. What you need is not the worry of command, not right now, not . . . not yet. You want rest. You've got to begin life on a new basis. I know . . . I lost my wife nine years back."

With obvious effort he brightened, peered into Faunce's drawn face to conclude, "So take things easy this winter, it's a hell of frozen harbors and wild west-eries anyway. Go easy, cap'n."

He stood up with hand extended.

Deeman Faunce stood again in the cold. Shuster, curse his flabby hide, telephoning everybody, warning all hands that a—an unfit ex-captain was making the rounds. Look out for him. The very gall of Shuster! Faunce well knew such practice existed, but . . .

That late afternoon Lois Faunce greeted her returning husband with misgiving. Womanlike, she fed him. She endeavored to make conversation, confident that it would soften whatever it might be that cloaked him in dour solemnity.

All her efforts failed, and in failure she found her own explanation for Deeman's mood. She wondered whether all sea captains talked of retiring sometime, to really enjoy life without the tremendous care of a ship on their minds. And whether, once ashore, their sea dream became a land nightmare. Were all captains permanently ruined for home life by command?

Mrs. Lois Faunce rattled dishes in the kitchenette. Deeman smoked alone.

Faunce went into the living room, shut himself in, and smoked a black pipe in long, slow draughts. Thus he could think, and think he must. Step by step he summoned all the facts in his situation and faced them boldly, much as he had faced gales and fogs and wind-torn seas.

THAT night Deeman Faunce looked in upon his Gethsemane. It proved a terrible experience for a young man who had known the mount of success to see nothing beyond him. It was dark in that living room, vastly darker within his resentful soul.

To think that he, of all men, should have bared his predicament to a Shuster, and invited a blunt statement of his uselessness from a great captain like Harley. Faunce groaned; he despised himself.

Even life itself turns valueless when despised. Faunce weighed his life insurance; Lois could manage nicely on it if he went out. Eventually she'd marry again. On the other hand, he had seen suicides on his trans-Atlantic crossings. Ugh! Cowards, all.

Gradually it dawned upon him; if he went out, she'd attribute it to remorse over the child's death.

Deeman Faunce stood up, laid aside his pipe. No, suicide would not do, he could not deliberately leave her to permanent grief. Not he.

But neither could he go on and on in the manner of these fourteen stupid months. Action was imperative within him, it lashed him. No man could just exist, he had to do things or not. If nothing else, he must go and go; that was it. He'd walk out as though on a jaunt to the waterfront. Keep on going incognito, roam his restlessness to the fill. Lois? Tell her not to expect him home in an hour, she'd understand.

He would hop a bus south and ride some fifty miles down the coast for that long-promised chat with the man who had hoisted him out of towboats to fame. For years he had been promising Chet and himself this hour of reminiscence, and

Chet did enjoy these visits from men he had graduated; all his letters asked for them. Aye, Chet was a prince, no Shusters could tell him that Faunce was unfit for command. Hardly!

The arrival of buses from Boston meant nothing to Chet Blair that cold day. He had much more on his mind than the possibility of visits from towboat grads. He was caught in a freeze-up.

He stared over his desk and beyond, through the broad windows, upon a harbor which, save for the tortuous, narrow channel, was sheet ice. His four towboats lay frozen to the pier, the only towboats in Port Falls to handle scows and tankers that had to be butted through two narrow bridges on the worst piloting stretch from Quoddy to Panama. Chet tore at his blond thatch and worried.

"All I ask — he nearly prayed it—"all I ask is that no tankers come in while this ice persists. What is it now, a foot thick?"

"Huh. We started to cut our way to the channel two hours ago and it was fifteen inches," one of his tugboat skippers replied.

"Ye gods! Anyway, the channel's clear yet."

"What if 'tis? We can't get out of it. If one o' them oil tankers came along she'd just have to anchor down the bay until—"

"Until we lost our best customers. No pilot would think of risking eighty thousand barrels of oil against bumping through those narrow bridge draws. Once he scraped and struck a spark, the whole city of Port Falls would go up in the explosion!"

THE tug captain was at a window, back to Chet; he could chuckle unobserved. "Take that there Oil King," he pursued, "she has only eleven inches clearance either side goin' through. Let ice veer her nose comin' out t'other side of a draw with her midships still in the draw and she'd h'ist this city to—"

"Hey, you, go down aboard your tug. You'll have me looney. You and your ifs and ands!"

The skipper went lazily. Then Chet's clerk emerged from the tiny cubicle that harbored typewriter, computing machine and files. He grinned: "Our towboats are tickled pink at nothing to do, aren't they?" he ventured. Getting no response, he went on with: "There really are two oil ships due pretty soon, according to my calendar. One's that Lapham—"

"The other's that big, clumsy, ninety-thousand barrel Oil King, blast her," Chet growled. "But not to-day. If either one wirelessly, we'd say anchor down off East Point in the lee."

"But the channel's open, they could pass up through the two bridges."

Chet's swivel chair screeched to vertical. "Wha-at? Without tugs to line them into the draws?"

"Oh."

"Yeab. Tankers don't negotiate Port Falls bridges alone. I tremble at what you'd probably do around here if I should be called away suddenly—and that cussed Oil King this trip is full of gasoline!"

Neither had discovered the big fellow, he was waiting just outside the threshold for this touchy talk to cease. The departing towboat skipper, passing him on the stairs, had not bothered to notice who was going up there next to bait Chet.

Now, however, the air was momentarily cleared. The visitor entered that grand old office with its familiar smells of charts and ink and towboat mustiness.

Chet Blair heard feet again; he scowled. Why didn't those towboat galoots warm themselves aboard their boats?

Suddenly Chet heard his name. It came on a voice from the distant past. He screeched his chair around and—"I be—Cap'n Deem' Faunce!"

It sent a warm glow through Faunce. He gripped Blair's hand. He sat down, relaxed for the first time in eons. He plunged into reminiscence with good old Chet. Together they resurrected the old Black Wolf affair that nearly sunk Chet's business, that assignment to tow the concrete scow around Point Jude, the steward who struck because they kidded him for spilling

quahogs in the bean soup. Until Chet wanted to know about the present.

Faunce's throat stiffened, his tongue dried off. He did manage, however, to get out a labored recital of the dismal year ashore.

And Chet concealed well his astonishment. More than that, he made light of it. "Pshaw, man, doing you good to ease up—no, I realize you don't fancy loafing and all that, Deem', but nevertheless I still maintain it's a blessing in disguise. The fearful care of running those huge liners on the North Atlantic a winter like this one—why, you're going to live longer for escaping it this winter. Yes, and you're getting acquainted with your fam—your wife."

Faunce hitched sideways. "Hm . . . Ah-hm . . . maybe so . . . never thought of it that way." He was trying to agree.

But he could not, for in the end he said, "There's a ton of truth in what you say, but I want a ship."

IT came bluntly and Chet understood what lay behind it. Chet always did understand, but right now his attention became divided between Faunce and the telephone. A tanker had entered the bay some twelve miles to the south'ard. That would be the Lapham with her cargo of fuel oil; Chet didn't get her name clearly over the phone nor did he need to, he had his month's schedule memorized as usual. And it was just like that Lapham to come unwanted.

He said, "Anchor inside East Point there . . . Oh, you are—what's that? No, not a towboat available and all anchorages up here are under a foot of ice. No thaw in sight yet." He turned to Faunce with, "Hear him jawing? Must be that peppery first mate, he's—Hello? Yes, I heard you, but it's anchor for you fellows. No, I said . . ."

Deem' Faunce was pouring out his anxiety when Chet hung up the receiver. Then Chet attempted to comfort one of the best men he'd ever "graduated." It flattered him to think Deem' had come all the way back to tell him this, but it stung him

too. He had nothing whatever to offer. Somehow he must couch that sorry fact in words.

Interruption was the order of Chet Blair's day. He had yet to invent words for Deem' when up came a deckhand.

"Mister—huh, huh—Blair," he panted, "they's a fire up 't City Wharf!"

"Fire! How bad?"

"Cripes, the's tons o' smoke, some of it's comin' over."

Chet grabbed his hat and coat. The clerk was missing nothing, he popped out of his cubicle and ran.

Deeman Faunce sat alone. What was a fire to him? Or ice or bitter cold? He knew, now, in the abrupt silence around him that his real errand down here to Port Falls had not been prompted by a desire for reminiscence at all; he had come for a ship from Chet. And even Chet Blair could do nothing for him.

The phone rang; Faunce let it ring. It rang again; had the fire threatened those iced-in towboats? Now it rang in one prolonged jingle. Faunce could endure it no longer—"Hello!"

"Blair? I want Blair."

"What's the matter?"

"Matter! I told you half an hour back, our crew's striking on us if we don't git in. Our grub's low, we been buckin' headwinds. The Ol' Man, he's folded up and ice's makin' all round us here. We gotta git to the dock."

Faunce's heart hammered its excitement, but above its thuddings he demanded, "Why don't you talk to a pilot, must be some of them on East Point?"

"Lord sake, I told you, they won't listen to it from us. We want you fellers to git after 'em."

"Why not listen to you? Got contagious disease aboard of you?"

"Not at all, it's account o' no towbo'ts up your way and no chance to anchor up there. We gotta git outa this, damn it!"

Was it the accumulated despair of months? Possibly a flash of foolhardiness. Something surely let go in Deeman Faunce's brain. Before he could weigh the

momentous consequences, his mouth opened wide and out came the voice he had lost fourteen months ago.

"Hell! I'll pilot you to the oil dock myself. Have a boat ready at the edge of the ice for me."

Faunce ran to the chart locker, pulled out the bay chart and folded it under his coat. In seven minutes he was on a bus, speeding down the shore road to a stop inside East Point. All the way down he reviewed the chart, refreshed his knowledge of courses, buoys, tides, soundings up the bay and into the river above the Port Falls bridges to the oil works. He pictured the Lapham, recalled the hazards attendant upon the movement of sixty thousand barrels of fuel oil in a steel hull moving up a winding channel. By hurrying, he'd have daylight through the draws. Thank the Lord it was the Lapham.

