10¢

Exciting Adventures

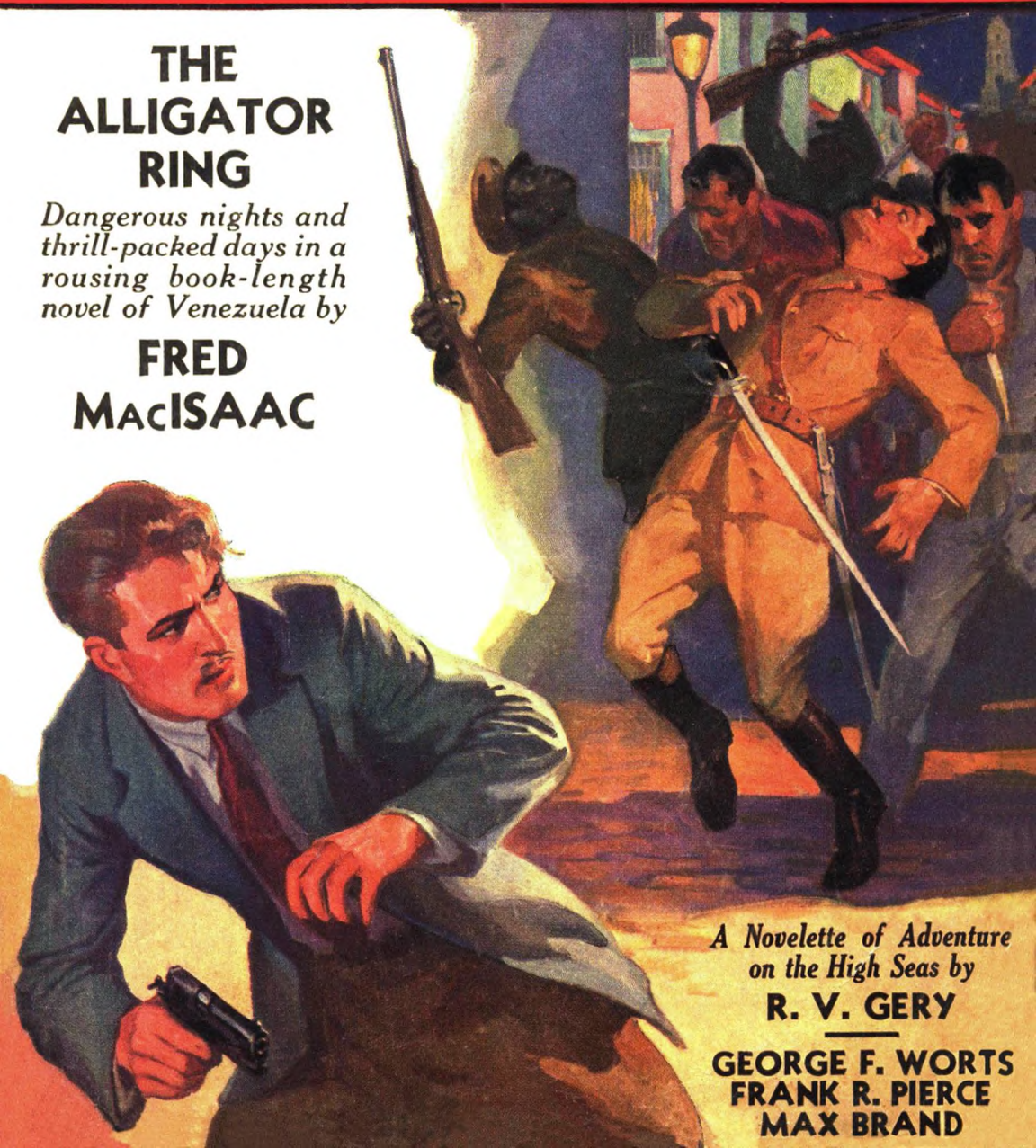
ARGOSY

MAY 30 WEEKLY

THE ALLIGATOR RING

Dangerous nights and thrill-packed days in a rousing book-length novel of Venezuela by

FRED MacISAAC



A Novelette of Adventure on the High Seas by

R. V. GERY

GEORGE F. WORTS
FRANK R. PIERCE
MAX BRAND

The makers of **MARLIN GUNS**—*famous since 1870—offer*

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK

Marlin

FIRST QUALITY, DOUBLE-EDGE

BLADES

50 for 50¢

For a limited time...

and provided the 100,000 boxes set aside for this special introductory sale are not exhausted, the makers of the famous Marlin Guns will send you direct by mail 50 first-quality blades for the unbelievable price of a penny apiece!

A SENSATIONAL OFFER—This one-cent price is made possible by performing a major operation on the spread between the *cost-to-make* and the ultimate *price-to-the-consumer*. The original patents having expired, blades must now sell close, like other everyday necessities. Marlin is merely ahead of the times.

SWEDISH SURGICAL STEEL—Fine surgeon's scalpels are made from the identical steel used in Marlin blades. Swedish ore is the purest found and consequently the easiest and most economical to refine and process. *Compare the Marlin blade with any on the market.*

SEND NO MONEY

unless you wish. Pay the postman $1 for a box of 100 blades; (50 for 50c); plus 18c. for C.O.D. and M.O. fee. WE PAY THE POSTAGE. If you prefer, send stamps, check, currency, or money order, and save the 18c. fee.

●

MOST MEN order 100 for $1 and share these good blades with their friends or family.

100 for $1

FOR DOUBLE-EDGE HOLDERS

●

Easy to re-sharpen and hone

●

GUARANTEE

If you use a box of Marlin blades and have not had the grandest shaves in all your life we will return TWICE the purchase price.

FRANK KENNA
President

MAIL COUPON TODAY BEFORE PRICE GOES UP

MARLIN FIREARMS CO., Est. 1870
2604 Willow St., New Haven, Conn.

Please send me.....(50-blade) packages of Marlin Double Edge Blades at 50 for 50c.; 100 for $1.

ENCLOSED AMOUNT

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

ASK YOUR DEALER TO SHOW YOU THE NEW MARLIN GUNS

ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

Volume 264 CONTENTS FOR MAY 30, 1936 Number 5

This magazine is on sale every Wednesday

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE
3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.
111 Rue Réaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1936, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 10 cents in United States; 15 cents in Canada. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $7.00 to Canada; $7.00 to other foreign countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Printed in U.S.A.

Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

"Shoot if you must," whispered Felice

The Alligator Ring

By FRED MacISAAC

Author of "The Wild Man of Cape Cod," "Masquerade," etc.

CHAPTER I.

FAT TURKEYS.

GUY GORMAN stood in front of the cracked mirror of his chamber in the Hotel All Saints, which was a very bad hotel indeed but the best he could afford, and tied his white tie. After that he put on his top hat. He pulled down his white vest and got into his light overcoat and grinned whimsically at himself in the cracked mirror.

Guy Gorman was an upstanding young man of twenty-five, one who could wear a tail coat with distinction. He was a fellow who had a thick thatch of light brown hair and a fine straight nose and a pleasant mouth and a pair of large, dark blue eyes. In any American city he was a type common enough, but in Caracas, the capital of Venezu-

Death haunts the trail to that emerald mine, but the fabulous prize is worth the risk of human lives

ela, he was definitely an attractive figure. The flower girls, half Indians, called endearing names to him, pretty Spanish girls gazed boldly at him from their motor cars but were too well bred to voice their admiration. He was a marked man in Caracas.

Tonight he was going to a party at the residence of Victor Almeraldo, which was upon the Plaza Bolivar. As the representative in Venezuela of the Round World Press Association, he had an impressive title, but his seventy-five dollars a week didn't go very far in one of the most expensive cities in the world. If it hadn't been for Victor and Victor's sister Felice, he would have been a forlorn young man in Caracas.

Yet when they had called him into the office of the manager of the Round World Press in New York and offered him this job, Guy had been wildly delighted. He had been earning forty-five dollars a week on the copy desk. Seventy-five sounded like affluence, and in New York, to a young man of his simple tastes, it would have been. But in Caracas it wasn't very much more than Victor Almeraldo would consider an

adequate tip to a head waiter. Victor was an aristocrat if there ever was one —and the salt of the earth. Half Gorman's joy in being assigned to Caracas lay in the fact that it was the home of Victor Almeraldo.

When Guy had been number four oar in the Cornell boat, Victor had been number three. They lived at the same fraternity house. Despite his poverty and Victor's wealth, they had been very intimate. And Victor had wept tears of delight when Gorman arrived in Caracas. Victor included him in all his social affairs and, knowing his financial condition, was careful that he should never be embarrassed.

As Guy walked through the narrow streets of the old town, he was oblivious of the racket of peddlers, venders, coachmen and chauffeurs. After a certain length of time, one gets oblivious of the shrilling and yipping of a Spanish-American city.

He was a bit worried about his friend Victor, who had been talking indiscreetly. Walls had ears in Caracas. The descendants of the Conquistadors walked on thin ice, figuratively speaking. For them, there was menace at every corner, danger lurked in the best restaurants and the most private salons.

In a way it was poetic justice. A handful of daring and unscrupulous Spaniards, Victor's ancestors among them, had invaded this vast rich land, enslaved the natives, acquired wealth, and their descendants had increased in arrogance and pride as the centuries passed, but today, *they* had a master and the master was one of the slaves, a pure blooded Indian, a grim, determined, ruthless ruler whose name was Juan Vicente Gomez. A Spanish name, but no Spanish blood flowed in his veins.

The Almeraldos and their class had joined Bolivar to cast off the yoke of Spain and now the yoke of Gomez was set firmly upon their necks.

There was always a party for Liberation. In college, Victor had talked much about going home and driving Gomez out of Venezuela, of reëstablishing the Republic. It had seemed to him a simple thing—at Cornell. Guy hadn't been able to understand why they hadn't overthrown the old Indian long ago, but he knew better now.

He came presently to the Plaza Bogota, a large square surrounded by old Spanish houses. Business had intruded a bit—many of the aristocrats had moved to the suburbs, particularly toward the section where the Hippodrome was located, but the Almeraldos remained in the home of their ancestors, a magnificent old residence of which they were justly proud.

IT was a stone house, its second story extending over the sidewalk supported by pillars which formed a colonnade—this in common with the other buildings upon the square. Considerable reconstruction work was going on, for, recently, there had been an edict compelling property owners to tear out the front of their house and rebuild, eliminating that part of the second story which protruded. The explanation was the danger of pedestrians being killed by falling stones in case of an earthquake, a peril most remote.

It was the sardonic humor of Gomez to thus harass the aristocrats who had to perform this costly job at their own expense. Victor had complained loudly and bitterly about it, and, as yet, had not undertaken the work.

There were no windows on the lower floor fronting on the street, but the sec-

ond story windows were ablaze with light, and a motor car was disgorging ladies in evening wraps while others waited their turn at the entrance.

Guy passed through the entrance with its huge mahogany door, which was so thick that a battering ram would hardly jar it, handed his hat and coat to a servant and walked through the passage into the patio.

This was a large, exquisite garden made brilliant by a multitude of Japanese lanterns. There were tables at which several parties sat, being served with drinks by liveried servants. At the right was a broad staircase leading to the upper floor and, up there, a dance orchestra was softly playing. The ladies ascended immediately, but the men lingered below to chat and drink by themselves, a quaint Spanish custom.

Victor came forward eagerly and threw an arm over his friend's shoulder.

"Just in time," he said. "A cup of champagne, old man. Come here. You know Juan Colga and Vicente Velasquez. I don't think you know Colonel Perez."

Guy greeted his acquaintance, bowed to the colonel, who gave him a thin-lipped smile. His desire was to hasten to the dancing-room. Felice Almeraldo would be there. But he had to sit down with his host and his friends, none of whom felt the need of haste to join the dancers.

He wondered at the presence of Perez, who was an officer of the Gomez army. Victor evidently was finding it necessary to be diplomatic.

"Heard the news, Gorman?" asked young Colga. "Juan Valez has been exiled."

"As a journalist," said the colonel, "you won't consider that of sufficient importance to send to New York, Mr. Gorman."

"Hardly," replied Guy. "Cables cost money and political exiles are news only if they are very celebrated persons. Valez is only a young chap. What was his offense?"

"He wrote an article for a newspaper which gave offense in certain quarters," said Victor gravely. "I warned him that he would get into trouble."

"It was most unfortunate," commented the colonel. "But it should have a salutary effect upon other malcontents."

He rose, bowed, and smiled and said, "Señora Perez will be annoyed if I linger down here any longer. My excuses, gentlemen."

"Good riddance," muttered Victor in English toward his retreating form.

"I was surprised to find him here," said Guy with a smile.

"I don't like him, but his wife is on my aunt's social list. Isn't it damnable, Guy? We never know where the lightning will strike next. We're like a lot of fat turkeys gobbling gaily in the barnyard until the farmer comes with his ax and grabs the nearest and fattest."

"And a remark like that should only be made to close friends," said Velazquez reprovingly.

"Well, we are close friends here—I hope."

"Of course. But you are pretty rash, Victor," said Velasquez.

"Let's all go up and join the ladies," Victor replied petulantly.