HE walked over ice to the small boat with the mate; Chet had guessed wrong, this was an old man and no hustler at all. He piled into the boat and took the mate's measure as he rowed. Presently they rounded the tanker's stern—and her name stood forth. She was the Oil King!

Faunce boarded that ship in a daze. He was about to pilot gasoline through two narrow bridges without towboats. And an east wind was rising.

"Where's the skipper?" he asked.

"Sick. A-bed three days, sir."

"Mate, get your hook, while I look in on him. Send the third aft, the second up here on the bridge." Faunce's orders came swiftly.

He found the captain in a pile of blankets, a sallow ghost, the face a claybank after a week's rain. Jaundiced eyes opened painfully, closed carefully. "You're taking us in?" he wheezed. "Get us in, please, this time anyway. I'm going home."

Faunce asked pertinent questions about his illness and how his ship handled. He got only the faintest nods and "Going to get acquainted . . . with my fam-ly . . . at last!"

Back on the bridge Faunce pulled down the engine room telegraph levers. The Oil King stirred throughout, moved in skim ice, speeded north. Overhead a dull, ominous slate of storm clouds obliterated what had been blue for a week. He must hurry against premature darkness now and snow.

"Mate, what's your speed?"

"Eleven and a half, sir. Kin do thirteen with fair wind and tide. This is a beam wind risin', though."

And the Appalachia had always slowed to thirteen for harbors! But this tanker was not even doing ten knots now. Faunce sent the mate below instead of whistling down to some engineer he did not know. Back came the mate to report: "They got two engineers standin' over them stokers with spanners. I reckon the stokers is playin' fancy with the feeds or somethin'. Anyway the gauges is low. Engineers told me to git to hell out."

Faunce hurried below. "Drive 'em!" he snapped at the second engineer on the control platform.

"Am. Got two men standing over 'em down there, but that crowd can push fires without raising steam. Right 'fore yer eyes. So what's the use? We'll be rid of 'em soon."

Faunce went back. He watched landmarks crawl past. He paced the bridge. Aye, he had bitten off a mouthful too big for any pilot. Despite a raw easterly, beam wind, he perspired from crown to heeltaps. At this rate he'd never reach the bridges.

Abruptly he left the ship to the old mate. He stormed aft and below again. On past slogging pistons into the stokehold he descended to the two growling engineers. Both showed the effects of a severe week at sea, weather and stokehold trouble had left them disgusted. Faunce ignored them to bark a command. He sized up the surly gang gathering around him.

"Just how do you men expect to die?" he demanded.

Some of them stared at him and paled.

"You're going to die along with the rest of us," Faunce added.

"Wut's the big idea?"

"W E'RE going through two narrow bridges without towboats to butt us in line. At this rate we'll be late for a head tide; that means no steerageway. And once we scrape those bridges, just one spark—no, I'm not bluffing. I am the pilot."

They all stiffened.

"You wanted to get to the dock. Now, by the Jehovah, you're going! Get to those feeds, blow her off. Move!"

All except two of them turned guiltily toward the boilers. The two staged a wise laugh in his face. "Bunk!" one blurted.

The next thing those two saw was their fo'castle. Faunce snapped them together like greased eggs and had them removed.

The Oil King speeded. Her pilot saw Braymore Point through spitting snow. Ice let go from her upperworks to clatter onto the decks as the temperature crawled upward for the oncoming storm.

Mount Prudence passed somewhere behind a squall. The day vanished and the wind strengthened. Snow drifted aboard. Faunce pulled the whistle cord, he poked her into what there was of Port Falls harbor between ice sheets. He rang for half speed and got it to the tune of a hiss of steam at the funnel.

The Oil King rounded Buoy 14. She stole up toward the lighthouse at its crook in the channel, the first hazard. The light filtered through the snow and darkness, then came the sounds of the bell from below it. At length the lighthouse, a dignified spark plug, set in the midst of snowy void.

Now the sharp turn west to precisely north, seven west. The Oil King swung heavily. Up the twisting channel she inched between ice sheets to Buoy 13. From there the real danger began.

Faunce caught city noises on his starboard hand, coming on the wind. One bungle, one feather-stroke of ill judgment or foul luck now would create an explosion that must devastate that beehive of unsuspecting humanity. What a chance he had taken!

But there was no turning back at this

stage. On he pushed the tanker. Buoy 13 came abeam and Faunce himself rolled the helm to port. Her nose swerved to starboard. He caught her in time, blew three blasts for the draw to open, and steadied her.

A bridge siren howled in the storm, the draw swung on its pier, on came the Oil King. And Faunce had his plan; he lined her up for the run through, not directly opposite that narrow gap he must negotiate, but east of it. How much east? That was the most vital, life-and-death bit of technique in this entire performance. It was entirely a matter of his judgment of ship, wind, tide; it was everything. He headed the ship for a point four fathoms east of the open draw.

Now the wind and that eddy slid her west as she neared the hole ahead. It was splendid timing and Faunce's wide eyes saw his reckonings become reality. Once over his shoulder he caught the random glow of a light over the shore to starboard; so Chet was in his office yet, was he? Good old Chet had discovered what an old grad of his was up to out here in the murk.

Faunce held his watch to the binnacle light. Five-seven. The tide would slack off at five thirty-two, all too soon for decent steerageway in that upper bridge. Faunce's hand shook when he pocketed his watch; he was in the stifling hug of the worst fright he had ever known. Gasoline, snow, narrow bridges, slack water, a beam wind pushing and not a towboat.

THE old mate at his elbow peered up at him; there was the open draw over to port, to port!

Faunce made out the range lights, too. Slowly they grew, slowly lined up. "Put your searchlight on that hole!" he shouted.

The mate leaped away—and Faunce's anxious moment ended. His fingers ran gently over the spokes in the interim, then the Oil King's nose seemed to stretch out, to reach between two clumps of piled steel. Her bridge moved along in. Out came her nose, her upperworks, her open deck aft. Finally the stern came along with a scant

three inches to spare to leeward and a rope fender that had flattened like cotton batting.

With one bridge passed, Deeman Faunce should have regretted the impulse, perhaps, that had put him atop ninety thousand barrels of gasoline in such a predicament between bridges. Instead, he dashed the sweat from his brow and starboarded his helm. Only five ship-lengths ahead of him stood the upper bridge. It was rated the worse of the two because it was a five-lane traffic bridge, somewhat wider than the other one.

Faunce blew for the draw to open. He headed her seventeen east along the windward side of the snug channel. Now for the run to safety.

But the draw had not opened! He blew again. He snorted the danger signal in short, startling blasts. Even then those platforms did not rise and divide to either side overhead. Faunce cursed them, his ship surged on. An uproar rose in the drifting snow on that bridge. Out of it came a megaphoned yell:

"Jammed . . . can't start the draw!"

"God 'a' mercy!" the old mate prayed.

Faunce had no time to pray, but his brain worked like lightning. He hove his helm down, ordered slow astern on the engine. White lather boiled alongside. A police whistle shrieked ashore, traffic scurried to safety.

Faunce checked his sternway and steered as no mortal ever did steer in that narrow trap. Now the tanker was back where the searchlight's beam and the third mate on the stern warned him. Another signal to the engine room. The ship stopped, hung there like a demon undecided when to launch destruction. Then she moved ahead.

Almost up to the upper bridge, almost back to the lower one and plenty to windward. Ahead, astern, back and forth between sheet ice she lingered while mauls banged on the stubborn draw. Over there men shouted, ran about, worked furiously.

On the tanker forty others hung at the rails in the terrible suspense. Some of them contemplated jumping for the ice, others

kept them away from that certain death. But they all knew their end was near, soon or late something positively had to go wrong.

High above them, Deeman Faunce fought the fight of his life. Rescuing souls from derelicts had nothing on gasoline at a city threshold. He barked engine signals to the mate, he steered, he watched in the searchlight's glare until he imagined he saw Lois in that flying snow.

He sweltered anew in the penetrating cold and wet. Yet, had he but known it, he was not half so upset now as when Shuster had eyed him out or when Harley had called him unfit to command. Rest? He? Deeman Faunce rediscovered himself between those Port Falls bridges in the snow.

He plumbed depths within himself that he had never suspected were there. Yes, indeed, they were right in Boston, he had changed—for the better.

THE tide slacked; he adjusted his technique to compensate it. Again back and forth, this time to the westward a trifle. The Oil King became a lumbering monster with amazing patience while mechanics worked desperately—

Suddenly a shrill, long-drawn siren out ahead! It filled the night and shocked a whole crew's nerves. They ran forward—to see their bows entering the open draw. In she slid. By now Faunce had the feel of his ship. He drove her through that upper gap deliberately, confidently, expertly. One fender chafed the side of the west draw, rolled aft. Another followed. A third. All three fell in rags and there stood the oil dock just beyond, reaching out into a channel that looked, now, as free as a bay by comparison.

Chet Blair was the first man to board the Oil King. White as the snow that Santa Claused him, he made for the bridge and seized Faunce's sweating hand.

"Now I know you're loco," he blustered. "Why on earth did you—why, that's the worst hole a tanker ever got into here."

"How'd I know your bridge would foul?

And what a fine mess two of your tugboats would have added!"

"No, no, but shoving gasoline cargo—"

"G'wan, you're tugboat minded," Faunce chuckled. "Fine time to bawl us out, after it's done, what?"

"Fancy anybody bawling you—say, I came to tell you the agent's in his Oil Works office," Chet added significantly. "See his light over that fourth reservoir? He and I work hand in glove, y'know, Deem'; let's see, he tells me the cap'n of this tanker is homeward bound. Yeah. So long. Luck."

Early next morning it was not milk carts that rattled Lois Faunce awake in her Boston apartment. Deeman Faunce stomped

straight to her bedside with the first glad news in fourteen months.

" . . . lady, oh lady; I said cap'n of the Oil King. Wake up, you're s'posed to cheer!" he boomed. "Taking her to San Ped' on tomorrow's flood. And what a piloting job that turned out to be. Say, Lois, I . . ." On and on he ran in a maze of nautical terms.

When, eventually, he ran down, she smiled confidently and drew his head closer to whisper in his ear.

"Not really, now. Honest, girl? You're not just—"

"Absolutely," she triumphed, "and somehow I know it will be a future sea captain."

THE END

The Most Dangerous Animal

A CORNERED tiger may be tough, a cobra's sting may be fatal, but modern naturalists seem to agree that neither these nor other fierce creatures are half so deadly as the mosquito. Two kinds are especially bad in the tropics, those bearing malaria and yellow fever.

The contempt of today's explorers for "wild animals" almost amounts to bravado. Gerhard Rohlfs, who knew all about the Sahara, is reported to have said that he never saw a lion. Professor Konrad Guenther declares he has wandered through India, Ceylon and Brazil unarmed; that pythons could not and would not crush men, and that most cases of cobra-bite in India are outright fakes and conceal native killings. He concluded that although there may be exceptions when animals are hunted and cornered, generally "dangerous wild animals are now found only in books of juvenile fiction." Gandhi has pointed out that while thousands of yogis dwell in India, none has yet been eaten by a tiger. An explorer who spent sixty years in Africa once remarked that the only time he was in deadly peril was in 1882—when the British bombarded Alexandria.

But—yellow fever is so feared in Brazil that a single case brings a corps of officers who completely cover the house with wet rags and fumigate it. All near-by pools of water are either drained or stocked with young carp, whose diet is mosquito larvæ.

—Delos White.



Henry Morgan proved himself no ordinary pirate

The Dew of Heaven

By GEORGE CHALLIS

Panama!—the fairest sight ever to greet the eyes of plundering pirates—lay waiting for Captain Morgan and his men

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

LOUIS D'OR, famous pirate of the Spanish Main, encounters in sea-battle a small craft commanded by Ivor Kildare, a young daring pirate who is also known as Tranquillo II. Louis d'Or captures Ivor and his lady, the attractive Señorita Ines Heredia, who has run away from her domineering uncle residing in Panama.

As Ivor is about to be strung up, a Spanish galleon suddenly appears and Ines is placed in a boat in order to delay the Spaniards who stop to rescue her. Ivor,

hoping to barter for his life, successfully translates for Louis a cipher cut in wood on the ship which tells of hidden treasure at Tortuga. Louis and Ivor become friends, and they, with their followers, sail to Tortuga. Once there, most all of their landing party suddenly become mutinous. There is much slaughter and few survive.

In digging for the treasure, a paper is found which reveals the next step in their quest: "Panama behind Peacock's Tail San Francisco." The actual treasure is in Panama, in the church of San Francisco.

This story began in the *Argosy* for September 7

Ivor, Louis, and Padraic More sail to Porto Bello, and make their way across the isthmus, entering Panama by stealth. Ivor sees Ines—who is back with her uncle—for a short time. Meanwhile Louis and Padraic have fallen into the hands of the Spanish and are imprisoned. Ivor is himself jailed, trying to free them. They are sentenced to die when Ines pleads that they be put aboard a galley. Her request is granted, and all three suffer the brand of the galley slave.

The galley meets a small English ship and engages it in battle. During the ramming, the English throw hammers and chisels to the chained slaves at the oars so that they may free themselves to fight against the Spanish. The captain of the galley is killed and the Spanish are massacred by the negro slaves.

Kildare and Louis free themselves; Kildare assuming command of the galley, and sailing her near the coast of the Panama Isthmus. He decides to visit Captain Henry Morgan, notorious buccaneer, and convinces him that their combined forces can successfully attack the city of Panama. So, under the commission of the Royal Council of Jamaica and the leadership of Morgan, three thousand pirates set off to sack Panama.

CHAPTER XVII (Continued).

WITH GUNS PRIMED.

SO they made the start in thirty canoes or periaguas and a few of little chatas, which were shallow-draft boats specially intended for work along the rivers. Kildare, with Robert the Mosquito Indian, took charge of the leading boat, which was a chata with some light brass and iron guns on board.

He sailed with the guns primed and the matches lighted because at any moment a storm of shot and Indian arrows might be poured upon them from an ambush; but in fact by dark they had covered six leagues against

the current before they anchored at De los Bracas.

It was an excellent beginning. It was a stride so long that the buccaneers talked as though they were already in Panama. But Kildare was a gloomy man. They had taken with them only a small store of maize and a few strips of charqui for each man. And the reckless buccaneers, instead of keeping the provender and using it very sparingly, devoured most of the corn and the jerked meat on that first night for their supper because, they said, they had to feed their bodies if their bodies had to feed the clouds of mosquitoes. Along the shore at De los Bracas there were a number of plantations, but the Spaniards and their slaves had run away and left nothing but bare huts behind them.

They went on the next day with the thin, maddening song of the mosquitoes continually about their ears. It was very hot, and since this was January—the dry season—the river had fallen low, with stretches of black, stinking mud often on either side of the stream.

The rapid jungle green was already sweeping over these newly exposed flats. Trees lay wedged in the current, big trees that had been swept down by the floods, and these had to be cut or dragged out of the way.

Once the prow of Kildare's chata bumped on a living log, and from under its keel slithered a mud-colored crocodile. Kildare bounced a bullet or two off its armored back and sent the chata on.

His heart was sinking all the while, and his faith in the success of the expedition was at a very low ebb. The men had for the most part eaten nothing but tobacco smoke during the day.

And an empty belly is a poor friend in the middle of a jungle with the night coming on.

When the dark came, the multitudinous singing of the mosquitoes was the undersong, and the chorus above it was composed of the cursing of the starved buccaneers.

They cursed Henry Morgan to his face and that night Kildare sat for a long council with the leader. Robert, the Mosquito Indian, sat with his sour, old face at that conference. He told Morgan that the boats could be dragged or rowed another six miles up the stream.

MORGAN sipped brandy and then rubbed some of the strong liquor on his face and hands, which were badly swollen from the poison of the mosquitoes. He looked purple-red and his eyes were swollen so that he could open them only as slits of light.

"I was wrong," he said to Kildare. "I should have taken more food along. But who would have thought that the Spaniards would run away from us and let us sink this far into their land without once rallying to strike us? Tranquillo, we should be eating the stew cooked in Spanish pots, tonight. Instead, we eat air! The dogs should have stayed to fight us and let us have their fare. They are too cowardly wise!"

"I can take a picked crew and a few of the best and lightest boats and be back here in three days with enough provisions to last all the way to Panama—if the men eat sparingly," said Kildare.

"They will *not* eat sparingly," said Morgan. "If food comes now, the beasts will bolt it and turn themselves

sick; and that will mean a fourth day of halt, while the mosquitoes drink up our courage and leave an itch in its place. No, no, Tranquillo! Look at Jimmy Green. He tells us that the worst thing an army can do is to turn back. He points us forward."

The monkey, in fact, had fallen asleep with his head on the knee of the admiral and one outstretched, hairy arm pointing up the stream of the Chagres!

So Kildare lay down, at last, to try to sleep. But the mosquitoes prevented that with their songs and their poisoned lances.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETURN TO THE BOATS.

THEY left the boats behind them the next morning because another day of labor at the oars would reduce the entire army to exhaustion and despair and it seemed better to cut a way overland, with Kildare to point the road.

A hundred and sixty men were detailed by Henry Morgan to guard the boats, so bringing down the strength of the force to little more than an even thousand. But the retreat would be secured in case of defeat and a remnant of the beaten host getting as far as the Chagres.

The last injunctions of Morgan to the boat crews were by no means to leave the boats and go ashore, no matter in how strong a party or how well armed. For through the deep sea of the jungle, Spanish spies might creep to within scant yards of foragers and pick them off. So the grim little army left that planter's station of Cruz de Juan Gallego and entered the woods.

Kildare, as guide, selected a force of strong macheteros to hew the way through the jungle. It was a long, green tunnel which the machetes opened, as the steel blades were humming and swishing through the juicy green stuff. Very pale, because the sun never had touched much of this growth, at times the tunnel became almost as white as a greenish ivory.

And slimy, crawling things moved out of the way; and always the thick, rank stench of the jungle fumes was in their nostrils, while the horrible woodticks dropped down to the scent of blood and drank life far more deeply than the mosquitoes could do. "The devil himself invented the garrapados!" said Robert, and he took a soft ball of wax and rubbed it over the skin of Kildare, the small ticks sticking to the stuff and the bigger ones being brushed off. Also, a waxed skin offered a more difficult surface for the pests to catch on with the barbed hooks of their hind legs.

It was the stifling air that made the men begin to drop. Half of them, presently, were either prostrate or down on one knee, breathing hard, turning pale. And Morgan had to lead them back to the boats.

It was a bitter decision. He muttered to Kildare: "This is the first backward step, and probably it is the end of the expedition. God curse the day when you tempted me to it in Port Royal!"

That day they rowed, poled or dragged the boats to a miserable bivouac at Cedro Bueno—a name rather than a place. And now the men were chewing bark, grass, and any sort of spicy leaves that they could find—chewing them because the rank juices allayed the belly torment a little. This

was the night when a score of the buccaneers headed by one Samkin Butterworth, a hump-backed man famous for his strength, came to Morgan and insisted that the expedition should return; it would be impossible to reach Panama.

Kildare never forgot that scene with the smoke of the bivouac fire rolling over Morgan and himself, keeping the mosquitoes away but nearly stifling the men.

"We'll ask Jimmy Green," said Morgan, speaking only from one side of his face, the other being now too painfully swollen by the mosquito poison.

But Jimmy Green was busy picking off ticks and killing them with his vicious, sharp little teeth.

"You see," said Morgan, "that Jimmy says it is better to kill deserters than to leave them behind us for the Spaniards to pick up and torture information out of 'em. So the answer is, Samkin, that if you try to leave the camp I'll have you followed and thrown to the fish, by God! Now, get out of my sight, you rotten piece of tick-food!"

The last words came out with a tremendous roar. Samkin hesitated only a moment, and then turned and led his companions away in a rapid flight from the wrath of the admiral.

Henry Morgan, stroking the monkey, grinned at Kildare.