The ballroom of the Almeraldo home was a spacious gracious room in the style of the eighteenth century when it had been built. Modern indirect lighting threw pleasant shadows and enhanced the beauty of the women,

Guy thought, as he looked around, that though some were too fat, there were few ladies present who were not beautiful, while Felice Almeraldo absolutely glowed with beauty.

She was dancing, but she spied him and gave him a smile which caused him to tingle from fingers to toes. If she were an American girl, he knew what he would do with as much encouragement as she gave him. He'd ask her to marry him.

But she was a Venezuelan, and no people are as proud and set such store on ancestry as these. Felice was the descendant of hidalgos. She would marry some countryman of hers with a coat of arms as fine as her own—unless something happened.

Even though Victor was his best friend, he didn't think Victor would permit him to marry his sister. Nor could Felice make her own decision as American girls do. She would flirt—all Spanish girls flirt—but she would marry the man selected for her.

He cut in boldly. Her escort relinquished her with a polite smile. Guy didn't know the man. Felice sighed as she rested in his arms.

"Only Americans can fox trot properly," she said. "I love to dance with you."

"I could dance with you forever," he whispered ardently. She wouldn't let him see her face, but she didn't, apparently, resent the remark.

"Guy," she said eagerly, "I want you to talk to Victor. I'm afraid he has some project in his mind. He is perfectly furious over the exile of Juan Valez. I wish we were all back in New York. It was so nice when I was at school there. No worse intrigues than schoolgirls whispering against one another."

"Oh, Victor is tactful," he assured her. "He has a head on his shoulders, that lad."

Somebody cut in and Guy joined the stag line. A hand touched him on the shoulder.

"Come into my study," whispered Victor. "I want to talk to you."

THEY went down a long corridor and into a small but richly furnished room, the principal feature of which was a magnificently carved oak desk brought a century before from Spain.

"The die is cast, old man," said Victor. "I'm joining the Liberty League."

Guy took the proffered cigarette and lighted it. He gazed steadily at his friend. Victor was a handsome youth, in any land, to any taste. He was tall, strong, wiry, graceful and his features were nearly perfect. His clear olive skin made his white teeth seem more white. There was a cleft in his finely formed chin. His black eyes were beautiful even when there was an angry glint in them.

"You're crazy, of course," remarked the American.

"We can't put up with this state of affairs any longer, I tell you. No man is safe. There never was as black a tyrant as Juan Gomez."

"Granted, but what can you do about it?"

"Overthrow him. The country is groaning under his oppression."

"Sit down, Victor, take it easy. How are you going to overthrow him?"

"We'll rise, sweep away him and his scum—"

"Will you listen to me, please?"

"All right, but my mind is made up."

"Very good. In the first place, the country isn't groaning at all. It isn't

oppressed. I've been here long enough to learn a lot about Venezuela. Of its millions, only a few hundred thousand are dissatisfied—your class. Three-quarters of the population are Indians, and they are satisfied to have an Indian Dictator. They are as well off as they ever were. Never having had anything, they don't miss not having anything.

"They either hate the whites or they are indifferent to what happens to them. Do you suppose the natives would revolt because Valez or you or everybody in this house tonight were exiled or sent to prison by Gomez?"

"*Coup d'état,*" replied Victor. "A few hundred determined men can overthrow this government."

"He has a large well trained, well fed, well paid army, almost all Indians, who would shoot your handful down with pleasure. Suppose he should be assassinated? Do you suppose that one of you would succeed him. It would be another Indian, but one who hadn't accumulated the largest private fortunes in the world and who would start right out to duplicate it."

"My friend, Caracas is Venezuela and we can take Caracas. The rest of the country either wouldn't know what had happened or would be indifferent."

"Which is why Gomez makes his headquarters, not here, but at Maracay. Your Army of Liberation would have to march to Maracay. He has ten thousand very good troops there. I've seen them drill. They are fine soldiers and loyal. He could have fifty or a hundred thousand assembled there before you reached Maracay. What makes you think you could raise fifty or a hundred thousand men? Why should the Indians fight under your banners? What did your people ever do for them?"

"We can try."

"Oh, sure, but you can't win. For heaven's sake, Victor, don't make a fool of yourself."

"We'll restore the Republic—"

"How can you have a Republic when three-quarters of your population can't read and write? At any honest election they'd vote you out of power. You could only establish an oligarchy. I grant it would be a great improvement upon the dictatorship—"

Victor sighed. "Oh, I know all your arguments. But suppose this happened in the United States. You'd grab a gun."

"I suppose so, but we are a white nation—except for ten million blacks, of course. Look here, old man. You're rich, you're not interfered with. Gomez won't live forever—"

Victor clapped him on the back and laughed gaily. "Oh, perhaps you're right," he agreed. "Let's go back and join the party."

CHAPTER II.

A GIRL AND A BOY.

VICTOR laughed, tucked his left hand inside Guy's right elbow and led him from the study. Glancing down it seemed to the American that the big emerald in the antique alligator-shaped ring which Victor wore gleamed in a sinister manner.

It was the only article of jewelry that the fastidious young Venezuelan ever wore. He wore it always, and Guy knew why. The great fortune of the Almeraldos was founded upon an emerald mine somewhere in the vast interior—its location no longer known.

He danced with a number of fascinating and vivacious young ladies and secured two dances with Felice.

Duennas sat in all the corners of the

ballroom. There was no strolling in the garden with the daughter of the Almeraldo. But, just as they had their last encore to their last dance, Felice lifted her long dark lashes, exposing her great dark eyes in all their transcendent loveliness, and her pretty mouth quivered, and this is what she said: "I wish—oh, I wish you were a Venezuelan, Guy."

Shortly after that he went away from the party. He knew what the girl meant. If he were of her own people she could have loved him. Maybe she did love him, but nothing could come of it.

He pondered as he strode the pavement of the Plaza Bogota upon the difference between races of men. Now he and Victor were as close as two young men of different races could be, but their friendship had not the thorough understanding of two Americans or two Spaniards. There was a wall between them, transparent, perhaps, but a wall. It was composed of centuries of different modes of thought, different standards. Liking each other greatly, he dared not to talk to Victor as sternly as he would have talked to a fellow countryman determined to destroy himself. Victor had closed the argument—to reopen it he, in some subtle manner, had made impossible.

And Felice, sweet, soft, gentle, adorable, Felice put him away from her because he was not of her nationality. He wondered if a man and woman of diverse nationality could ever be as close, even if married, as persons of the same breed—could they so thoroughly understand one another, make allowances for one another. He thought they could be closer than two men of different race—that it might be possible to break through the wall between. If it were humanly possible, he'd win Felice—he'd risk her pride, her upbringing, her damned ancestors.

After all his father was a farmer, all his people were farmers. One of those farmers had fired a rifle at British troops at Lexington.

His footsteps rang upon the stone pavement as he passed the capitol, the grandiose ornate building inside which a fake Congress assembled to pass what laws the Dictator sent down from his stronghold at Maracay, sixty miles away.

Being an American, he was unable to hate and despise Gomez as did the descendants of the Conquistadors. He took his hat off to the old boy. Gomez in his youth had been a peon, a mule driver to a ranchero. The overseer's whip had curled around his shoulders once too often, and he had fled to the jungle and become a bandit. In the days of Dictator Castro, a successful bandit was often bought off and exchanged a hazardous profession for a sinecure as a colonel or general in the army. Gomez became a general and a good one. Castro, not being pure Indian, had lots of trouble, not only with his people but with foreign countries. Gomez soldiers crushed several revolts during the Castro régime of thirty years back and when Castro fled to Paris with a fortune and the aristocrats celebrated wildly the restoration of liberty, they woke up to find another foot on their necks. Gomez had the army under his thumb, he crushed rival pretenders ruthlessly, and established himself solidly in the Dictator's throne.

Compared to Gomez, Castro was an amateur. Until middle age, Gomez had been unable to read or write. All documents were read to him and he issued verbal orders. But he could understand.

He understood that the American and British oil companies would bring wealth to a country ruined by Castro, and he made liberal concessions.

He realized that the foreign debt of Venezuela was a source of danger. England had almost invaded the country, and only the attitude of the United States had saved it. Next time America might not interfere. He set himself to pay off the foreign debt out of the income from the concessions and at the end of twenty-five years Venezuela had no bonded indebtedness—the only country in the world which could make such a boast.

Where he had learned that the way to prevent trouble was to nip it in the bud, nobody knew, but very early in his reign he had adopted the policy of exiling persons who were not content with his way of doing business and confiscating all their property. Guy knew that there were a hundred thousand exiled Venezuelans in the United States and Europe, that they had Revolutionary Juntas, but they hadn't annoyed Gomez very much.

He knew that plenty of pure white Venezuelans supported Gomez because they prospered under his reign and that the malcontents were usually betrayed by members of their own class. And he was horribly worried about Victor.

Victor's simile about the fat turkeys in the barnyard was apt, but about the fattest of all the turkeys was Victor Almeraldo. Well, he had done his best to make Victor behave. Tonight he was wrathy because of the exile of his friend. Tomorrow he might realize that the cause of Liberty in Venezuela was hopeless.

There were beggar women sleeping in doorways as he moved along the streets of the shabby district in which the Hotel All Saints were located, there were homeless men wearing only shirt and overalls who sat on curbstones despondently and whined for alms as the man in evening dress passed, but there were no night marauders, thanks to the efficient police of the Dictator. Nor did the wretches who passed the nights in the street curse El Presidente; they had always been as they were now, they hoped for no better. And Gomez, at least, was one of themselves, not an accursed Spaniard.

GUY GORMAN arrived at his hotel, removed his elegant garments, put on his pajamas and lay upon his harsh Spanish bed for hours before going to sleep. He was not, however, thinking of the folly of his college chum, he was thinking of Felice. Some day, in some way, he would make her and her brother realize that an American was as good as a Venezuelan.

Two afternoons later he called at the Casa Almeraldo, his party call. To his consternation the major domo informed him that the ladies had departed for La Guaira, the seaport, that morning, accompanied by Victor.

"When will they return?" he asked anxiously.

"The ladies are embarking on a steamer for New York today. No doubt Señor Victor will be back tomorrow."

Stunned, Guy turned away. What did it mean? Had Victor discovered that he was in love with Felice and Felice with him, and sent her north? Had he turned against his friend to such an extent that he would not permit him a word of farewell with Felice? If that was it, if that was what Victor's friendship amounted to—well, he was through with him.

A week later, Guy Gorman learned

that he had misjudged young Almeraldo, that he had gone far afield in surmising the cause of his departure and his failure to return to Caracas.

CHAPTER III.

EL PRESIDENTE.

MARACAY is an astounding little city created by Gomez and located not very far from the Venezuelan seaport of Puerto Cabello. It has broad streets, fine houses, an excellent hotel and the Presidential Palace. It has barracks and fortifications and a wide cement road runs directly to the little seaport of Ocumare where a gunboat was always stationed ready to take off the Dictator if an attack upon Maracay looked as if it might be successful.

Here President Gomez was wont to unbutton himself, so to speak. The palace has a huge and very beautiful garden in which, lolling in a big wicker chair beneath a palm tree, His Excellency dispensed the high justice, the middle, and the low.

There was no desk and no pen. Clad in white pants with a white shirt open at the throat permitting a view of a very hairy chest, Juan Gomez sat and received visitors. His ministers came with official documents and read them aloud to him. His decisions were instant. "Bene, bene," or "Non, non." And from his decision there was no appeal.

He was seventy years old and an extraordinarily well-preserved Sachem. His face was the color of copper with strong but unmistakably Indian features. His black eyes sparkled always. He was very much alive. Moving about the grounds but keeping a safe distance away from him, a dozen or two of his grandchildren and their wives were apt to be found. Gomez boasted of having seventy-five children, though he was never legally married to any woman. And most of his progeny were well provided for by the patriarch.

Gomez sat alone, half asleep, when a military aid in resplendent uniform approached cautiously. The heavy lids lifted and the black eyes were fixed upon.

"What do you want?" he asked in his guttural tones.

"Excellency, the merchant Juan Perez is requesting an audience."

"*Sí, sí.* He telephoned from Caracas. I'll see him."

In a few minutes the aide returned, accompanied by a gray-haired man with round shoulders and a cunning expression.

"Speak," commanded the Dictator.

"Excellency, I wish to speak regarding Victor Almeraldo."

"He will be shot at sunrise," stated Gomez in his guttural tones.

"And he certainly deserves that fate. An assassin!"

Gomez shook his head. "Not an assassin, Perez. I am proceeding to La Guaira well escorted. I am attacked by a hundred men wearing uniforms. There is a battle. Fortunately I am forewarned and have taken my precautions. My troops kill or capture the revolutionists. An assassin is one who sticks a knife in your back. Almeraldo is a brave man.

"He wishes to restore the Republic. But it is unlawful to revolt against the Republic of Gomez." His thick lips parted in a cruel grin. "So the prisoners, including Victor Almeraldo, will be shot at sunrise."

"In that case," stated Perez, "the secret will perish with him."

The old man leaned forward.

"What secret?" he demanded harshly.

"The location of the emerald mine of the Almeraldos."

"I have a mind to have you shot, rascal," rasped the Dictator. "No one knows its location. It is lost, gone forever."

"I have reason to believe that Victor Almeraldo knows."

"Leave us," commanded the Dictator of the aide, who hovered near. "Now, Perez, what makes you think he knows?"