"What would I do without Jimmy Green?" he asked.

IN the narrower stream above Cedro Bueno there was more water and the boats made a slightly easier progress. Even famine, as the hungry bellies of the men shrank, became easier to endure. And besides, they caught a

few fish, most of them struck by the instinct and the uncanny skill of Robert the Mosquito. He followed Kildare always close at heel, silently, day and night, with a face sour as vinegar and darker than thunder, but with a nameless devotion in his heart.

They were climbing out of the deeper jungle. It was easier to march along the shore and on the fourth day of the journey most of the men took to the land, with Kildare as their guide, the rest following in the canoes.

On this day it was that a sudden thickening of the green ahead of them drew suspicion, and then they were able to make out an irregular breastwork of felled trees. Plainly the Spaniards had built an ambuscade and the buccaneers might have suffered fearfully from gunfire in front of it. But the only thought of these men, when they saw the fortification in the forest, was that where enemies lurked, food would be found, also. So they charged with yells of joy, but after all the place was vacated long before. The first sight of the unshaven savages from the Caribbean had been too much for the Spanish stomachs, or perhaps the tale of the winning of Fort San Lorenzo now weighed heavily on their minds.

At any rate, the buccaneers found not an enemy, not a scrap of food, except bread crumbs and crusts which had been trodden into the ground, with some leather bags also. Those leather bags were torn to shreds and chewed to a pulp and swallowed.

They spent the night at Torna Munni and marched on through the heat, the mosquitoes, the blood-sucking ticks, and at noon of the fifth day—nearly four days of starvation, now—they came with weak knees into the little town of Barbacoas.

But the Spaniards had even uprooted the crops lest the buccaneers should find sustenance, and the village was bare of everything that could be eaten except that in a recess in the rocks were found two great sacks of ground corn meal, and two large jars of wine. It would have gone down the gullets of the first to find it, but Morgan ran when he heard the joyous howling and beat the finders from their loot. That nourishment was given only to the men who were palpably dying of starvation; and many a life was saved by that act of good management.

Kildare, for the first time since the march began, was able to render a hearty admiration to his leader. It had been fine generalship. It was an act so wise that even the most savage of the buccaneers had to admit its excellence.

That night they spent in a bean field from which the Spaniards had removed every trace of sustenance again.

The sixth day was hell on earth.

From chewing grass and bark, a brown or a green crust appeared on the lips of the men; the same lips were cracked and bleeding; and Henry Morgan stalked with the rear guard, his face now a hideous blotched distortion but his resolution growing more gigantic with every step he took.

He kept with him the strongest men in the army and with these he picked up the men who had fainted. Some of them were beaten forward; some were carried; none were left for the Spanish spies to pick up and torture. One man in ten was now going ahead on hands and knees. Those who had friends, sworn-brothers of the Coast, frequently were seen arm in arm, staggering on and giving one another a strange mutual support. The affection between

them seemed to serve instead of food, to some degree.

BUT Henry Morgan retained the strength of his idea, and Kildare, though he was a bundle of wires and bones, was sustained by his purpose and his goal.

He it was, with the advance guard, that came on a plantation which was apparently as deserted and clean-swept as any they had hitherto encountered on the march, but when the doors of a great barn were beaten open, out flooded a yellow tide of corn dried and glistening on the cob. Food for an army!

Those nearer the door acted in strange ways. Some of them, ordered by Kildare, with a mouth full of food obediently started to pitch the cobs out to a distance so that the rest of the running army could get to it.

Others fell down and began to cram their throats with the dry stuff until one of them choked and died on the spot. And Kildare saw one starved wretch on his knees, throwing up the corn, bathing his body in the joy of it, as it were, and blubbing and laughing with delight.

But they were saved. They had enough to eat and quantities to carry away. For the first time the city of Panama had reason to be concerned with this strange march of ragamuffins across the Isthmus on an impossible quest.

CHAPTER XIX.

PANAMA—AT LAST!

BEYOND that barn which was their salvation, they encountered an Indian ambushade—but without Indians inside it. The red men were

on the farther side of the river, dancing and yelling and brandishing their bows and arrows in intervals of the trees.

A score of buccaneers plunged in at once to get across the river and capture a few of the Indians for what information might be tormented out of them, but five men were shot until they bristled with arrows, and their dead bodies floated down the stream into the mouths of the alligators, while the triumphant Indians started yelling in Spanish: "*Hai, dogs! Hai! Go out on the savannah! Go out on the savannah! See what waits for you there!*"

What waited there, the buccaneers wondered? A mighty armed force of the Spaniards ready to sweep the Morgan-men to death?

It was now time to prepare. They rested at the end of the sixth day, slept as well as they could with their bellies complaining of the quantities of dried corn which had been chewed down, and with fifty great fires smoking in the woods to keep away the damnation of the mosquitoes.

On the seventh day they furbished their swords, cleaned the firearms, looked to the dryness of the powder, and then crossed the river and advanced until they saw before them one of the fairest sights that ever had blessed the eyes of a starving pirate—a whole trim little town with smoke rising from it. And why should there be fire in such a torrid climate unless cookery was going on?

Alas, as they ran into the town on the double, they discovered that the place had been swept clear of all provisions, and the smoke rose from the burning houses, for the Spaniards had fired the entire village, except the stone store-houses and stables of the King of Spain.

After heavenly expectation, nothing came to their stomachs except some starving dogs and cats in the streets, which were instantly butchered and devoured.

It was from this place that Morgan sent the boats down stream to rejoin those which waited under guard at Cedro Bueno; only one periagua he retained and hid to act as a messenger boat later on, in time of need. At the town of Venta Cruz, also, a party wandering for provisions outside of the town was surprised by a number of Spaniards and Indians, and one of the buccaneers captured and carried off. He would be tortured until he gave information; then he would be tortured again until he died. Perhaps the generous Spaniards would hand him over to the Indians, so that they might indulge themselves in the giving of the last rites of agony.

On the eighth day they found a road from Venta Cruz and took it, many of the men still very sick but able to walk. The road was rough with cobblestones, but to men used to wearying their arms at the oars or to struggling through forest slush the road was a heavenly delight. Here occurred a very strange thing, for brutes as they were, the buccaneers, not one of them stepped into or crushed a stream of green leaf-bits which was flowing out of the forest on one side, across the road, and into the forest on the other side. These were an army of the leaf-cutting ants which, said Robert the Mosquito, bury the leaves under the ground for the sake of the fungus which will grow on them, and on which they afterwards feed. That green, living stream, each ant carrying a portion of leaf far larger than his own body, flowed uninterrupted straight across

the path of the marching men, as though even the buccaneers could sympathize with labors which were greater than their own!

Indians now began to shoot arrows at them from covert but only a few men were slightly wounded. Finally the redmen gained the courage to stand their ground in a covert of trees, rallying strongly about a cacique. But this was easy game for the buccaneers. They charged with a wild joy, glad to have for the first time a chance to get their hands on human enemies. They burst in among the redmen, killed the chief, and scattered the rest like smoke.

AND now, still going downhill towards the South Sea, they left the forest and had before them a pleasant country, green, checkered with farms, and in a little valley between two ridges of hills they camped for the night. It was a wretched encampment, with a dark smother of rain constantly falling, but not a man murmured. The prize they had come for so far was not long removed from them now!

And on the morning of the ninth day they marched in a mass across the next ridge and there saw before them a landscape worthy of heaven, they thought.

And at the foot of the hills appeared some Spanish cavalry with morions and breastplates on fire in the slant morning light. They scattered and rode off slowly, firing a few vain, distant shots from their heavy carbines.

Beyond, lay the open, green savannah where the Indians had assured them they would find something worth seeing. But beyond the green plain lay the cloudy smoke of the town of Panama, beyond that the deep blue of the

Pacific, and in the sea—how tiny it seemed in the distance!—a tall ship under a white cloud of sail.

And southward lay the Andes, clearly seen, whitening their tops in the sky, like spear-heads gilded with silver light. And on the plain below them—better than all the beauty which greeted the spirit and the eye, they saw a scattering of grazing cattle!

They were rounded up, butchered; fires smoked, burned, were almost put out under the mass of raw flesh which the pirates approached to the flames. Men were seen with blood dripping down their faces, spilling on their clothes as they tore with savage teeth at half-roasted pieces of beef.

Corn? That had been horse food, but this was the food for men! They feasted; they rested; they feasted again; and then got up after a long noonday rest and went staggering forward, laughing, drunk with content, forgetful of all the danger and the gain that might lie before them, rather thinking back to the banquet on roasted flesh as the greatest moment of their lives.

So it was late in the day, almost the end of it, when a thin, dark spearhead grew up out of the savannah in front of Kildare and the vanguard. His eyes could not discern its nature, at first, but after a moment he understood. It was the first, the tallest spire of Panama.

They topped the next rolling piece of ground and saw before them all the wide walls, the lights of Panama beginning to gleam through the twilight.

There was no riot of joy. The men laughed, and clapped one another on the shoulder. A thousand such proud cities turned to spoil, a mule load of gold for every man in the army, would have seemed unimportant compared

with that last meal of roasted flesh which was inside them, already sending strength into their bodies and a sort of foggy joy into their brains.

CHAPTER XX.

KILDARE'S PLANS.

BEFORE the sun had set on this day, Kildare was talking with Henry Morgan, whom he found in very good spirits now that the forthcoming decisive battle was not far off.

Morgan said, merely: "Their scouts tell them that we're half starved, ragged, weak, exhausted. They're going to come out with every man from the town who's equipped with guns and they're going to try to sweep us off the field at a charge. If we beat them, Tranquillo, we'll run with them all the way inside Panama; and beat them we shall because we have to. In the meantime, if you have a hundred men, get them and bring them to me."

"When you show yourself on the field tomorrow," said Kildare, "suppose that armed ship sailed into Panama harbor and made an attack? How many of the Spaniards opposite you would be unsteadied if they heard guns and yells and alarm bells beating from the harbor side of the town?"

Here Jimmy Green, the ape, found something on the ragged sleeve of Kildare that attracted his attention. He shambled over on all fours and reached out his black paw. Kildare took the paw in his hand. "Jimmy Green congratulates me on the idea," said Kildare.

At this Morgan laughed. "You have the brain for an admiral," he declared. "Where will you find your ship?"

"They will come back continually, I think, to a certain lagoon that I know of down the coast below the city."

"Why will they make that their harbor if the Spaniards might trace them to the place—aye, and perhaps capture them because they keep coming back to the same place like rabbits to a warren?"

"I left them there," said Kildare. "They will keep hoping to find me there again."

Morgan hesitated. "Well," he said, "if I let you go, I think that I'm giving up a part of my good luck. But go to try your chance."

"There were three horses, saddled and all, captured to-day on the savannah," said Kildare.

"We won't eat them while we have beef," said Morgan.

"Give me two of them, one for myself and one for Luis."

Morgan scowled. He was not a man to give anything away easily. But eventually he shrugged his shoulders. "Take the horses and go your way, Tranquillo," he said. He scratched the tuft of whiskers between his lower lip and chin. Jimmy Green hopped up and sat on his master's shoulder and made odd faces at the Englishman. "Go, and take your luck with you," continued Morgan. "I think that I'll see you in Panama before many days—maybe we'll meet over brandy; maybe we'll meet in a Spanish torture chamber."

Far through the night rode Kildare and Luis, the Mosquito Indian, until Luis was riding first on one leg and then on the next, because a great deal of his skin had been chafed away. He made no complaint, however, as they struck from the savannah into woods, and from the woods came out

by the waters of a lagoon where clear moonlight turned the sea to black and silver.

And there—not drawn up on the beach but moored with light cables in the shallow of the water, its bows pointing out to the bay, lay the good galley, the Santa Magdalena. Two or three fires smoked faintly along the beach with forms lying asleep near them—always on the lee side of the fires, so that the smudge might keep the mosquitoes off. But what pleased Kildare on seeing the Santa Magdalena, almost unbelievably returned to that trusting place, what pleased him almost as much as seeing the ship and the crew was the sight of dark forms walking on sentry go along the beach and in the ship itself. That would be the contriving of Louis d'Or, of course.

A moment later there was a loud shout and a musket exploded, the bullet singing a harsh high note not far from the head of Kildare himself.

The whole camp sprang up, with a glimmering bit of steel in the hand of every man. Even as Kildare shouted to identify himself, he could see some of the big, dusky forms of the negroes nearest at hand with their arms drawn back at full strain and their long-headed spears ready for the cast.

Five seconds later he was gripping the hands of Padraic More and the Frenchman. The fires were lighted. Meat began to hiss on the flames. Meat of many kinds—of watee, and agouti, and fresh pork, and venison. Cocoa was brewing, bread was being broken, wine and brandy produced, cases of bottles of delicate liquors gleamed in fire-shine and moonlight, and a wide, wild voice of rejoicing went ringing up from the beach and echoing across the flat silver waters of the lagoon.

KILDARE stopped that outcry and that festival with brief words.

"All my friends," he said, "we can't drink tonight and fight tomorrow, and tomorrow morning we are going to sail into Panama harbor and attack the forts."

"We?" said Captain Bartholomew, lisping with his toothless gums. "We attack the forts of Panama—and then we tackle her thirty thousand people, I suppose?"

But Louis d'Or said: "Morgan has come, I suppose? Is that it, Tranquillo? We've had some word about him from the last two or three little boats we captured coming out of Panama!"

Kildare looked at his friends, and then over the sleek ribs of the negroes, who grinned and nodded whenever they felt his eyes on them. Suddenly he felt like a starved cat. "You've had a fat time of it," he said.

"Never a day without rowing," said Louis d'Or, with a smile. "And sometimes hardly a day without a prize of one sort or another. The Spaniards have come to know us, Tranquillo. They've hunted the seas for us with whole flotillas; but the weather has been good. In a fair wind we sail away from them; in a calm, we row away. We've led charmed lives—but so have you, or you would never have managed to lead Henry Morgan by the nose across the Isthmus of Darien for the sake of setting your lady free. What did you do to manage that?"

"Told some truth and a good many lies," said Kildare. "And Morgan is waiting with a thousand men on the savannah outside of Panama. They'll fight the battle tomorrow."

"A thousand men? Tranquillo, the Spaniards will eat them! They have

Indians enough, alone, to fill the air with arrows and spit every one of Morgan's men ten times over!"

"Perhaps. But not one of Morgan's men will die without making a fight of it. And suppose, in the middle of the fight in the savannah, that guns are heard in the harbor, and the alarm begins to go yelling up from the town?—Every fighting man among the Spaniards has a family or a bit of treasure in the town. They'll begin to look over their shoulders before long—and trust Morgan then to make them run, aye, and to come tumbling into the town at their heels! You've lived on the fat, Louis d'Or. Now we'll do a little fighting, and afterwards you can go home and buy the king's peace in France as you please. Mark—when we sail into the harbor we'll find that it's been stripped of every soldier to fight on the landward side. Think of the booty there along the quay?"

THAT thought was enough to end all argument; and not half an hour later the drinking had ended, the negroes were stretched murmuring together around the fires, Kildare had finished in a very brief sketch the account of his adventures, and now as he stretched himself out in his turn on the sand, Luis the Indian came and squatted for a moment at his side.

"There are more than a hundred of them gathered here, father," he said.

"Aye, more than a hundred," murmured Kildare, sleepily.

"And ten of your hundreds more waiting on the savannah to fight tomorrow."

"That is true."

"And all of this," said Luis the Indian, "is because one man wants one woman."

"I can't tell, Luis. It's a hunger they give us; like the hunger for sun when the sky is raining, and the hunger for shade when the sun is burning."

"True," said Luis. "Then there must be a devil in a woman."

CHAPTER XXI.

UNDER FIRE.

IN the dawn of the next morning, there was hardly enough wind to wipe the oily look from the face of the sea. And with furled sails and the long yards pointing fore and aft, the Santa Magdalena sped out to sea and sent the water singing down her long sides. She went with a will,

Those gaunt, round-backed negroes of the other days had been able to make the galley jump through the waves with the whip to inspire them, but the full-flowing muscles and the happy spirits of these re-made oarsmen gave them a doubled power.

They sang as they worked, always one voice chanting a time for the others to follow, while Padraic More sat under the awning and laughed and beat out the rhythm with the gavel, and the great, red mouths of the negroes grinned back at him.

The foul odor had left the ship—unless it were for a slightly sour smell such as comes from wood that has been impregnated with wine. And the entire air of the very galley itself seemed to have altered. The rigging was more trim and taut, kept as it was by the skilful direction of that hardy seaman, Bartholomew.

There was no clattering of marines. The English were the sailors assisted by a few picked negroes. But the negroes themselves were the marines, and very proud of them was Captain Louis

d'Or as he stood on the poop and explained to Kildare what had been done.

Louis d'Or was in truth a figure of gold, now, for he had found in one prize a splendid suit of yellow velvet, complete from hat to shoes, and he shone like metal in the sun, with his hair a brighter sheen than the silk of the cloth.

From the first they had had plenty of muskets and carbines. And from the prizes they made they had taken more until every oarsman in the galley had a good gun under his bench, together with at least a pair of those terrible spears with cutlasses for lance-heads. And each negro was girt with a belt from which swung an excellent machete.

Having the weapons was only a small part of the game, and Louis d'Or, the Irishman, and Bartholomew had encouraged the negroes constantly to practice with the muskets. For that matter, they had more powder and lead than they could use, and the result of establishing a few prizes and distributing a bit of instruction and praise was that every one of the blacks had become a tolerable marksman; some were truly excellent, though none of them had quite that deadly perfection which the buccaneers were apt to possess.

However, they had taken over a hundred desperate slaves and turned them into five score cheerful, reckless fighting men. Though in a pinch, said Louis d'Or, the negroes were apt to trust more to the lances than to the muskets.

"And perhaps they ought to," said the Frenchman, "for I've seen them stand off ten paces and then drive the head of the spear through an inch plank!"

So they were talking, very gaily, as though they had not decided to run straight into the lion's mouth on this

day. They raised the smoke of Panama town; they saw the gleam of the highest steeple, and now, well out to sea, they saw a huge ship under a great white head of sail.

Louis d'Or turned instantly towards it. There was no need to guess what was in it. Such a ship of such a size would not have left Panama on an idle errand, and they could be sure that half the treasure of the city had been packed on board before it left the quay.

In the slight wind they saw the great boat turning slowly to cover them with its broadside.

And what a broadside! Through the open ports looked the huge, ring-mouthed and reinforced muzzles of twenty-five great guns!

"She's the Santo Spirito!" cried the Irishman, though he kept the rhythm duly with his gavel. "See the blacks laugh! God knows they'd wear other faces if they knew what's on that ship! Four hundred Spaniards or my name is not More! Four hundred of the king's men, and seven hundred tons, and sixty guns—and—"

"Drake would have done the trick with three pinnaces and a hundred men on board, with nothing better than muskets to pick off the helmsmen and the gunners," said Kildare. "Why can't we do the same trick with a race-horse like this under us and some big guns of our own to do a little barking and biting? Bring up under her starboard quarter, Louis d'Or! The wind fails her and she sits still like a duck in thick mud. She can't yaw as fast as we can shift!"

THE great Santo Spirito, in fact, was now fixed in place, with the sails hanging in folds like the cheeks of old women, as the lithe, swift-running galley was maneuvering

in a wide arc to come up behind her. Those heavy guns would be of little use unless trained directly on the enemy, and if the galley came in just angling from the corner of the stern, it would be hard for a single broadside gun to strike at her, and even the five huge stern-chasers would find it hard to strike their mark.

Right on this correct angle, Louis d'Or steered the galley. As they came up, they could see a frenzy of preparation on the Spaniard. He was big enough to laugh at such an antagonist, but not in such a deadness of the air that he could not maneuver. Into his five big fighting tops, high on the masts and at the end of the reaching bowsprit, he sent a crowd of men. On the decks, the crew were bringing aft some of the lighter deck guns. But it was no part of the purpose of the Santa Magdalena to venture up in close range. She would steal close and try to do what damage she could before a gust of wind enabled the monster to swing about and, with a single broadside, blow the frail galley from the face of the sea.