"Excellency, the foundation of the Almeraldo fortune came from this emerald mine, but the way to it entails untold hardships and their investments were so fortunate that it was no longer necessary to take the risks. It was generally supposed that the secret of the location perished with the grandfather."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, six or seven years ago the father of Victor was pressed for cash. He came to me. He said he had a map of the route to the old mines. He proposed that I supply the capital necessary for the expedition and we haggled over the terms. But he received a huge sum for the sale of one of his ranches, and the coffee crop, which had been unsold, was suddenly purchased and he called off the deal."

"Ah, and where is this map?" demanded Gomez.

"In New York, in a safe deposit vault. He said he kept it there in case he was so unfortunate as to incur your displeasure. Of course Victor knows about it."

"Before we shoot him," remarked Gomez, "we shall squeeze the information from him."

"It is not so easy as that, Excellency. His sister has escaped to New York. The map is there. Should he tell you in what bank vault it is hidden, you could not secure it."

Gomez nodded. His black eyes were very bright.

"What is your plan? Naturally I have confiscated his estates, so the emerald mine is my property along with his cattle and coffee ranches. But if the map is in New York?"

"I suggest you permit him to escape. He will go to New York. Being a most extravagant young man, he will soon be without funds, since his estates are forfeit and he cannot have much money in New York. He will then think of the emerald mine. He is daring enough to try to recoup his fortunes by seeking it. He will return to Venezuela."

"And lead me to the mines," exclaimed Gomez. "My property. Where do you come in?"

The merchant spread out his arms. "Where your Excellency wishes," he said humbly.

"One third. You may go. Send back my aide-de-camp."

Perez departed and the officer came running.

"Domingo," said Gomez, "a steamer sails tonight for New York. Take young Almeraldo from the carcel and put him on board. Buy him a ticket. I make him an exile instead of a corpse because his father was a good, loyal man."

"But, Excellency—"

"My orders."

The aide hastened away. Gomez lolled once more in his big chair. A cool, refreshing breeze came from the sea. His chin dropped upon his chest. Presently the old wolf was sleeping as peacefully as a lamb. And a bewildered young Venezuelan patriot under sentence of death, to his profound astonishment, found himself that evening in

a cabin of a de luxe liner bound for New York.

FOR five or six weeks, life in Caracas, to Guy Gorman, had been unspeakably dull and drear. He was still numb from the sense of loss which the presumed death of Victor Almeraldo caused to him. News in Caracas as it affected the Dictator was hard to get and even more difficult to transmit to New York. A press censorship had been clamped down; to cable the attack upon the escort of Gomez by a hundred mad young patriots had been impossible and mail dispatches never reached their destination.

No Caracas newspaper dared print anything regarding the sharp skirmish on the road to La Guaira, but the correspondents in devious ways had learned the details—an ambush which had, in turn, been ambushed. Such of the members of the Liberty League as had not been slain in battle had been stood up before firing squads at Maracay and shot down in cold blood.

Who were the dead? Well, look over the array at the race track, at the best clubs, at the cocktail parties, and figure out who was missing. Victor Almeraldo and scores of young bloods had vanished off the map.

It was impossible for Guy to believe that Victor was dead. He had been so full of vitality, of the joy of living. But no word had come from him, and Guy knew that Victor must have been in the fight, and if he had been, he was the last man likely to have saved his own skin.

On this night, as on most nights, Guy went to dinner at the Hotel Buenaventura, which was a small and ill-considered hotel on the Main Plaza opposite the Opera House. There were grand hotels around the square, but a newspaper correspondent could not afford to patronize a restaurant where a modest dinner would cost five or six dollars.

The table d'hôte at the Buenaventura cost, in American money, a dollar and a quarter. Victor had been wont to chide his friend for eating the dreadful food served there.

"As bad as the food is," he would add, "the company is worse."

"I shut my eyes and hold my nose," Guy had replied. "Can't you understand that I only make seventy-five dollars a week which is the equivalent here of thirty dollars a week in New York?"

"Well, you are always welcome at our table," Victor assured him. Naturally Guy had taken advantage of the offer only when especially urged.

During the winter season many cruise ships from New York put in at La Guaira and allowed their passengers a day and evening ashore. Most of them motored up thirty-five miles of mountain road to the capital and occasionally some of them drifted into the dining room of the Buenaventura. Their reactions to bad Spanish cooking gave Guy a certain dismal amusement.

Upon this night Guy had a seat at a window from which he had a view of the Opera House across the way. It was lighted because there was a gala performance tonight, and the President, having disposed of the Liberty League, was motoring up from Maracay to attend. A Spanish Grand Opera Company had been brought across the Atlantic because the President liked good music and was able to pay for it.

Guy would have liked to hear "Traviata," but he couldn't afford ten dollars for a ticket. At the moment, his financial tide was at the ebb.

Across the room sat a dozen gay

young people from a cruise ship. He watched them wistfully and enjoyed their comments upon Spanish rice and stringy chicken. Their ship was sailing at midnight and Gorman gladly would have chucked his job for a chance to go home on her. He didn't have money enough to pay for a ticket and, with the depression on in New York, it was unlikely he could find a job at home if he returned there.

With a sigh, he called for his check, paid it and rose. He left the dining room and crossed the small shabby lobby and went up a curious stone winding staircase to the second floor.

While the Madrid's arrangements were quite primitive, the visiting Toreadors made no objections and Guy took things as he found them.

As he climbed the stairs he smiled whimsically to think how that visiting tourist party was being gypped by the guide which had brought it to dine in this wretched establishment.

On his return he paused at the head of the winding staircase because there was not room for two people to descend. To his astonishment, a young woman made him a sign to come down, although she was halfway up. They met in the middle of the staircase. She was a blond young woman with a disfiguring scar upon the left corner of her mouth. Her cheeks were very plump. He had never seen her before in his life, but, for some reason, the blood began to gallop through his veins. She bent her head to avoid him.

"I beg your pardon," he said unsteadily. "Oh, God! Felice!"

"No, no," she whispered. "Let me pass, please."

"But what—?" he stammered.

Her big black eyes looked into his beseechingly. "You must not recognize me. Conceal this. Let me pass."

AN envelope was thrust into his hand which he crumpled up and she brushed past and ascended the stairs. The ladies' rest room was also on the second floor. The slender, marvelously graceful back of her! How could he have failed to recognize her instantly, the girl he adored?

Why, it was extremely perilous for her to be in Caracas! The family of Almeraldo was adjudged traitor. Their estates had been confiscated. And Gomez had prisons for female enemies.

His breath came fast. He gazed below, but, aside from a clerk half asleep behind the hotel desk, the lobby was empty.

Felice had chosen an ideal place to deliver the letter—the winding staircase had a solid cement balustrade and the movement of hands had been concealed from the clerk by it.

To the clerk she was just another fool American tourist. He loitered in the lobby. At all costs he must protect her. No doubt she had come down by the cruise ship. He must see her safely aboard of it. What an insane risk to take to deliver a letter. What was in the letter? It could not be from Victor, because Victor was dead; he had died like a hero before a firing squad.

He waited with growing impatience. Ten minutes passed. Fifteen. It was obvious that she was not coming back. She had slipped out a back exit. She didn't want to see him again. Perhaps the letter would explain.

Reluctantly he left the hotel and walked four blocks to his own quarters. He dared not open the letter in a public place.

After locking his chamber door and pulling down the curtains, he eagerly tore open the envelope. To his astonishment he found within five hundred-dollar bills and a folded sheet of paper.

Another folded sheet fell out of this upon the floor. He picked it up. It was a chart of some kind. He opened the note. There had been no address on the envelope, and his name was not mentioned in the salutation, which was merely,

AMIGO MIO:

If you have recognized my messenger, you realize the great importance to us of communicating with you. By the grace of God, my death sentence was changed to exile. We have limited funds in New York. You are the only person in Caracas I dare trust. I ask you to join me in a perilous quest. I ask you to do something which may ruin you. Incidentally it may make you rich.

My father's house is closed and boarded up—it is now the property of the government. It is necessary to enter it. Go to the front bedchamber on the left of the main hall on the second floor. Enclosed is a plan of the room. Have with you a hammer, and break the wall panel marked "X" on the plan, as it is impossible to explain to you how to find the spring. Inside you will find an envelope—guard it with your life—destroy it if capture is inevitable. Undoubtedly your movements will be watched. If you escape from the house with the envelope, cable to William Hawks, Waldorf Astoria, "Am resigning my newspaper post. Please find me a job."

In two weeks meet me at the Castile Hotel in Barranquilla. Then, if you care to risk your life, I promise you wealth. Destroy this immediately.

There was no signature. Guy read the letter once again, tore it into pieces and burned the pieces.

He sat down thoughtfully and stared at the faded wall paper. If this was a revolutionary plot he didn't want any part of it. Old man Gomez didn't allow revolutions. On the other hand, it didn't sound like a revolutionary plot. Victor talked of wealth. A secret panel, an envelope—a guide perhaps to buried treasure. After all, this was the Spanish Main, where pirates had roamed.

HE smiled at the thought of Victor, who had sent him five hundred dollars, being at the end of his resources. If Victor were down to his last fifty thousand dollars he would think he was a pauper. Why, those emeralds of his, alone, must be worth fifty thousand dollars! Yet Victor had permitted Felice to take the horrible risk of returning to Caracas. A girl who had been as closely guarded, as strictly reared as Felice. It meant the matter was of terrific importance to both of them. Come to think of it, Felice in her disguise took slight risk. Her English was perfect. If he hadn't loved her, he could not have recognized her.

CHAPTER IV.

BREAKING AND ENTERING.

GUY paced up and down the little room. Victor had no right to send his sister here—no right to expose her to even a slight risk. He must be desperate indeed.

He had seen the Almeraldo mansion that day, duty causing him to pass through the Plaza Bogota. It was closed, boarded up and the seals of the Dictator were on the doors. Anybody who broke into the Almeraldo house would land in the Fortress of San Carlo on Lake Maracaibo, the most horrible of prisons, from which eventually he would be carried out feet first.

Dare he take the chance? Much as he liked Victor he would have hesitated had it not been for Felice, who had handed him the letter of instructions. Felice had poked her pretty nose into this hell hole. Well, he couldn't let her down.

"Aw, heck," he muttered, "I've lived long enough."

He put on his straw hat, after changing from a suit of white to dark blue, less conspicuous, and resolutely walked out of the apartment and into the street.

Tonight, he gazed upon the city through which he passed as though he were seeing it for the first time. The natives proudly called it "Little Paris," but save for its narrow streets, low buildings and its shops with their cast iron shutters, it bore little resemblance to the French capital. In Caracas between the small upper class and the lower nine-tenths, the gulf is wide and deep. Guy no longer took the misery of those in the streets as a matter of course. It caused him to burn with indignation against the Dictator.

When he came to the Plaza Bogota he saw with satisfaction that there were very few people there. He made a circuit of the Plaza once to discover if police were watching the confiscated house. Of course it was unlikely that a watch would be kept since the government knew that the Almeraldos were in far distant New York, while Caracas thieves knew better than to break into a building sealed up by General Gomez.

Breaking in would not be easy. There was a solid boarding over the front door and no windows on the lower floor in front, while those at the sides and rear were protected by the customary heavy iron grilles.

Between Victor's house and the house at the left there was a space of three or four feet and the house at the left was in the process of removing the second story overhang.

As he walked by, Guy thought that the prospect of his getting inside Almeraldo's house was slight. Originally these houses had been built to withstand siege, they were in fact fortresses and there were formerly holes in the floor of the second story overhang through which bullets and hot pitch could be poured upon persons attacking from below.

One would consider entering an American home from the rear, but these houses, built around an interior patio, had no gardens at the rear.

It was a pity that Victor hadn't supplied some suggestions regarding this job of breaking and entering. He certainly had overestimated the ingenuity of his American friend.

Guy stopped in the shadow and studied the house with increasing dismay. He had been given an impossible task and that was all there was about it. He had better go back to his hotel. In fact he made a few steps in that direction when the white face of Felice with her big, luminous, imploring black eyes seemed to appear before him. No, he could not let Felice down.

As Gorman passed the house at the left, for the second time, he observed a ladder placed against the scaffolding. If he could get on the roof of this house he could jump across the intervening space. Entrance from the roof was his only hope.

He cast a quick glance around. Two men were approaching. He continued on his way, but when they had passed, he waited a couple of minutes and retraced his steps. It was a plaza which was dimly lighted—if anybody were looking, he might be observed going up the ladder, but he had to chance it. He hesitated. He had five hundred dollars of his friend's money in his pocket, and there was Felice.

Like a monkey he went up the ladder. It stopped within five feet of the

roof. He balanced himself on the topmost rung, and caught the parapet with the tips of his fingers. He strengthened his grip, swung over, and stood upon the flat roof of a mansion a hundred and fifty years old. So far, so good.

There was a thirty-inch stone parapet all around the house. There was an awning in the center of the roof and half a dozen wicker chairs and pumpkin cushions.

Guy walked toward the rear, a distance of forty feet. He would be invisible from the street when he made his leap. To a former Cornell athlete a four foot jump was not a matter to worry about. He climbed up on the parapet, leaped, landed on the far edge of the opposite parapet and fell upon the roof unhurt.