Sternchasers, all five of them, roared from the Santo Spirito. The heavy shot plunged into the sea on the lee of the galley. The rearmost starboard guns of the Spaniard bellowed smoke and lead; but these shots went well to the right of the galley.

Even the negroes understood the meaning of this and set up a frantic yelling of delight. They could understand that they had stolen up exactly into the blind spot of the eye of the great ship.

The Spanish crew knew the same thing and a long howling of dismay came rolling over the water. There followed a great discharge of musketry and a barking of deck guns that cur-

tained the lofty stern of the ship in white fog, and as this drifted very gradually away, the gilded carvings which ran and writhed from the water line to the top of the poop were visible again.

"Now!" said Kildare. "Now let him have it. The stern first, Bartholomew! Knock out that eye of him entirely and we'll have a blind spot to dodge into and stay in: if the wind brings him a bit of life!"

Bartholomew, a famous gunner, handled the aiming of the galley's largest gun; the two others, pointing forward, were aimed by the Irishman and Louis d'Or. They began a steady fire.

To Louis d'Or was assigned the task of hitting the mizzen mast and bringing it down if possible, because a ship without its rearmost mast answers the helm very clumsily. The Irishman, with Bartholomew, kept plunging shot into the towering gun galleries at the stern of the Spaniard.

A few rounds steadied their aim. The length of the galley gave them a very steady shooting platform. The sea was still. And now every great shot was plunging into the stern of the Spaniard.

They dismounted three of the five great guns at once. Every shot knocked up a cloud of splinters and brought fresh shouts of dismay from the Santo Spirito's crew. The galley was fixed, for the moment, in a perfect safety, like a small hawk at a height above an eagle's head, able to pounce when it would.

The fourth stern-chaser of the Spaniard was knocked over, and at that moment, as though greeting the new wound received, the crew of the Spaniard began a tumultuous cheering. Kildare, looking over the side, saw the reason.

In the near distance, the southern sea

was darkening, and the darkness ran rapidly towards them. A wind was coming. Already they were swinging the yards, the great, heavy, creaking yards of the Santo Spirito to catch the breeze when it arrived.

Already the rudder was turning with the pull of its chains. The first weight of the wind would now turn the huge ship to the starboard and bring his whole starboard battery, gun by gun, to bear on the galley—and a single shot, taking proper effect, might rip the galley open from end to end and sink it on the spot.

KILDARE ran forward into the smoke which rose in pungent clouds about the guns of the Santa Magdalena. He shouted at the ear of Bartholomew: "A wind coming. We're lost unless I can keep straight in the rear of the Santo Spirito. We're lost even if I put the galley there, unless you can manage to knock over the last of the stern-chasers!"

A streak of powder-black, greasy as paint, was struck diagonally across the face of Bartholomew and made him look like a ghost, and a hellish one. He waved a hand of understanding at Kildare and bent to the sighting of the gun again.

Kildare cried to Louis d'Or: "Center the mizzen-mast again, Louis. Bring her down—or God help us! The wind is coming."

"I've hit the damned mast," said the Frenchman. "I'll hit it again—but it's like whittling with a small knife at a great tree!"

Kildare ran back to his place in the stern and through his cupped hands shouted the order. At once the oars were in motion. The blacks, serenely confident, were still laughing to one another; what would happen to their

morale if some solid shot began to plunge among them?

In the meantime, he swerved the galley right in behind the Spaniard, and at the same time the wind filled the sails of the big ship with an audible succession of booming noises. It leaned. The hull shook.

The water quivered along the edge of the moving hull, and now she began to answer her head and swing gradually to the starboard in the midst of a frantic pandemonium of joy; every man on the Spaniard seemed to have ten tongues of brass at that moment.

The rearmost gun of the starboard broadside boomed. The big shot whirred visibly through the air and streaked just past the right-hand gunwale of the galley. Kildare turned the galley still more. If he could maneuver well enough he might still avoid the fatal danger of the whole broadside and there remained only the single great stern-chaser.

Here, suddenly, it spoke. Even before the sound dented against the cars of Kildare, a crackling ruin swept through the larboard benches of the Santa Magdalena. The sweeps snapped off like straws, the benches were broken; a hideous spray of blood rose in a flying cloud and dashed into the face of Kildare.

Ten of the blacks were down; the rest were in a howling confusion as Kildare himself leaped down among the broken benches and seized the handle of an unbroken sweep.

"Give way! Give way!" he roared.

And as he shouted, looking up he could see through the great porthole where the mouth of the stern-chaser issued, the Spaniards in a dancing and screaming joy.

Moreover, as the galley rowed in, it of necessity had come much closer to

the big ship, and now the cloud of men in the fighting top of the mizzen mast opened with a rapid musketry.

Here was the test of fire for the black men. Kildare, with a dizzy sense that he and all the rest were wavering on the sharp edge of destruction, was amazed to hear the shouting of the blacks turn from dismay to rage.

They leaped at the remaining sweeps on the port side. They stood on the mangled bodies of their kindred and strained at the oars as though they were striving to break them. But further ruin came.

THAT moment of delay had allowed the yawing Spaniard to swing still further around, and that rearmost pair of guns on the starboard battery spoke again. One shot fairly missed. The other snapped off the galley's mast and flung it with its confusion of rigging over the side.

Could they drag that weight forward and creep into the comparative safety of the stern of the Santo Spirito?

Slowly they pushed through the water, and rapidly the great ship was gathering way, swinging, coming to life like a sleeping lion to strike away a rabble of mongrel dogs.

Bartholomew, stripped to the waist, powder-blackened, would have to tell a part of the tale. He told his half that instant, for the round shot from his big gun smashed full into the muzzle of the last of the five stern-chasers. That great-mouthed token of ruin was flung from its carriage and the laughing, dancing gun-crew disappeared in the interior darkness. At the same moment the pressure of the wind leaned like a shoulder of a giant against the wounded mizzen mast of the Santo Spirito and brought it down with a long, rending crash. The men in the fighting top,

like a handful of small shot, were flung afar into the sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

RETREAT.

FAR outside Panama on the green savannah the Spaniards were maintaining their battle furiously but not very well. They had plenty of men and plenty of guns and if they could have fought hand-to-hand, the buccaneers could not have endured those numbers very long. But getting to close quarters was the difficulty. The cavalry kept up their charging until nearly all of them were dropped dead on the savannah, and they included most of the blue-blooded gentry of the city. Now crowds of the riderless horses were roving about the plain, caught by the buccaneers whenever possible so that the pursuit might be keen or retreat made easy if the time came for it.

The cavalry being beaten down at a distance, the Spanish foot found an equal trouble in getting forward, because holes appeared in their long line from the terrible, unfailling musket fire of the pirates, and as soon as one hole was closed, another appeared.

The Spanish governor had one last resort which he now applied. He had been a sick man for many days, and during the long, wakeful nights since he had known that the buccaneers were crossing the isthmus of Darien, he had evolved a brilliancy that could be murderously effective in the time of battle.

There were great droves of cattle scattered over the savannah and by degrees the governor had brought them up closer and closer to the city of Panama, so that the bellowing kept the air slightly atremble in Panama day

and night, like a murmuring of distant thunder. As the battle began, these herds were driven in from east and west, the bulls crowded towards the front, the cows and calves to the rear, two huge, dark-fronted armies with the long, polished horns shining like weapons, like hordes of brandished swords. A throng of quick-footed Indians and negroes manuevered the herds, pushing them forward, and at last getting them into a dead run. The two wings came thundering in on the flanks of the buccaneers while the Spanish line, which seemed in danger of being involved in the same dilemma, hastily drew back a little and began to shout with a sudden enthusiasm in this unlucky battle.

Admiral Henry Morgan proved himself more than a common pirate then. Everywhere, he could see his men wincing from what looked like certain death. A good number of them had already mounted the captured horses, and in a moment they would be apt to try to save their lives by flight.

The battle hung on a thread; but Morgan, turning his voice to a harsh thunder that was heard up and down the line, bade the flanks form facing outwards to meet the droves and then to hold fire until the herds were at a short distance. He himself would give the order to fire. And he ran off into the men of the left flank to take his stand on the site of the most dangerous ground.

It was hard to persuade his men to hold their fire. They were apt to use their guns when and where they pleased, once a fight had begun, and they could hear their fellows on the right flank already opening, in spite of the orders which Morgan had given.

But here Henry Morgan in person raged up and down, sword in hand, with the white-bearded ape, Jimmy

Green, perched on his shoulder. The sight of Jimmy Green squealing and dancing on the shoulder of his master while bullets were flying all around had had a wonderful effect in steadying the nerves of the buccaneers, and now they obediently held their fire.

The black-fronted herd of bulls rushed on very close until the leaders had dropped their heads and begun the final charge, as though they expected the next moment to have their horns in human flesh. Then Morgan gave the word with a great shout which the beating and the clashing of the myriad hoofs could only partially drown. The whole front of the flanking line burst into flashes of fire, and a simultaneous roar as the volley was poured in.

The buccaneers, their muskets empty, began to dance and screech and wave their arms and brandish their swords. In the meantime, the whole front of the charging herd went down, the ranks immediately behind tumbling headlong over the killed leaders. Those behind would sooner have charged into a raging fire than into the insane human tumult before them. Right and left the great herd split, like a stream of dark water on a rock, and roared harmlessly away.

THAT was not all. From the right flank came yells of dismay.

And Henry Morgan, looking back, saw that all his plans were about to be ruined; for though the scattering fire of the buccaneers on that side had killed many of the bees and turned others to the side, a considerable number broke through and rushed down the line.

Several of the pirates were trampled to death. The others along the line, thrown into a confusion, leaped here and there and fired for their lives.

It was a thinned herd that reached the center of the line and there bore down and ripped to tatters the English standard which Morgan had been careful to raise. But here, as though they had accomplished their purpose and realized that no more could be done, they turned and scattered harmlessly across the plain.