There had to be a trap door. People made use of their roofs as well as their patios in Caracas. He found a trap door, but it was firmly nailed down. He swore softly. He walked around the building and on the other side of the patio opening he came upon a skylight about four feet square but constructed of small panes in wooden frames. He kicked out a pane of glass. It fell, apparently, on a carpet, for there was only a slight tinkle. He broke the other panes and then smashed the frame with his heavy shoes. Entrance had been provided. Gingerly lowering himself to avoid cuts from jagged edges of glass, he hung by his arms and dropped.

He landed upon something soft and springy, lost his balance and toppled from a bed to the floor. He became aware that he had cut the palm of his left hand on broken glass. After wrapping up the cut in his handkerchief, he risked striking a match. He was in a large bedroom furnished in the French style. He spied the door and made his way to it in the dark. It was not locked.

HE was in the hallway of the second floor. He oriented himself, and in the dark made his way to the bedroom on the left front. He opened the door and struck another match. Heavy curtains were drawn over the windows and he knew there was boarding outside, so, spying a candle on a night table, he had no hesitation in lighting it.

This was a very large room paneled in mahogany. There were fine oil paintings on the walls on three sides, and a huge intricate Gobelin tapestry occupied the greater part of the fourth wall.

Taking the candle, he sat down at a desk, and consulted the plan of the room. The room, he had observed to be a masculine bedchamber, and he recalled that Victor, who had occupied a room across the hall, had mentioned that this room had been his father's. Evidently nothing had been disturbed.

The panel marked "X," he learned from the plan, was located behind the Gobelin tapestry. He had forgotten to provide himself with a hammer, but there was a heavy wrought iron branch candlestick upon a wall table the base of which would be as effective.

Lifting the tapestry, he pulled a night table behind it, set his candle upon it and counted the panels. "X" was the sixth from the corner in the upper row. He went back and secured the big candlestick, a two foot affair. With his left hand he pushed the tapestry farther back, and drove the ten pound piece of wrought iron against the panel. It shattered, revealing a space two feet high, six inches wide, and six inches deep. He pulled out the splinters of the panel and lifted an

envelope thick with dust and yellow with age.

He thrust it into his pocket and uttered an explanation of dismay. The candelabrum which he had used as a battering ram had pushed back the tapestry a foot when he swung it for the blow. The heavy carpet had swung in again and a fold of it had struck the table, knocking the candle over. The flame had touched the ancient carpet, which immediately ignited. The flames were rushing out for Guy Gorman. He escaped. He grasped the end of the tapestry, tried to pull it to the floor, but its fastenings resisted his efforts. The flames were rushing upwards and already licking the dry ancient beams of the ceiling.

The house was going to burn—he could not stop it. And he could not be caught in the burning house. With anguish he thought of the destruction of this tresure house of the Almeraldos—but the fire was already out of hand and it would be Gomez's loss, not Victor's.

Out into the dark hall, down the passage and into the room where he had entered. He lit a match. There were candles in a gold branched candlestick on the dresser. He lighted three of them and gazed upward. It was fully nine feet to the skylight opening. He put a big armchair on the bed, stood on it, but could not reach, climbed on its back and leaped as the chair toppled over. He caught the edge of the skylight, and a jagged edge of glass cut the fingers of his right hand. His strong arms served him well, but, as he emerged upon the roof, a cloud of pungent smoke emerged with him. The fire was spreading with great rapidity.

He climbed the parapet, leaped to the opposite roof and rushed to the front of the house—he had lost his hat somewhere, but it didn't matter.

It was a ticklish job to find the top of the ladder, he found it. In a few seconds he dropped from it to the ground. As yet there was no alarm—the flames had not broken through the boarding.

With a gasp of relief he walked away. A man was approaching—he had come out of a house a few doors up.

Guy slowed his pace—he must not appear perturbed—anything unusual was reported in Caracas. The man was about to pass—a slim, dark, graceful Venezuelan gentleman. He glanced at the American.

"Ah, Señor Gorman," he exclaimed. "What are you doing in this part of town?"

He extended his hand. Instinctively Guy shook hands.

"Good evening, Colonel Perez," he said. "A stroll."

But Perez had pulled away his hand.

"My friend, you are bleeding!" he exclaimed. He glanced suspiciously at the American.

"A nail in one of those damn scaffoldings," muttered Guy. "I struck my hand against it as I passed. I thought it was just a scratch."

"But it is a deep cut," cried the Colonel, lifting it to examine it in the dim light. "You must see a doctor at once."

"Why, it *is* serious," Gorman exclaimed in apparent astonishment. "I certainly shall! Excuse me, Colonel."

HE got away rapidly, but glancing back he saw the Colonel looking after him in perplexity. He shivered. Of all people to meet. The man was head of the army intelligence service.

At the exit to the Plaza he looked back.

Smoke was pouring in great clouds from the upper windows of the Almeraldo house.

In a moment the fire would be discovered and the alarm given. And Colonel Perez would put two and two together. Guy, he was aware, had been a friend of Almeraldo. Somebody had entered the residence of Victor and had fired it. Incendiarism of Presidential property. And Guy Gorman, with a bleeding hand, had been encountered within a few doors of the burning building.

"I've got to get out of Venezuela," he muttered. He walked down the short street which led from the Plaza Bogota to a main thoroughfare and, to his satisfaction, spied a taxi approaching. He hailed it excitedly and then saw, to his dismay, that it had a passenger—a woman.

There was no other car in sight—it might be ten minutes before another came down this rather unfrequented thoroughfare.

The cab passed under a street lamp. It was an open touring car, and he drew in his breath sharply. Its occupant was Felice Almeraldo. She leaned forward and spoke to the chauffeur, who came to a stop in front of the young man on the sidewalk.

Despite his apprehension, he marveled at her beauty. She was as lovely as a blonde or as a brunette. Of course that disfiguring scar was grease paint.

"You have been such a long time," she said in Spanish. "We must hurry."

He leaped in beside her. "You angel," he exclaimed. "I'll say we must hurry."

Felice uttered a joyful exclamation. "Then you have succeeded," she cried in English. "Oh, thank all the saints."

CHAPTER V.

DOWN THE MOUNTAINS.

"I SUCCEEDED," Guy said grimly. "But you do not know the need of haste." He broke off. He dared not tell her that his carelessness had probably caused the destruction of the girl's ancestral home. While no alarm had yet been given, he was certain that the flames had made too great headway to be stopped.

"You are most wonderful," she said softly. "I knew you wouldn't fail us. I was supposed to return immediately to the ship after giving you the letter. Victor told me I would be sure to find you dining at that horrible hotel. But I feared you might have trouble, that it would be necessary for you to get away quickly, so I have been driving up and down this street for an hour."

"You're just the sort of girl I thought you were," he said gratefully.

The old car was already swaying from side to side as its driver stepped on the gas.

Guy leaned back nervously against the cushions. Perez might have passed out of the Plaza or entered another house before the fire was discovered. It might be some time before he made up his mind that the American's presence in the vicinity was suspicious. It was possible they could make the steamer before the leisurely police visited his apartment and looked into his well known haunts. The fact that all his personal belongings were in his room might help. It was a slim chance, however, and his presence in this car spelled danger to Felice. He had to tell her the facts.

"Oh, you're wounded, bleeding," she exclaimed in alarm. "Here! Let me bandage your poor hand. Both hands are hurt. Oh, my dear friend!"

Her solicitude enraptured him, but he withdrew his bleeding hands firmly from her tender touch.

" Before we get out of the city," he said nervously, " I must tell you. There was an accident in your house. A candle caught on a tapestry. I tried to extinguish the fire, but had to fly for my life. Felice, I'm very much afraid your house will be gutted—and it's my fault."

He watched her apprehensively. She stiffened, her great eyes grew moist, and then she lifted her lovely little chin.

" Not my home any more. It belongs to the tyrant. It's a pity the walls are of stone so they cannot burn."

Guy drew a deep breath. " You're a Spartan woman," he said from the heart. " It means, however, that I shall be pursued. I met Colonel Perez in the Plaza. He noticed that my right hand was bleeding. He'll probably give the alarm. Now I'm turning this envelope with whatever is in it over to you. You can get through if I take another motor car. I may not. Wait, remember how important it is to your brother."

She hesitated a fraction of a second and then shook her head firmly. " We escape together, my friend," she declared. She shouted to the chauffeur, who managed to increase his speed.

" Please, be reasonable."

" Listen, Guy Gorman. If they do pursue, if they wire to stop cars bound for La Guaira, your chances of getting through will be better with a woman. The city was full of tourists today. Many will be going down to the port; the orders will be to stop a man, not a couple. Anyway I shall not abandon you after what you have done for us."

" But I've done nothing, if the package doesn't reach Victor."

" Be silent," she said imperiously. " Hold your hands here. I'll bandage them."

The first and second fingers of his right hand were badly cut and the palm of his right hand ached viciously, but it was no longer bleeding freely. She bound them tightly with a scarf and a handkerchief. " The ship's doctor will take care of your poor hands," she said softly.

The road to the seaport from the capital is broad and well paved, but it descends thirty-five hundred feet in not much more than thirty-five miles. It is as tortuous, as full of sudden twists and turns, of hair raising plunges, as any mountain road in the world. At the half-way point a monument has been built where a dreadful accident once occurred, the memorial consisting of the battered hulk of a motor car placed on a high stone pedestal.

A few miles out of the city where the steep descent begins, the native driver of the car applied his brakes. Guy would have none of that.

" Double fare if you get us there in an hour," he called. The man decided to take chances. The fugitives sat tense and silent. Her little hand crept out and touched his. The touch of her soothed his wounded palm. They were thrown against each other as the machine rounded curves at dangerous speed.

Twenty minutes passed, and they were ten miles down when a flashlight ahead signalled to stop. Felice opened a bag and pressed a small revolver into his hand.

" Shoot if you must," she whispered. " Pray the Virgin it won't be necessary."

It was not. A man and a woman were operating the flashlight and a car in the ditch which lay against the mountainside told the story.

" Don't stop," commanded Guy.

" No, wait. It's providential," cried the girl. " Don't you see?"

" Speak English?" called the man in the road.

Guy nodded. " What can we do for you?"

" Take us down. We've got to make the Rotterdam. Our car was sideswiped by a big truck filled with soldiers."

Guy jumped into the road. " On one condition," he said. " I'm a newspaper correspondent who has to get out of the country with a big story that the censorship wouldn't let me cable. If we are stopped, back me up when I say this lady and myself are cruise passengers on the Rotterdam."

The woman was peering at Felice.

" But it's Miss Phyllis Brown," she exclaimed. " Hello, Miss Brown."

" I didn't recognize you, Miss Brown," said the man. " If this gentleman is a friend of yours I'll back him up. Glad to put something over on these Venezuelans."

The pair crowded in. The driver whined for more pay and the new male passenger hastened to hand him five dollars.

" This is Mr. and Miss Farlow, Mr. Smith," said Felice. " We all want to put something over on the Venezuelans." She nudged Guy with her elbow.

" So they have a censorship, eh? Who do they think they are?" demanded Farlow.

AS a matter of fact, while there was no official censorship, nothing went over the cables or radio that Gomez didn't wish to let out and correspondents' mail was frequently tampered with.

On through the night flew the car, tearing round curves, dipping always toward the sea. The lights of La Guaira were visible ahead, a cluster of stars as they rose high on the side of the mountains which rise abruptly from the sea. Over at the left was a large lighted building, the Leper Hospital. A mile long, and the driver braked suddenly.

A gate across the road had been closed.

Felice clutched Guy's forearm so tightly. A crisis.

Uniformed officers with flashlights appeared. An officer stepped to the side of the car and threw the flash upon its passengers. Guy had reason to be grateful for the presence of the Farlows, as the crush in the back seat enabled him to keep his bandaged hands concealed.

" Give an account of yourselves," the man commanded sharply.

" Cruise passengers of the Rotterdam," Guy said glibly.

" Names, please."

He produced a passenger list to check off the names.

" Mr. and Miss Farlow, Miss Brown. My name's Smith."

Felice's selection of a name had been lucky. There must be Smiths on the passenger list. The Smiths are everywhere.

A second's tense pause. " Very well, go ahead," said the officer, stepping back. The gate across the road was swung open and the car proceeded. In ten minutes the four Americans stepped out upon the quay and walked briskly to one of the ship's launches which was waiting. Guy dropped upon a seat with a sigh of relief. Felice leaned heavily against him.

" Hold me. I feel as if I were going to faint," she whispered. " How silly, since it's all over."

Guy put an arm about her hungrily. While he knew that it was not all over, he did not have the heart to tell her. If Colonel Perez believed him responsible for the fire in the Almeraldo mansion, he probably would have wired the ship to watch out for Guy Gorman.

The boat, being full, immediately started for the liner. With five hundred passengers the men at the gangway could not be expected to pick out a strange face in the night.

Guy ran that gantlet successfully and the girl and youth stepped upon the deck of the steamer thankfully.

" Now go to your cabin, Felice," he said. " I'll keep moving about on deck until the ship is well out to sea. For all I know, they have orders to put me ashore if they find me on board."

" Oh, but they couldn't. This is foreign territory."

" Not in a port it isn't," he replied. " Please do as I say."