Much damage had been done, however. The entire buccaneer line was in confused disorder, weakened by the withdrawal of men to the flanking parties and, moreover, full of great gaps across the front.

The Spaniards were soldiers enough to see this. The remaining handful of cavalry and all the infantry, pushed forward very gallantly, yelling out to the English: "Stand for us, dogs! Stand, Englishmen! We are going to send you to hell before your time! Santiago! Santiago! Forward, gentlemen."

They were charging home with these gallant outcries when through the air from the direction of Panama city came a sound of heavy booming, that made many a man look up suddenly to see thunderclouds.

But there were no thunderheads in the sky. The blue of it was washed and pure and every man in the Spanish host realized, suddenly and with a deadly coldness about the heart, that the noise was that of guns firing in the harbor.

There was a rear attack, then?

They could have guessed from the first that even a madman like the desperate Henry Morgan never would have delivered a frontal assault against an enemy so many times his strength except that he had ships to take the city from the rear.

The English, badly exhausted by the fighting, almost ready to run, marked that wavering among the Spaniards

where every man had a family or a treasure to think of and who could not help picturing the rape and ruin of the city at his back.

Henry Morgan himself was the first to shout out, when he heard the guns: "Tranquillo! Tranquillo! He is in the city with five hundred men! The brave Tranquillo! He takes Panama behind your backs, while you wait out here like a lot of lazy dogs! Forward! Smash them, boys, before Tranquillo's hungry rats find all the good bits in the city. Forward! Panama is ours! Tranquillo is eating the heart of the city now!"

The whole army, possessed by the same idea as the noise of the cannon became greater and greater, forgot their own danger and only were eager to get at the rich loot of the city. As the Spanish heart died at the sound of the cannon in the harbor, that of the buccaneers rose suddenly.

And they began to charge as the Spaniards were coming to an uncertain stand.

That ended the doubt about the battle. The buccaneers came in refreshed with confidence and forgetting their two hundred dead and all their wounds.

The Spaniards, divided between two ideas, could do nothing. At the first weight of the onset they gave way and crumbled in long, streaming lines towards Panama!

Henry Morgan followed. There were batteries to be taken and he had a mind to have them at once, entering on the heels of the Spaniards. Besides, there were many horses, now, to give wings to a big percentage of his host—horses, and mules which had been brought out as beasts of burden. Any back, any saddle would suit a buccaneer!

THE galley was well behind the Spaniard, now, and this was indeed a blind spot and a broad one, for not a single gun other than a musket could now bear aft from the big ship. However, the battle was not over. The wind blew fresh. And the Santo Spirito had gathered such way that she had become very maneuverable, as the wreckage of the mizzen was cut away and allowed to drift free.

The wreckage of the foremast of the galley, on the other hand, was still clinging to her, though the machetes, keen as knives and heavy as axes, were working hard and fast to chop the cordage clean away.

And yonder was Louis d'Or, having done his duty so very well by the mizzen of the Spaniard, taking order about clearing of the wreck, while Bartholomew and the Irishman with a constant dint put one round shot after another through the stern ports of the Spaniard. Raking shots were all of these, which did not simply penetrate the ship from side to side, but ranged long fore and aft, caroming from one obstacle to dash into another.

Kildare saw the red spout out, boldly, from the scuppers of the stricken ship, or else run leaking down the tall sides of it. It was not battle on board her, for this moment, but sheer massacre. It was not imagining that made him see, time and again, the terrible red sheen of sprays of blood where the solid shot dashed whole groups of men to death.

But do as they would, still the clinging wreckage from the mast that was overboard held the galley crank and slow while the fair wind bowled the Spaniard along and turned him again to the starboard, he having by this time turned in such a circle that he was fairly pointed back again for Panama. And

very much most of those aboard him must have wished to be ashore again!

Here, however, he had veered so that, one by one, every gun on the starboard broadside bore on the galley.

There was not a shot fired. Kildare felt that he understood. The wise captain, saving patiently his wrath and his pain, now had determined to hold his fire until all a broadside bore on the enemy and then, in one blood-red instant, to blow him to a fiery hell.

And still the volley did not come!

Only then was the wreckage of the galley's mast cleared away and the good light ship sped into the water again—to get that priceless advantage point astern of the galleon—with sweeping strokes of the oars, with Kildare shouting loudly to give the rhythm for the sway and catch of the sweeps.

And he realized, as the galley roused herself, what had happened. There was no fire from the starboard guns. There would be no fire from them for some moments.

The frightful storm of shot which had swept again and again the lower gundecks of the Spaniard had driven the guncrews up to the top deck and the guns, the great, fatal guns which looked with wide eyes on the pirate, were not served!

That was how Kildare ran his boat from under the verge of death and back, safely, without a cannon fired, under the stern of the Spaniard.

There were not even muskets playing, now, from the great ship, except from the two fighting tops of the mainmast, and Captain Bartholomew most wisely and sufficingly took care of these; for he loaded his great gun, which already had won the battle for the buccaneers, clean to the muzzle with musket balls, aimed it nicely, and sent such a cloud of death on the men in the

fighting tops that half of them were gone in an instant, and the rest slid down stays or clambered down the shrouds to escape from another terrible visitation.

The battle, clearly, was now over. The voice of agony that rang unceasingly from the Spaniard told that the work had been done. It only needed that the galley should run aboard the galleon and probably the shock of a hand-to-hand attack would end the matter, no matter what odds of men still remained aboard the Santo Spirit.

However, another agency here was taking a blind hand, and that was the freshening wind. No longer striving to use it to maneuver so as to bring fresh broadsides to bear on the pirates, the Spaniards were running as fast as they could, with all sails spread on the fore and mainmasts, towards the shelter of Panama harbor.

Would that be a shelter, after all?

Far away, dim and small with distance but unmistakable, the sound of guns blew on the wind from the landward side of Panama. What was happening there?

IF the Spaniards on the shore, hearing the guns of the sea-battle, shrank away, Morgan certainly would scatter them. But if the Spaniards used their numbers to win, then the galley was running in the jaws of death by entering the range of the forts of the bay.

This Louis d'Or—his golden clothes badly streaked and stained with fresh blood—came running aft to shout to Kildare. But Kildare, grinning till the smile pulled painfully at his face, answered: "We are running on a high tide. If it takes us to hell, what does that matter? Have you forgotten, Louis? Have you forgotten the treas-

ure of Tranquillo, and the church of San Francisco?"

"No," said the Frenchman, "no more than you have forgotten that Spanish girl of yours."

"Brother," said Kildare, "she only wears a Spanish name. Her soul is like her complexion—English, all English!"

Then he added: "Make on! Close on them, friends! Forward before she reaches the dock. There is gold on her. Gold and silver. We are rich men!"

The negroes had cast their dead men overboard, and standing where their broken, red-stained benches cluttered the places, they sprang on the oars and made the prow of the galley rise with the force of their rowing.

So, rapidly, the galley closed on the Santo Spirito, but the wind was strong enough to speed the Spaniard into the bay and close up towards the quay. Now the English were within the range of the forts, yet no gun fired.

Kildare laughed: "They are all out there on the savannah! Every man of them has left the town to fight in the field! And what fighting! Do you hear, Louis d'Or?"

It was unmistakable.

Kildare and his friends were not able to see that picture of flight, but they could make out, very well, a thin, distant sound, no louder than the singing of one bird near at hand, and that sound was made up of human voices and rolled constantly closer and closer to the landward walls of Panama.

There was only one meaning for it. The Spaniards were in swift retreat, and if they retreated before such devils as those of Henry Morgan, they were lost! And Panama would be lost with them.

Perhaps the Spaniards on the Santo Spirito understood the distant noises and the far approach of gunfire in the

same way. This, at least, is the truth. That when the great ship came close to the quay, the main course was thrown suddenly aback, and the ship checked her way and glided with a wonderful smoothness up towards the edge of the quay.

The moment she was near, men began to leap from the decks. Some fell short, struck the water, and were crushed to death as the rounded side of the galleon bumped against the quay. But the majority leaped safely to the quay and then fled with their lives, and no honor.

This was not true of all. There were always among the Spaniards of the New World a certain few who had not fallen entirely from the high estate of the old Castillian blood, men like those who made the greatest infantry in the world under the command of the great Parma and others, men whose blood had not been weakened by tropic weather and the gold hunger. And there were a certain number on board the Santo Spirito who had not the slightest intention of abandoning the great ship before she was sunk under them.

Among these was their calm commander, a hero, a gentleman, a pure soul of valor and gentleness who had wasted his own fortune instead of finding one, he was so apt to give gifts of medicine and food to the poor Indians he found.

This was Francisco Mores, now rather old, rather bent, but very young at heart and ever ready to die. Francisco Mores rallied all who would follow him and led them aft onto the high poop of the galleon where he prepared to beat off the attack of the pirates.

Poor Francisco Mores!

But how could he know that there would be on board the galley a subtle

and ready serpent like Ivor Kildare, who would not even try, like most of his shipmates, to storm the lofty wall of the Santo Spirito but instead chose to slip with a few followers through the broken timbers, the batters, yawning portholes at the stern of the galleon, and so to make their way into the intimate vitals of the ship?

IT was a frightful journey, one made as though into an underworld.

Dead men—and more dead fragments—were here and there to be stumbled over, and the big beams that crossed the decks above were spattered with brain and with blood, and most of the cannon of the starboard battery tumbled from their carriages and were now rolling with a soft thunder back and forth over the planks.

But Kildare led his men upwards from the lower decks. They reached a cabin where bottles of wine rolled on the floor, and where by some freak of chance a jewel casket was open on the table of the cabin, a great casket with little labels attached to rings, to necklaces, to great, green and red-glowing pendants. The negroes who followed Kildare as though he were their king paid no heed to this display of cold fire. Kildare himself picked up a handful of the treasures of the ladies of Panama which had been labelled and entrusted to the keeping of the brave Don Francisco. He dropped those brilliants into his pocket and then climbed to the top-deck.