She departed reluctantly. He went up to the promenade deck and dropped into a deck chair in the shadows. It was eleven twenty-five. Thirty-five minutes during which anything could happen.

The document precious to the Almeraldo family was safe in his breast pocket. His fingers throbbed, the handkerchief with which she had bound them was soaked with blood. He set his teeth. Not until the ship was outside the three mile limit dare he go to the purser and buy a ticket, or ask the ship's doctor for medical attention.

He mused upon the phenomenon of cruise ships. No passports. Welcome everywhere. No port formalities. The Caribbean islands and nations were pleased to offer their passengers every facility to rush ashore for a few hours and spend their American dollars.

If this had been a regular liner he would have had to go before the port officials before going on board, he would have had to present a ticket already purchased at the gangway. Instead he had mingled with the mob and here he was. And, welcome sound, the anchor was being weighed.

He wondered if the interior of the Almeraldo house had been entirely consumed. A pity since it was full of art treasures and some day Victor might have had it restored to him. Well, he was out of a job. Victor had said there was wealth in this enterprise, whatever it was. He could use some money.

THE ship was moving, her siren was blowing. He couldn't stand the pain in his hands any more. Rising he went into the main companionway, picked up a passenger list, consulted it and boldly presented himself at the cabin of the ship's doctor. Until he had dressed the cuts, the Dutch physician asked no questions. Then he demanded, " How it happen, eh?"

" Car accident. Broken windshield."

" Humph. Name and cabin."

For the second time that night he took the name of Smith in vain. He had found an N. R. Smith on the passenger list. After that he sought the purser and bought a ticket to Curacoa, the Dutch island where the ship would arrive in the morning.

It had been easy. Perhaps there had been no pursuit, perhaps no suspicion had attached to him.

Turning from the purser's window, he found himself face to face with Felice. He smiled at her contentedly.

" Let's go on deck," he suggested.

" It will be nice having you on board," she said.

" But I am going ashore in the morning at Curacoa, Felice. You, of

course, are going back to New York."

They leaned upon the rail and watched the moon play upon the water. For a while they were silent.

"I've seen an undreamed of side of you tonight," he said. "You've always been so feminine, so—er—Spanish. Why, an American girl couldn't have exhibited more courage and ingenuity."

"I'm one of the best women motor car drivers in Venezuela. When I was at school in Washington I took up flying until my brother found out about it. By that time I had my pilot's license. You should see me in men's clothes on a wild horse on one of our ranches. When we were children there was no stunt my brother did that I didn't attempt. In Caracas, of course, one must comply with conventions."

"Well, I think you're marvelous. A kid like you a licensed aviator. I'd like to see you in men's clothes—you're blushing, Felice."

"I'm not," she denied. "Let me have that packet. I'll return it to you in the morning. Shall we breakfast together?"

He handed her the packet. "I'll say we shall," he said enthusiastically. "Look here, Felice, now that we're safe away, what's it all about?"

"Victor will want to tell you himself," she replied evasively. "Now I must go to my cabin."

They met at seven thirty in the dining room, but the girl, who had been like a pal the night before, was all woman once more, seductive, evasive, and determined to keep him off a certain subject.

"Would you like to take me sight seeing?" she asked. "I've never been ashore here, curiously enough."

"Unfortunately I can't. The ship is late and will stop only to land and take off passengers. That's why I'd like to talk to you. We can never tell about the future. You go back to New York. It may be months before we finish your brother's business."

"Who knows when we'll meet again?" she said gravely. "It may be much sooner than you expect."

"It can't be. Now, Felice, I don't understand you this morning."

"A girl often doesn't understand herself. Here's the precious package, and give my love to Victor."

They had gone on deck and were at the rail. The anchor was propping—the ship was not entering the harbor, but laying out at sea. A tender was coming out from shore.

For a while they stood there in silence. A steward with a booming voice was shouting, "Passengers for Curacoa at the gangway, please." "No, madame, the cruise passengers cannot go ashore. We leave immediately."

"It's good-by, then," said Guy mournfully.

She looked up at him, her black eyes brimming with tears.

"Guy," she said, "you may kiss me good-by."

From the tender he waved to her and she waved back. He stood on the quay and watched the big ship until she was far out to sea. After that, with lagging footsteps, he sought a steamship office to take passage to the Columbian city of Barranquilla, where he had a rendezvous with Victor, and then sought the radio office to send his friend the cryptic message which meant "success so far." In his room he inspected the packet.

To his astonishment the flap of the envelope bore evidence of having been steamed open and glued together again. It had not been in that condition when he took it from the secret hiding

place, so it must have been Felice who had done it. Anyway, no harm had been done.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MINES OF THE ALMERALDOS.

THE Colombian city of Barranquilla is both a seaport and a river port. From it depart the steamers which make the long journey to the headquarters of the Magdalena River, the only road to the capital Bogota. Ocean liners put in there, and there were several fairly good hotels.

People put up at them to await the departure of the Bogota bound aquaplanes, a German line which has reduced the length of the journey from the coast to the high mountain capital from fourteen days to twenty-four hours.

At the Hotel Castile, Gorman waited impatiently for the arrival of Victor Almeraldo. Since the day when he returned to his hotel in Curacoa to find that his luggage had been searched, he had worn the packet sewn to the inside of his shirt and he had slept in his shirt.

He was sitting on the hotel terrace at a spot from which he could watch arrivals, about four in the afternoon of the fourteenth day since his hasty departure from Caracas, when he saw Victor come up the steps and cross the terrace. He rose and waved his arm, but Victor, affecting not to see him, went inside.

Guy took the hint and went to his room. In five minutes there was a knock on the door. He opened it and Almeraldo stepped inside and embraced him with Spanish exuberance.

"*Amigo mio,*" he cried, "it's good to see you. You can imagine my delight when I received your radiogram."

"Then why the devil didn't you answer it? Why leave me fretting in this filthy town for two weeks?"

Almeraldo threw himself in a chair and gazed at him fondly.

"I knew you would come here and it was not wise for me to send you a reply."

"Oh, you're becoming discreet. After your crazy attempt upon Gomez, it's rather comical. And how dared you send your sister upon such a dangerous mission? I ought to beat you up for that."

The young Venezuelan's face grew very serious. "You would be right, Guy," he declared. "Believe me, I tried to dissuade her, but my little sister is very stubborn and she knew there was nobody else to whom I dared entrust that letter. When she disguised herself, I hardly knew her myself. And she persuaded me that she ran practically no risk. You know that there is no watch on Yankee tourists. She delivered the letter to you and hastened back to the ship."

"Did she tell you that?"

"But I haven't seen Felice."

"What? The Rotterdam must have reached New York before you sailed."

"She was not on board. She decided to remain in Panama with some relatives of ours. I received a letter from her stating that all was well."

"But she told me she was returning to New York. Come to think of it, she didn't. I took it for granted when I left her at Curacoa."

"You left her?"

"Yes. I escaped on the Rotterdam. Victor, old man, it was like a voice from the tomb when I read your letter. We heard that all the participants in the *coup* who survived had been shot."

"I was condemned to death," said Victor solemnly. "I had given up hope when the Dictator's aide-de-camp came into my cell and told me that Gomez had decided, in consideration of the great services of my ancestors to Venezuela, to change my sentence to exile. A cruise steamer took me to New York. I landed there without funds, practically. Of course I had cabled ten or fifteen thousand dollars to New York when I sent Felice and her aunt north. You realize how long that would last the Almeraldos."

"You could have made arrangements to transfer a large sum before you set out with the other idiots to ambush the President."

Victor laughed gayly. "But, my friend, we expected to succeed, to set Venezuela free. It never occurred to me to prepare for any other result."

Guy shrugged his shoulders. "Typical," he commented. "Now what the devil is this mystery? What are we going to do? How are we going to get rich?"

He handed Victor the fat envelope, which the Venezuelan tore open eagerly. "This, my friend, is our fortune," he declared bombastically.

"Buried treasure, eh?"

"In a way. It is a map which will lead us to the emerald mines of the Almeraldos. My grandfather made the map fifty years ago. Leaving Caracas, as I did, unexpectedly, I did not take it with me. In fact I had forgotten its existence. I remembered it when I found myself facing adversity."

"You're weird," remarked Gorman. "You have a fortune in an emerald mine and you forget its existence. Victor, you deserve to be broke."

Victor laughed loudly. "But certainly. You do not understand, Guy. Upon our emeralds brought from the mines by my grandfather we built a great fortune. The way to the mines is haunted by death. Only desperate men would dare attempt to reach them. I am desperate. Are you?"

"Well, I suppose so," said Guy dubiously. "Thanks to you, I have lost my job. Look here, does anybody else know about the mines?"

"It's a tradition of Venezuela. No doubt scores have perished trying to locate them in the last half century."

"Well, does anybody else know about the existence of this map?"

Victor looked a trifle perturbed.

"Well, yes," he confessed. "Some years ago when my father was in a tight spot he thought of recouping by going after the emeralds. He went to a money lender named Juan Perez and offered him a share for financing an expedition. It happened just then that things took a turn for the better. In a few months my father was more wealthy than before, so he called off the deal."

"Is this Perez any relation to Colonel Perez?"

"Why?"

"I'd better tell you what happened in Caracas. I'm sorry to say that in securing your map I inadvertently set fire to your house. I am afraid it was nearly destroyed. I'm dreadfully sorry, Victor."

A spasm of pain had crossed the handsome countenance of his friend.

"After all," said Victor, "Gomez is the loser, since the place was no longer mine."

"As I was leaving the house I ran into Colonel Perez, who recognized me. I had cut my hand on broken glass, and when we shook hands he discovered it was bleeding. Do you suppose he might suspect me of having been inside your house, of causing the fire?

Would he be apt to think, knowing me for your intimate friend, that I had gone there to get this map?"

"No-o," said Victor slowly. "My father, fearing that Juan Perez might denounce him to Gomez, stated that the map was in New York. The General himself sent an expedition south in search of our mine several years ago, but didn't locate it."

"I jumped to the conclusion that he would believe I had gone there to get something of value. In Curacoa my effects were searched. I think I have been watched since my arrival."

Victor nodded. "And no doubt my arrival has already been wired to Gomez. His spies are everywhere. *Caramba!* What a fool I have been. I was almost grateful to the old scoundrel for exiling me instead of shooting me. The deeds of my ancestors! What does he care for my ancestors? Guy, he turned me loose because he knew of the existence of this map. He expects me to go after the emeralds."

"Well," said Guy despondently, "that's that."

"It only increases our difficulties, but we shall succeed," said the indomitable young Latin. "They are not sure you had the map. A sensible man would have sent his treasures out of the country before embarking upon a forlorn hope like our *coup d'état.*"

"Where is this emerald mine?"

"About a thousand miles in the interior, beyond the Pampas and the jungles. We'll lead the General a merry chase."

"The jungles. I've heard of them. Fever, man-eating fish, alligators, jaguars—"

"I told you death haunts the trail, but the prize is worth the risk, Guy Gorman."

"Maybe."

"Guy, we'll bring back millions in emeralds. Your share will be a fifth, which is about our chances, one to five, that we ever return."

"For all you know, the mines may be exhausted. How can two men—"

"We shall be five. I have made preparations. That's why I delayed in New York. I'll make you a proposition. I'll advance you a thousand dollars. Go to New York. If I return I'll pay you a tenth of our profit—if you accompany me, a fifth."

"You darn fool, of course I'll go with you," said Guy, laughing.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Irishman's Holiday

By R. V. GERY

Author of "Fire Island," "Dead Man's Reef," etc.

"Not until we've got things a lot clearer," she said

Red Muldoon, the Mick from Mickville, takes a day off to tangle with a gang of South Seas cutthroats

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

GREETED WITH BULLETS.

"DID you ever," says Malacca Joe, "foregather with Terence Muldoon, the mad Mick from Mickville? You did not, eh? Then lemme tell you you're shy an experience, mister, for Red Muldoon counted just that, in the days when—"

Malacca leans back in his wicker chair, takes a thoughtful pull at the mug of hard liquor perpetually at his elbow, and prepares to narrate. At such times it is well, for those congenitally addicted to tall yarns, to lean back too, and take a general grip on surrounding objects and one's own hair, for Malacca Joe at his lurid best is phenomenal. He is none the less intriguing to a listener by the mere fact that now and again he is telling the truth.

Yeah (says Malacca), there was Red Muldoon, the wild Irishman from County Clare. There ain't no gettin' away from it, he was a caution, that

one — a two-way-discharge, ginger-haired rapscallion that didn't give a consecrated hoot for anything between hell and high water, or anybody, I guess, but his own hard, hairy self and what was coming to it. When Red saw a thing, he went and took it, if you get me, and if anyone's toes got trod on, why, that was just too bad, that's all.

Born to have his own way regardless — and gettin' his own way, d'ye see? An' by the same token never satisfied or content when he'd got it. There's a few like him, out here around the islands. I reckon that's why they're here, mainly, for they're unhappy anyway, an' there's something about the Pacific that kind of attracts that sort.

Anyway, that's how Red Muldoon was, ten year ago—a roarin', two-fisted hell-raiser hereabouts, hungry for somethin' he didn't know what, an' stompin' around, a damn nuisance to himself an' everyone else, by reason of that very same trick o' the mind.

Until he got some sense knocked into that thick Mick skull of his; learnt that there's things beyond havin' your own way an' tramplin' on other people to get it. An' that's the tale that's comin', so fill up an' drink hearty, an' lemme sling the *bat* for a while.

Let's see—there was me, an' Red, an' a cove by the name of Shag Petersen, some kind of a Dane or such, hammerin' round the islands in a twenty-ton old witch of a cutter Red had picked up some place; stole as like as not, an' he called her by a name it ain't perhaps decent to repeat here. He wasn't the only one to use pretty language about her, neither, for she leaked like a basket, and one or other of us was always muckin' with her paralytic old pump.

What didn't improve matters none was the weather. It'd been blowin' for days, with plenty threats of worse to come—the kind of hot, misty, typhoon stuff that might bank up any minute into extry-special hell an' send us an' the cutter to the bottom quicker'n kiss your hand. Navigatin' was just a joke with us, anyway; but in that weather an' with them currents it wasn't even that. We didn't know from Adam's pet sow where we were or what might be comin' next, when right in the beginnin' of one evenin' Petersen up forward howls out:

"Breakers!"

RED MULDOON jams the helm down, an' nearly takes the stick out of her doin' it.

"Damnation!" says he. "Now what? You Joe, slip up an' see what ye can see, quick!"

'Twasn't no lady's-maid job, shinnin' up that crazy mast in that sea; but I done it an' took a *dekko* round. What there was there didn't look too merry-an'-bright just at first, but after a minute I see somethin'.

"Yeah," I says, slippin' down, "it's breakers all right—barrier reef, an' there's smooth water beyond. It's an island, but what kind of island, or whereabouts, ask Susannah—"

"Ah, stop yer jaw!" snaps Red. "Did ye see a break in the reef, ye lummox?"

"Sure I did," I says. "It's a piece to port here, an' there's smooth water beyond. We're all to the mustard, as the sayin' is, boys!"

Red swings her off on the wind again. "Get forrard with ye," says he. "An' not so much of the ould gab. We'll see what we'll see, an' that's that!"

Well, there wasn't nothin' to be done with Red when he was like that, we

knew well enough, so we said nothin'; and in a while here we were, through the reef an' standin' in across the quiet lagoon towards the island. You could just see it now, the palms an' the beach risin' out of the mist—ghostly, kind of, an' deserted seemin'ly, but welcome enough to us, as you may lay, after that poundin' we'd had. Red put the cutter up in the wind again, an' stared at the place under his hand.

"So?" he says quietly. "Well, dear knows where ye are or what ye are, but here's good-day to ye, an' the top o' the mornin', me darlin'—"

Smack!

It come like that, right in the middle of his talk—an' there wasn't any mistakin' what it was. High-power bullet, by the Lord! an' it ripped a sliver o' wood out o' the cutter's coamin', within a foot o' where Red was standin'.

"Jee-*rusalem!*"

Believe me, I dropped down in the cockpit mighty quick—an' I wasn't hardly there when here comes another little packet o' peppermint, smash into the glass o' the cabin skylight. Shag Petersen up by the mast had dropped flat on the deck, an' I was pretty much in a heap down there on the cockpit floor; but Red Muldoon stood at the wheel still, scowlin' at the shore.

"Ach, to hell—" he says, an' that was all.

"Down, you fool! Get down!" I howls. "D'ye want to be drilled? They'll knock you off next time!"

Might just as well have talked to the moon. I don't think the lunatic so much as heard me. He was still upright there, his hand on the spokes of the wheel, glowerin' out from under them red brows of his. Another bullet went *ping-g-g* somewheres past his ear, but he took no more notice of it than of a mosquito. All he did was stare—an' then he was round on us like a tiger.

"Anchor down, ye swabs!" says he, mighty rambunctious. "We're goin' in to look what's all this!"

AN' with that he dives into the cabin an' comes out again with his *bundook* in his fist—an old black Webley he'd picked up some place, an' a nice-lookin' article she was, at that—an' dives for the boat we'd stowed amidships under the boom.

"Come on, come on, now!" says he to Shag an' me. "Do ye quit that Sunday-school minanderin', the pair of ye, an' wag a leg overside. They's no one usin' me for a fool, bedad, without me knowin' somethin' about it."

Yeah, that was Red Muldoon all over—never feelin' fear himself, an' wonderin' that anyone else would. Myself, me knees was knockin' together an' me tongue clucked when I tried to speak, an' as for Shag, that big Dane was yellow round the gills an' sweatin'. To row in, cool an' owdacious, across maybe seventy yards of lagoon, with a sharpshooter somewhere in them palms drawin' a neat bead on your serviceable vertebræ, wasn't any manner o' fun, an' damme if I care who knows it. Plain murder was what it was, an' no error.

All the same, we was with Red Muldoon, an' him an' bein' murdered didn't go together somehow—an' what was more, that feller with the popper over in the trees looked to have let up poppin' for a while. Pickin' out a nice easy spot on them serviceable vertebræ, prob'ly, thinks I. Sweet idea to have sloshin' round in your head, pullin' on an oar, ain't it?

But nothin' happened. In a few minutes the boat's nose grounded on the sand.

An' then it broke. Just as Red Muldoon had a leg overside an' was headin' for the palms, someone come walkin' out of 'em, cool as you please. I heard Shag Petersen catch his breath.

"*Gott!*" says he. "A woman, uh?"

A woman it was, to be sure—maybe I'd do better callin' her a girl, for she wasn't any more. But hell an' blazes, gentlemen, what a girl! No, she wasn't one o' your peaches-an'-cream affairs, not yet a coffee-skin from the islands; she didn't tally up with that sort at all. She was white, an' tanned, an' pretty tall an' well built an' she'd the most amazin' mop o' red hair you ever clapped your eyes on.

What's more, she was in considerable of a tantrum, it looked like. She come marchin' down the beach.

"Well?" says she, mighty sharp. "An' who may you be, all of you?"

She'd got a gun slung across her elbow, an' it was the gun that'd fired them shots out yonder—not much doubt o' that. Shag an' me, we just looked at her, flummoxed-like, but Red Muldoon —trust him!—did the honors. He went wadin' ashore through the little ripples, just as if this was a picnic he was on.

CHAPTER II.

DOPED DRINKS.

"AN' a fine good mornin' to ye, Miss *Asthore*—" he begins, pullin' the celebrated old blarney for her benefit an' stickin' his pistol out of sight in his pants.

"Stop!"

By the Lord, she'd upped with the rifle an' shoved it in his gob, so that he started back an' pretty near sat down on the sand.

"Don't you move, now!" says she. "Not until we've got things a whole lot clearer than they are just now. I asked you a question, didn't I? Who are you, an' where d'you come from?"

Well, there's some funny things happen hereabouts, I don't have to tell you, but this was goin' a bit beyond funny. From where I was I could see a kind of a slow flush creepin' up the back of Red's neck. He didn't relish this stuff, not from nobody—least of all, I guess, from a copper-topped armful o' squeeze here on a lonely beach. 'Twasn't what he'd been used to from that sort, not by a long chalk.

So what's he do, bein' the wild lunatic he was, but jump her, swift an' sudden! The rifle banged—yeah, she was meanin' business, not much doubt —an' the bullet went sailin' out to sea some place; an' here's Red Muldoon, in a proper Irish paddywhack, wrestlin' the gun from her.

"*Arrah,* to the divil with ye!" says he between his teeth. "What's eatin' ye at all, ye foot-an'-a-half o' dynamite? Come here to me now, an' we'll proceed to a small trifle of argyment—"

An' with that he grabs her an' lays her across his knee.

"Now," says he, "me darlin' missy, here's somethin' ye've been in the want of this long time, I'm thinkin'—" an' he gives her a couple of belts, playful-like, and lets her up on her feet again —"and now maybe ye'll inform me what in thunder it's all about!"

That was Red, all over, with women; keep 'em guessin', from this minute to that; one time hard, next tender, a kick an' a kiss. He'd a theory that was the way to manage 'em, an' don't ask me whether he was wrong or no, for they ain't my pidgin. Anyways, it seemed to be all right with this one, for she dropped back an'

stood there, quiet an' subdued all of a sudden. An' she was a good-looker all right—yeah, a proper lallapaloosa, boys. Not much denyin' that.

"Come on, now," says Red, "who are ye, an' what's this place?"

She looked at the three of us for a minute, an' then she smiled—it was more of a grin, for she'd the layout of a heavenly handsome boy.

"I'm—Dora Smith," says she. "An' I'm sorry I jumped at conclusions, gentlemen. We—we're not used to strangers here. Will you come up to the house an' see my father?"

Well, there wasn't any refusin' an invitation pitched like that, neither by Red nor any of us. Red answers her grin, an' kind of bows.

"Ah, there's no need to be apologizin'," says he, in that offhand, careless manner of his. "Maybe when you an' me get a trifle better acquainted, sweetheart, it's not thirty-thirty slugs ye'll be throwin' at me, at that. Lead on, now, an' we'll be glad to meet the ould man—though faith, he's an odd way of welcomin' folks. Lead on!"

So there we went, the three of us, paradin' up through the palms an' pandanus, with the girl an' Red in front, an' Shag an' me behind. Shag was a queer kind of a cuss, as maybe I've indicated already, an' he wasn't given to sayin' much at any time; but now he was silent as a graveyard, and his jaw was juttin' out in an obstinate way I'd seen before.

"What's the matter?" I whispered.

BUT he only shook his head. He didn't talk, unless there was somethin' to talk about, Shag didn't. All the same, he wasn't happy, that was easy seen; he didn't go for the women the way Red did, not by no means.

"Humph!" thinks I. "Now what kind of a shemozzle's all this, anyway?"

Yeah, I was pretty leery all at once, walkin' along there among the trees. By an' by we come to a clearin', set back from the sea, an' lookin' over the inside of the island, as you might say—up towards the high ground, where the rocks an' peaks showed brown through the green. There was a house there, a bungalow, well built an' with a garden round it; an' on the veranda of the house was a long chair, an' a man in it. Red checks a minute.

"This the dad?" he asks the girl.

She nods. "Yes," says she, with a kind of a gulp. "He's—he's sick. Paralyzed—"

Red clucks his tongue. "So?" he says, walkin' on. "Well, well, that's too bad. An' so that's why ye were the least bit awkward with us to begin with, eh? All alone with him, maybe?"

At that she doesn't say a word, for we're at the veranda edge, lookin' at her father. There wasn't much to say about him; he'd got it, an' got it bad. One side of his face was pulled down into a silly kind of a grin. No, he wasn't a pretty sight. Stroke, of course, an' the next'd finish him.

Well, we stood there, the three of us, an' if we looked like the fools we felt, there weren't three bigger gabies in the South Seas that minute. Even Shag Petersen was ashamed, I b'lieve; anyhow, he looked silly enough.

"Tare an' ages!" says Red under his breath. "He's flummoxed, the poor fella!"

The girl didn't seem to hear him, for she leads the way on to the veranda. "He can't speak," she says very quiet. "So it's no good your passin' the time of day with him, gentlemen. But if you'll sit down a minute, I'll fix you

some drinks, an' then you can talk to me—if you wish. Tell me your names, maybe—"

She said the last as she was goin' into the house, offhand and flippant-like, somethin' reflectin' Red Muldoon's own manner. But Red wasn't so fly now with his tongue; he was considerin' the crooked dummy in the the chair, wrinklin' up his brow an' pullin' at his lip.

"Phew!" says he. "That's bad, boys. Mighty bad for a kid the likes of her."

"Bad enough," says I. "But—what is the meanin' of it all? Why the shootin'?"

BEFORE Red could say anything we got another kind of a jolt. Someone comes pad-paddin' round the corner of the house an' stops, starin' at us. It was a big yellow man—an' if his trouble had made the girl's father look like somethin' out of a bad dream, this chap was worse, the way God made him. Some kind of a Chink, one o' the raw-boned, tall sort, an' he looked like the devil served cold. Ugly great son of a witch, if you get me.

"Crimes!" says Red. "An' who may you be, misther?"

Friend Chink ain't sayin'. He stops there for a couple of breaths, takin' us all in out o' them slit eyes of his, an' then he was off again, pad-pad where he come from.

"Holy cat!" says I. "That's a beaut, an' no error!"

The girl come out of the house as I spoke, with a tray an' gin swizzles on it.

"An' who's your yellow friend, me dear?" says Red, taking his glass.

She laughs. "Him?" says she. "Oh, that's only old Wing Lee. He's quite harmless, I assure you, gentlemen. An' now, here's luck to you all—whoever you may be!"

An' she lifts her glass, grinnin' at us still in that schoolboy trick of hers.

We ought to have known—o' course we ought to have known. But we didn't; she put it across us, fair an' proper. Red gets to his feet, an' so do I.

"*Achudth,*" says he in that Irishry of his, "here's your sweet health—"

An' we drinks, hearty. 'Twasn't a split second later I knew we'd been had—hocussed, doped, laid on the line. Things started spinnin' right off, and I'd barely time to hear Red's glass drop on the floor an' his silly curse, when I was out. Flop on the veranda, like a pole-axed steer.