There were a score of the negroes behind Kildare when he came to the top-deck. They did not have to be shown the enemy or ordered forward. They ran like hungry animals up the blood-dripping decks towards the Spaniards on the poop of the Santo Spirito. There the long-bladed spears did the work

thoroughly, quickly. Every Spaniard went down; every Spaniard who went down died instantly; and the remaining tide from the galley now swept up and gained the deck of the galleon.

They knew the state of the ship at once. It was Bartholomew himself who came up in a frenzy of joy and announced that whole tons and masses of silver were stored in the hold. He wanted to sail the galleon instantly out of the harbor and make home with it around the Horn.

Louis d'Or said: "Stay here with the ship. Get the sails trimmed. More and Kildare and I have a little trip to make on shore. But get the ship away from the quay and ready to stand out to sea—because if Morgan's men find her, they'll have everything that's inside her skin in no time at all!"

To Bartholomew it seemed an unspeakable madness to venture into the town and mix with the men of Morgan whose wild yelling could be heard on the farther rim of the city as they entered on their conquest. Padraic More enforced the same point of view.

"Tranquillo, man," he implored, "we have a ship to sail in and plenty of the Dew of Heaven on board her. We're only a step from England, now; but once we go on shore we may be a million miles from home. It's harder to get past Henry Morgan than to wade across the Pacific and the Atlantic, laid end to end. And if he smells money on us, you'll see him turn into a mad dog!"

Louis d'Or said: "There's enough to make us all rich in the hold of the Santo Spirito. Give up the thinking about the jewels in the church of San Francisco. Give up the girl, Tranquillo, too! There are a thousand prettier ones in your own England. It's only the distance from home that's made her seem so lovely."

Kildare said, while his anxious eye flashed away towards the uproar which was streaming into Panama town: "Stay here with the ship, both of you. I'll manage some way to come out to you. Stand a little way out into the harbor, and I'll get off to you in a small boat. And if not—"

He waved to them and instantly was over the side and swinging down onto the quay.

He ran with all speed straight for the house of Larretta.

Stone below and timber above, it was finished to the roof, now, and had an air of substantial wealth and comfort about it.

The front door was not locked and Kildare flung it open, shouting the name of Ines Heredia.

After the blazing brightness of the street, the house had the cool, dark loneliness of twilight, and the echoes of Kildare's shouting rang empty back to him.

He reached her room. It was empty. A long red cloak trailed from the floor to the couch. It seemed to the frantic mind of Kildare like a living thing or a ghost of life flung down in a despairing posture; then he raced down the stairs. There he found a poor wretch of a servant of the house. He could hardly speak.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Moving an Obelisk

THE most interesting feature—some say the only interesting one—about an Egyptian obelisk as found in New York, London or Paris, is the way they are transported. Actually, there is no one method; each was moved a different way. Although an obelisk weighs one hundred to three hundred tons, it is considered very bad form to cut one up. An obelisk which is not a single hunk of granite is nothing.

The one taken to France was lowered to a pile of sand under which was a sort of sled. The sand then being dug out from around the sled, it was dragged to the Nile and loaded on to a barge similarly buried in sand. At the sea it was shoved on to a raft and carefully towed to France. The London obelisk made the voyage in a specially built closed steel hull with a deck and masts. Crossing the Bay of Biscay a severe storm attacked the obelisk, but heroic seamanship kept it from foundering.

The New York obelisk represents even more startling engineering. At the place where it stood in Alexandria two steel towers were put up, one on each side. Chains were let down and the shaft was gripped just below the middle. On lifting these chains the obelisk toppled forward—too suddenly, as it happened—till its point crashed onto a tower of crossed beams. A similar tower was built under the butt, and the stone was then let down gradually by jacks. Dragged to the docks, it was shoved into the S. S. Dessouk through a large hole cut in her bow. At New York, the stone was hauled to Central Park on flat cars over a specially built railroad spur. Some of the short moves involved rolling the obelisk over cannon balls put in channel irons—the largest ball-bearings on record.

—J. W. Holden.



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



THE first nomination for a Pulitzer Prize award for Mr. Roscoe comes from

A. R. RICE

Theodore Roscoe's "War Declared!" has inspired this letter. I have just finished it, and I must say that the novel has my fullest endorsement. It's the best story published in ARGOSY this year, and it ranks with the same author's "A Grave Must Be Deep!" as two of the best that have ever appeared in your magazine.

The cream of your crop of old-timers: Merritt, Packard and Seltzer. And now we can add Roscoe's name. A lot newer than the other three, in his smooth, flowing style he is nevertheless as good as the others, and just as original and individual.

In "War Declared!" Roscoe has demonstrated that he is no flash in the pan, but on the contrary versatility personified. He kept the readers' interest at top height throughout his vivid descriptions. There was swift action and suspense; Roscoe spun out his usual superb mysteries; and—wonder of wonders!—he dallied a bit with the semi-fantastic or futuristic. One could actually see the great motorized Teuton Juggernaut sweeping all in its path, only to be laughed out of countenance and power in Helvania. What a magnificent climax that story contained!

It's my prediction that Roscoe is in line for a Pulitzer Prize award in the near future.

Yours for more of Mr. Roscoe's wonderful imaginative stuff!

Beaufort, N. C.

A MASTER of the Short Story, says

RICHARD ELRICH

(Formerly of *Artillerie Spéciale*, 373, French Army)

You have asked readers why certain stories stand out in their memories. So I've sharpened my pencil and will unburden my mind about J. D. Newsom.

Until I found Newsom again in ARGOSY a few months ago, I had been watching the stands and

cursing fat-headed editors for using imitation Foreign Legion stories instead of the real thing that Newsom produces. Knowing French army types, French slang, military tactics, and so forth, I gloat over his stories. For the same reasons, I cannot read the slop his imitators dish out.

But the main thing is his mastery of the short story. He crams action, atmosphere, background, purpose, into meaty paragraphs that stick together and come out in a fast-moving slam-bang story. Yet the picture he gives you—of the economic exploitation of backward races by adventurous military men—is further proof of his understanding of what a short story should be.

As an "*ancien engagé volontaire*" in the French army, I get a tremendous kick out of his snarling sergeants, the comic and serious messes his *Légionnaires* get themselves into in alley wine shops, as well as in combat—and all the rest of his true-to-life fiction! As long as he doesn't realize it, Newsom will remain one of the great short story writers of today!

What's his address? If he lives in New York or in Paris I'd like to drop in some day and present him with a box of cigars and a bottle of cognac and ask him how the hell he does it.

Washington, D. C.

A WORD from a Viking:

WALTER JOHANSEN

I believe you never have received a letter from a place situated as far north as this. But even in this part of the world the ARGOSY is read, and read with pleasure. How did I become an ARGOSY fan? It all began when my brother, who is living in Philadelphia, sent me ten volumes of your magazine, about a year ago. As soon as I had read them I asked for more, and now I get a packet from him once every month. I like Americans, but here in Stockholm there are very few of them. Last summer an American cruiser, the *New Orleans*, stopped here and I became acquainted with quite a few of the crew.

Best regards to the ARGOSY staff and to its readers

Stockholm, Sweden.

A SLIGHT injustice is made right by

(MISS) EILEEN McCONNELL

I recently bought an ARGOSY on my way from Portland, Oregon, by bus to Vancouver, Canada, my home, after a visit of 3 weeks' duration in the U. S. A. I always have been very British, and have regarded Americans as gangsters—lawless, etc. However, I have a better respect for them now, as well as for their stand in staying out of the League of Nations.

Also, I never before understood the rather free, flip, happy-go-lucky manner of speech which Americans possess. But after visiting them, I am anxious to go back, where almost everybody really knows how to enjoy life in a natural manner.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter. I felt I ought to get it off my chest, having done Americans an injustice.

Vancouver, B. C., Canada.

A SLIGHT difference of opinion is expressed by

F. W. COOKE

An orchid to ARGOSY, and spinach to Mrs. M. M. Waller of New York. If you were to put on a gripe contest I'd certainly bet on her to win, hands down. Her letter, published in the "Argonotes" department of the August 3rd issue was, in my opinion, the classic gripe of the century. It should be framed!

If she doesn't like the stories by the authors she speaks of I'd like to suggest to her that she refrain from reading them. There is always a great variety of stories in ARGOSY, and I think that she should be able to find among them at least one that would appeal to her.

I would like to cast my vote, not for one single

story, but for the entire magazine. There is no such thing as a *best* story in ARGOSY. They are all equally good.

Moline, Ill.

A PRAYER for continued clean proofreading from

GEORGE PARKE

I have no desire to compete for an ARGOSY subscription. I had rather be free to buy my copies at the news-stands and so be free to criticize your magazine—adversely if necessary. Nevertheless I am constrained to write you expressing my sincere pleasure at reading the story by Kevin Johnson, "The Marines Having Landed—"

To a linguist there is nothing more annoying than to read a tale which the author has sprinkled with italicized foreign words, most of which are not translated, or if so, wrongly. And to a reader who is unfamiliar with the foreign language it is more than annoying—it takes away the good taste of the tale.

Johnson has supplied a story that is true to life, thrilling and credible. Moreover it is full of Spanish, correctly translated and yet literal in wording. He makes his characters live and talk like Latins, not like Americans. I consider it the best story containing Spanish characters that I have ever read—and I have read thousands.

I also wish to pass the word along to Hapsburg Liebe that I consider he has grown into a fine story-teller—better far than when he lived in Orlando, Florida, at which time I resided at Winter Park. More power to him!

ARGOSY is pretty clear of errors lately. I hope the good proofreading will continue.

Farmhaven, Miss.

VOTES FOR 1935 COVERS

DO you want an original black and white drawing, an illustration like those which appear on the inside pages of the magazine? Save ten consecutive coupons like the one attached, fill them in with the date (or description) of the ARGOSY cover which you have liked best, and mail the coupons to The EDITOR, ARGOSY Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City. The artist will present you with a drawing. You may divide your votes among several covers, in any way you choose, or even cast all ten votes for a single cover. But the ten coupons must be consecutive.

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