Well, that was what Red Muldoon an' his doin's with the women had let us into. Weeks later, it seemed to me, I was drivin' a coach-an'-pair over the hobs of hell, an' every hoof of them plugs was red-hot an' poundin' into my brain.

"Whoa!" I says to 'em. "Whoa, an' be damned to you!"

One of 'em turns over his shoulder an' looks at me out o' blindin' white eyes.

"He's coming to," he says, an' vanishes. I was somewhere on my back on a mighty hard floor, with a head like ten million hornets and a sick taste in my mouth. Someone was there with a light—yeah, it was the girl.

"Uh-huh?" says I. "Where am I?"

"Here," she says, mighty stiff. "Sit up an' behave yourself. You're half an hour after the others."

I SAT up, groanin', an' she flashed the light—a torch—round where we were. There was Red an' Shag Petersen, propped up against the walls, blear-eyed an' foolish-lookin'; an' there

standin' over them was the Chink, Wing Lee. He seemed to be almighty pleased with himself, which is more than I was, rememberin' dizzy what'd happened. We'd walked into it, neat an' clever, whatever it was. An' it was somethin', for all three of us was tied up, wrist and ankle.

"Ker-ripes!" I says.

Red grins—he'd screw out some kind of a bit of mountebankery, that big lump, if it was the Old Gentleman himself he was colloguin' with, across the coals.

"Scuppered, eh?" he says, light as be-damned. "An' by the brightest pair of eyes under the Cross—"

Slap!

The light blinked out, and there it was—the sound of flesh on flesh, a hand laid on with a will. Red gave a sort of a grunt, more surprised than hurt. Then he laughed outright.

"The brightest pair of eyes under the Cross," he says. "An' bedad, the hardest hand—an' heart! An' now give over the blandandherin', *acushla,* an' let's have the truth. What in heaven or out of it d'ye figure you're playin' at, at all?"

The torch snapped on again, an' there was Red, sittin' just as before. One side of his face was good an' red under its sunburn, but he was still showin' his white teeth in a smile as he looked up into the dark. It was a bit before the girl answered, an' we could hear her breathin' fast.

"That's enough!" she breaks out. "I know you, and you're not bluffing me. You're Tarrion, and you know it—"

There was a silence again for maybe the inside of a minute, and then Red chuckles.

"Tarrion, eh?" says he. "Well, not bein' familiar with the gentleman, I can't say if that's a compliment or no. But what's he done to you, me dear, the way ye'd clout him in the puss that unmerciful? Or was it, maybe, after that trifle o' spankin'—"

At that she turns on him, more wild than ever.

"That'll do!" she says, vicious as all hell. "You're Tarrion, and you'll regret coming here. I suppose you thought, just because I was a girl, you could walk in on us as you liked. Well, you were wrong, Captain Tarrion, and you'll have to pay for it!"

Red Muldoon had stopped laughin'. "Bedad," says he, "an' you're somethin' new in wildcats, darlin'. I dunno what's stravagin' around inside that pretty head o' yours, but maybe it's not occurred to ye I'm not Tarrion at all—"

"You are!" says she. "Don't argue."

MULDOON shrugs. "As ye like, o' course," he says. "But there's me cutter anchored down yonder, with sailin' papers in the locker, all correct an' in order from the consul at Noumea six weeks ago. An' let me tell ye, in case ye don't know it, that them Frogs don't deal in cooked documents—much. Devil a bit they do, me dear. Muldoon's me name, an' here's Briggs, an' this is Petersen. Ye're up the wrong tree this time."

He was serious now, an' that line o' talk ought to've worked with anyone. But it didn't with the missy, an' she was bankin' up for another flare-out, when the big yellow cove said somethin' in Chinese. Looked like he'd followed the reasonin' all right, an' was suggestin' bein' a bit more amenable. Leastways she quit the high-horse lay all of a sudden, an' without a word more to any of us went out. The Chink

followed her, an' the door locked with a click, leavin' us in the dark.

"An' that's that!" says I. "Some little terror, the lady friend, Red!"

He don't say nothin' for quite a time, like he was thinkin'.

"Ye know," he says at last, as if he's talkin' to himself, "it don't render, all this. Not at all it don't render. Who's this Tarrion, anyway—an' why is she scared of him? By the same token, who's she? Dora Smith, wasn't it? Dora Smith, me eye! It's got jury-name stickin' out a mile."

Shag Petersen speaks. "*Ja!*" says he. "Mebbe I know—I dunno. Dere was a Tarrion, one time in Samoa . . . big bad feller, *ja!* Plenty scamp, sure. . . . I t'ink he catch prison sometime—"

"Scamp, eh?" says Red. "Now just what kind of a scamp, Shag? Get that ould think-box o' yours goin', an' let's see. What shape of a vilyan was he? Like me, anyways?"

"*Na,*" says Petersen. "Big feller with a beard—"

"Humph! Then either it's not the man, or she's never seen him," says Red. "An' judgin' by the way she carries on, I reckon it's the last. They're lookin' for trouble from outside, she an' the Chink—an' they don't know how an' where it's comin', except that there's an *omadhaun* by the name of Tarrion. That's the way of it, boys."

"Sure," says I. "But there's your own question yet to answer—why's she so powerful scared of him?"

"Ah, who knows?" Red says careless. "Shag, got any more on this Tarrion o' yours? Just what way he was bad, as ye say?"

Petersen sat for a long time in the dark, thinkin'; then he grunted. "*Na,*" he says. "I have forgotten—only I know he wass bad; a *schelm.*"

Red groaned to himself. "An' that's useful, ye gowk!" he said. "Is that all's inside that turnip ye call a head? To the divil with ye—"

Well, there wasn't anything to do then but sit an' wait, an' by an' by, sure enough, here's the door opens again, an' missy in it with the torch. She ain't in anything of a better humor, or not much.

"It seems you're right," says she, grudging. "But it's your own fault, coming here at all. We don't want strangers. You'd better get in your boat and go away again, all three of you. It's—it's no place for you."

Her voice shook at the end, so that anyone could have told she was pretty well on edge. It was just the kind of thing that'd take Red up short.

"Ah, God save ye!" says he. "That be damned for a tale, me jewel. We're here, an' we stop, until we see what's in it with this Tarrion party o' yours. Ye'll not get rid of us that easy, I'm tellin' ye!"

At that she begins to cry—more in temper than anything else.

"Go away!" says she. "Go away quick! We don't want you!"

"Ye'll have to put up with us," says Red—an' laughs again like the crazy man he was.

CHAPTER III.

ALLIES.

WELL, that's the way it went. The big Chink let us loose, an' the girl drifted out on to the veranda, an' stood lookin' over the sea. She didn't take no manner of notice of us, an' wouldn't answer any o' Red's talk. He talked plenty, too, tryin' to get her movin', as you might say—but devil a word there was out of her. Red draws me an' Shag aside.

"See here," says he, an' for once in his life I see he's worried, "this won't do, me gallant boys. There's no red-headed bit of a clip goin' to put things over on me so. I'm for gettin' to the bottom of all this—Tarrion an' all, d'ye agree?"

"Hell, yes," says I, for this place had me goin', what with one thing an' another. "There's somethin' mighty rum hereabouts. But what?"

Red grins. "Ask me another," he says. "They're hidin' somethin'—or hidin' from somethin', that's sure. I'd give plenty if the ould fella c'd talk..."

He was still sittin' in the chair there, droolin' from the corner of his mouth an' slobberin' away, a cruel bad sight. I was just wonderin' what might be goin' on inside that poor broke-down brain of his, when Shag grunts.

"Ship!" says he.

Red an' I whips about, an' there's missy at the veranda rail, peerin' out under her hand. You could see the horizon from here, mostly; an' sure enough there's a sail on it.

"Humph!" says Red. "Schooner—comin' up fast!"

No doubt about it, an' if there was, the girl settled it for us. She turned round, an' her face was white under that cloud of bright hair—white as death.

"You—devils!" she says between her teeth. "So that's it! You brought him here—"

An' with that she makes a dive for the gun again, that's leanin' against the wall.

Red was quicker than she was, though. He's jumped her again, an' this time he's got her in his arms.

"Be easy, will ye?" he says. "*Arrah*, what's eatin' ye, ye little donkey? Is that Tarrion yonder?"

She wrenches an' wriggles to get away, but he's the grip on her all right an' don't let go."

"Is that Tarrion?" he asks again.

She gives a kind of gulp an' a choke. "You know damn well it is, you—you beast!" she says. "You're in with him, all of you!"

Red turns her loose—I'd made sure of the gun—an' stands strokin' his chin. He looks at me an' Shag.

"An' what d'ye know about that?" says he. "Here's himself, no less, approachin' umbrageous an' at his ease. An' now, what's the office? Skip out—or stay?"

"No need to ask me," I says. "You know what I think. Try Shag here—"

Petersen's frownin' away to himself, but there's a twinkle in his old eye.

"Tuts!" says he. "It's two for one, whatever, boys, aind't it? *Ja*, we stay!"

AT that the girl drops into a chair, ker-flop, and it's easy seen she's pretty nigh beat. Wing Lee, the Chink, comes runnin' onto the veranda an' says somethin' in that farmyard gabble o' his, but she don't answer him. She's all eyes for Red Muldoon just then.

"Well," says that man, puttin' his hands on his hips an' squintin' down at her. "An' how'd it be if ye found a bit o' sense, *asthore*, an' told us what's doin'? What's your name, for instance?"

She was a long time before answerin'; thinkin' hard, it's clear enough; an' when she does it's in kind of a low voice.

"I'm Ellen Macquarrie," she says. "My—my father's Peter Macquarrie..."

Red Muldoon lets out a long whistle. "Ye—don't—say!" he says. "So

here's where he is! Well, it's the world's wonder how things turn out, ain't it, now? Down in Australia they figured he was dead this long time—"

She looked across at her dad and shrugged; there wasn't much arguin' what that shrug meant. Macquarrie, an' neither Shag nor me'd so much as heard o' the name before, was as good as dead anyway, fixed the way he was that minute. Red thought so too, for he patted her shoulder.

"Ah, there now!" says he. "No need to take on so, me darlin' girl. It's what comes to us all—an' he's happy so, maybe. But what's this Tarrion affair ye're so stirred up about? Who's Tarrion, anyways?"

She got up an' began fidgetin' restlessly to an' fro on the veranda, bitin' at her knuckles. All at once she stopped right in front of Red.

"You knew — you knew us — in Australia?" she said.

Red nodded. "To be sure," he said. "They're weren't many up around Kalgoorlie an' the like that hadn't heard of Peter Macquarrie—"

"What did you hear?" She was all flamin' again, tense and edgy. "Good —or bad?"

Well, that one seemed to have Red stuck for a minute, as if it was a beggar to answer. He laughed.

"There's good an' bad told of us all, *achudth!*" says he, with all of his wicked Irishman's smoothness. "Good an' bad of us all, an' Peter Macquarrie here's no different to anyone else. But there was plenty good, Ellen—plenty good!"

She gives a kind of a choked sob, an' hereabouts I thought it was time to chip in. All this in-an'-out stuff didn't mean a thing to me—an' I'd me eye on that schooner.

"A-hem!" says I. "Not wishin' to interrupt the conversation, Red, that feller's crackin' it on regardless. If ye've anythin' special in mind—"

HE swings over his shoulder an' takes a *dekko* at Tarrion out there to seaward. It was gettin' on towards evenin' by now, an' the sky had cleared, though the wind still held. In an hour's time it was goin' to be dark, although there was a moon in the sky the size of a soup-plate, slung low over the sea.

"True for you, Joe!" he says. "An' we'll have to postpone the leavin's of the discourse till later. It's boot an' saddle now, bedad!"

He took another glint at the schooner and at the light.

"He's seen the cutter down yonder," he says, "an' he's a bit curious. Don't expect it, likely. Wants to run in while the visibility's good an' take a look round. Ellen," he says to the girl sudden, "ye've got me pistol!"

She makes a kind of helpless movement to Wing Lee, an' the big Chink takes it out of some pocket or other in his clothes. Red handles it an' laughs again.

"Faith," he says, "we're not what ye might call well heeled either. There's the ould Winchester down in the cabin yonder, an' this blunderbuss of a .30-.30 ye're such an artist with, me dear, an' me elegant scent-sprinkler here—an' I misdoubt that's all. Unless Rob Roy MacGregor here's packin' anything?"

He nods at the Chink, who seems to be fly enough what it's all about, for he grins fit to make you sick an' drags out a hell of a long knife. Red shakes his head.

"All same pig-stickee, eh?" he says. "Well, there's nothin' against pig-stickin' in its place, but that's not here

just now, I'm thinkin'. Put it away, Wing—it gives me the creeps. An' now we'll get to work, if ye please, all of ye!"

Just like Red Muldoon; the way he always acted. Hard, an' quick on the uptake, an' self-confident as a cock on a dunghill. He didn't know the meanin' of doubt, that great ginger-haired sawney. The girl took him in for a minute, across the chair where her father lay, a sight to make a man shiver; an' then she smiled, for the first time, I b'lieve, since we'd landed.

"Yes," she said. "Lead on—we'll follow you, Mr. Muldoon!"

Well, in the next ten or fifteen minutes Red showed us what we knew well enough already, Shag an' me—that when it came to a push he was a scorcher. He'd it all cut an' dried in his head, seemin'ly; the stratagems for us, with three firearms, an' two of 'em short-range, small-caliber stuff, to tackle Tarrion an' his gang on that schooner.

An' when we'd done what he told us, an' we looked up to find the night fallin', an' the schooner standin' in close to the reef, he cocked his head on one side an' pulled a comical little devil-may-care face at us all.

"Blood on the moon, boys!" says he. "Let's go!"

CHAPTER IV.

A HARD CUSTOMER.

SURE enough, the moon looked queer an' red as we went hurryin' down, the three of us, to the beach. It was one of them nights you find thereabouts sometimes, at the end of a dyin' storm, when the weather seems like it can't make up its mind to quit an' behave, but must go on threatenin' trouble though the glass is risin' all the time.

Everything looked dim an' ghostly, an' the wind had dropped dead, leavin' a kind o' blue mist to rise from the lagoon. The schooner's topsails showed above it, an' we could hear the voice of a man in her cross-trees conning her in, an' the *phut-phut-phut* of her paraffin auxiliary. But beyond that there was nothin' of her to be made out, nor of Tarrion and his lot.

"What's next?" I says to Red.

"Wait here, you an' me," says he. "Shag, slip off to the cutter there an' pick up that Winchester. Quiet, now!"

Petersen kicks the dinghy out into the smooth water an' sculls off in the mist, an' Red an' I stands there on the sand, watchin' the schooner. She's in through the reef now, an' in a while she shuts off engines an' here goes her anchor. There's the sounds of a boat bein' got ready—mebbe she's a hundred yards away or a bit more. Red cocks an ear.

"Lot of 'em," he says, half to himself. "Eight or nine o' the divils, shouldn't wonder. Where's that Shag?"

Here he comes, driftin' in quiet as a puff o' wind. Red waits till he's ashore. Then he pulls the two of us close to him.

"Now," says he, "here's the business. Go on, the pair of ye, an' meet 'em when they land. You're me, d'ye see, Joe, if they're curious, an' ye've been blown ashore here. An' remember now, ye don't know anything—anything at all. Just a couple o' stupid mugs—an' faith, it's well ye'll play the part between ye. Off with ye now, an' be careful!"

He slips away, into the trees, an' Shag an' me looks at one another. We was used to Red an' his ways all right,

but this was goin' it a bit strong, leavin' us to tackle maybe a dozen o' Tarrion's mob. Still, there it was, an' we walked along the sand towards the boat—we could hear it now, its oars dip-dippin' out there in the mist.

"Hoomph!" says Shag, thoughtful-like, an' that's all. He wasn't much of a talker, Shag wasn't, but he was a devil to think.

"Yeah!" I says. "Hoomph it is—an' then some, at that!"

Well, by an' by we could see the boat, grounded on the beach, an' what we saw didn't make us any more comfortable, neither, for there was half a dozen men in her. They spotted us, too, soon as we did them, an' a couple of 'em comes runnin' towards us.

B'lieve me, there was one feller thereabouts just then wished he was safe home and in his bed!

"Ahoy!" they calls. "Who's that? Stand fast or you'll know it!"

Not much doubt but we would, either. Shag an' me stood still, our rifles across our arms, an' Tarrion's men pounded up to us.

"Well?" I says. "An' who may you be—an' what's the meanin' of all this little shemozzle?"

ONE of 'em—he was a tough-lookin' specimen, too—sizes us up.

"O-ho?" says he, impudent. "So that's the way of it, eh? Hey, cap'n, better come an' look here. Two gents wants to know what in hell you mean by bein' alive—"

Tarrion's over by the boat, watchin'; an' now he walks over to us, a lump of a feller with a big black beard on him. Shag makes a kind of a hissin' sound to himself, an' I knew this was the same man he'd seen in Samoa. Not that it mattered just then; nothin' mattered except Tarrion an' what he'd do.

He took a long look at us.

"Well, boys," he says, sneerin', "an' how-de-do this fine evenin', eh?"

There wasn't much to be said to that, o' course, so Shag an' me stood there stupid-like, the way Red had said.

Tarrion laughs. "Not so civil, are ye?" he says. "Well, we'll see about that. Catch hold of 'em there, an' we'll have a look at this ship o' theirs—"

"Hey!" I says, as the other two closes in. "None o' that, now. We ain't doin' nobody no harm, so you let us alone, see?"

An' with that I shows 'em the rifle. Shag's at me shoulder, an' I dare say we looked somethin' of a proposition between us. Anyway, they checked an' turned to Tarrion, like they was askin' for more orders.

"Go on—knock em down!" says he.

"I'll drill the first man that moves," says I, although me knees was playin' a tattoo. "Act sensible, mister, whatever your name is."

At that he considers us again.

"So?" he says after a minute. "Well, me young friend, if I were you I'd not worry about my name. Put that damnfool gun o' yours down, an' do it quick. We're nine to two, anyway."

"You don't say so!" says I, playin' for time. "An' what's that got to do with it, I'd like to know? Pretty business when a man can't walk along a beach without havin' himself stuck up by a bunch o'—"

Well, he wasn't standin' any nonsense, this Tarrion, an' he was in a hurry. So he whistles up the rest of the push, an' to cut a long story short, there we were, Shag an' me, with a pair of 'em at each elbow, an' wonderin' soulful-like what was goin' to come next. 'Twasn't pleasant, either, I give you me word.

TARRION don't wait to see how we're takin' it. He just snaps, "Fix 'em!" over his shoulder, calls the rest of 'em after him, an' off with him up the beach, leavin' us pretty much looked after by as tough a couple of plug-uglies as you'd see between this an' Christmas. Our guns was gone, an' we was sittin' on the sand, lookin' down the muzzle of 'em an' feelin' unhappy. Leastways I know I was. This here jamboree of Red's might be amusin' from his end of it, but from where we were it didn't look such a muchness.

What was more, there was worse comin', if I was any judge o' things. Tarrion an' Co. had gone up to that house, an' in about ten minutes they'd find they'd been had—an' there'd be proceedin's, with us on the wrong end of 'em. That's what was in the wind, all right.

I sat there, starin' down the sights of the .30-.30 across the plug-ugly's knee. Nobody said a word, an' it was quiet as death there on the sand. I was strainin' me ears to catch any sound, for Red an' the girl between 'em were due to show up somewhere soon—that is, if anything hadn't gone wrong. If it had—well, it didn't do to think about it. Tarrion'd get wise to the game, an' there wasn't any need to figure what he'd do. I'd seen him, an' that was enough.

So the minutes went on and on and on, an' my gullet got drier an' drier—an' finally, just when I was beginnin' to think somethin' had slipped after all an' we was all for the high-jump, I heard it. The very faintest noise, it was, but there was no mistakin' it; the rollin' of an oar in a grommet. Shag heard it, too, but he didn't even move his head; it'd take more than that to shake him up.

The two plug-uglies heard somethin', too, for they pricked up their ears.

"What's that?" says one.

The other listens—an' I don't know what'd have happened next, but all of a sudden here's the hell's own racket bust out, away there beyond the trees. Shoutin' an' carryin' on somethin' tremenjus, an' here's another time when there ain't much explainin' needed to tell what it was. Tarrion an' the rest of 'em have got to that house an' found nothin' there. Red an' the girl an' Wing Lee have got clear, carryin' the old man—

Yeah, an' now it's our turn—that is, unless we're up an' doin' somethin'. The same notion took hold o' Shag an' me together; an' it was together that we went for the two toughs.

WELL, I'd like to say we *puckarowed* 'em an' got away with it; but it's a fact we didn't. Them two beauties was trained dirty fighters, an'—though one of 'em squibbed off the gun at me an' missed—we knew it in about two jiffies.

I'd done some rough-an'-tumble, knee-an'-thumb scrappin' here an' there, an' I got my feller with a crotch hold that didn't do him no manner of good; but Shag Petersen was just a plain fist-an'-belt merchant. He wasn't up to any o' the tricks of the trade, an' his cove was, so it wasn't long before he was down an' out, sick an' silly an' half-blind, an' the cove was on top o' me. An' that tore it, as you might say. Next I knew was the pair of 'em sittin' on me, cursin' to beat all hell, an' discussin' very artistic what they'd do with us.

"Guttle 'em!" says one. "Cut their ruddy throats!"

"Yeah?" says the other. "That's the way it ought to be, by rights. But I ain't doin' nothin' until skipper's here. He'll be wantin' 'em, mebbe—an' there's somebody I don't aim to get across—"

Number One seems to be agreeable to that, in general, an' it's easy seen Tarrion's got discipline in his lot all right. For a couple o' scamps like them two to hold back just because they're scared o' what he'd say was enough to prove it. All the same, it didn't mean a thing as far as we were concerned; Tarrion'd do us in, likely enough, when he found he'd been fooled.

So I lay there in the dark an' the mist, wonderin' what it felt like to be scuppered in cold blood, an' with Shag groanin' away beside me. An' the next thing was, here's a ruddy glare among the trees, an' more shouts an' yells comin' down to us. The house is afire all right, an' burnin' to beat billy-o, which was part o' Red's little scheme.

Well, thinks I, there's somethin' gone right, anyway. They'll hang around there for a bit, an' in the meantime Red an' the Chink an' the girl'll get clear—

But I was wrong again; strike me saucy, I was wrong! For here's a couple o' people come up along the sand, sociable an' pleasant as you please. An' one o' them's Tarrion, an' the other's the girl!

CHAPTER V.

TRICKERY.

WELL, I dunno how you gents'd have acted if you'd have been in my place, but I don't mind tellin' you I pretty near passed out right there.

Somethin' had slipped—an' slipped bad, by the look o' things. By rights, the girl ought to have been out there in our dinghy with Red, makin' a raid unbeknownst on Tarrion's schooner, for that was the scheme that wild Irishman had worked out. An' I'd heard them, or someone, rowin' on the lagoon there away to our left, an' thought that that part of it, anyways, was goin' along all right, an' that somehow or other Red would get us—Shag an' me—out o' this hell's own mess we was in.

But this last damn show finished it. What it meant or didn't mean left me guessin', but I wasn't in the dark for long. Tarrion an' the girl comes over an' looks down at us.

"Humph!" says he. "So that's it, eh? Tried some rough-house. Well, you seem to have handled 'em all right, between you. Hold 'em there for a minute.—Now, missy," says he to the girl, "take a squint at these two. D'ye know 'em?"

She laughs—a shred of a thing.

"Know 'em?" she says, cool as a cucumber. "Of course I know them. They're part of the outfit—the gang that—that took away my f-father..."

If it hadn't been so almighty serious, it'd have been funny, to hear it come trippin' off her tongue so pat. Whatever else she might be—an' that was a puzzle I'd not the time to worry over right then—she was a beautiful little liar, and I couldn't help tellin' her so.

"Lady," I says, "I dunno where you figure to go, spillin' that line o' talk. I ain't had nothin' to do with—"

Tarrion cuts in, or rather one of his gorillas does, with a clip across the mouth that hurt. Yeah, hurt; an' seein' that there was likely more to come, an' havin' some kind of a wish to be

alive still after all this, I quit talkin'. Tarrion had the girl by the arm, an' was gentlin' her along.

"All right, all right," he was sayin'. "We'll look after 'em for you, don't be afraid. They can't get far, any of 'em. Down the beach here, you said they went?"

"Yes," says missy, prim and proper. "The big man an' Wing Lee, together. They were carrying my—my father."

Tarrion chuckles. "And I've got six men on their trail right now. It won't be long before I've my hands on Mr. Peter Macquarrie—an' the Lord help him when I do!"

At that, it's the girl's turn to chuckle—or rather, laugh, another of her throaty gurgles.

"You're a good little hater—Tom!" she says. "I wouldn't like to be the wrong side of you."

"No," says Tarrion, grim. "You wouldn't."

An' leaves it there. You could have bought an' sold what was left o' my brains for a farthin's worth o' peppermint rock candy. It didn't render at all; nothin' rendered. Everything was crazy under a crazy moon.

There was only one thing surer than a shootin'-match. We'd been had, crossed an' double-crossed, by this red-haired, slick-tongued bunch o' devilment. She was in cahoots with Tarrion, judging by everything, an' had been all along. They were thick as a couple o' thieves, right there on the beach.

YEAH, but who was she—an' who was the man they called Peter Macquarrie? Not her father, surely; even a red-headed little Jezebel like this wouldn't hand her dad over to Tarrion with a grin. It all fair made my head spin, an' no error; but that didn't bring me any closer to the meanin' of it all.

An' then I remembered somethin' else—she'd mistook Red Muldoon for Tarrion to begin with an' pretty nigh murdered the lot of us because of it; yet here she was, paradin' about on his arm, callin' him "Tom," an' ready to give Macquarrie away to him, an' the lot of us as well—

I give it up. It's a gospel fact it was too much for me.

An' then—just when Tarrion was stampin' around, gettin' more impatient every minute for news from his mob, there's a sound from out in the lagoon that stops him dead, an' has him starin' into the mist with his jaw dropped.

It's engines—the paraffin auxiliary on the schooner startin'. An' what's more, as if that wasn't enough, here comes the crack of a shot. Red an' the Chink gettin' in some of their fine work—not a doubt of it.

Well, that started things, I don't mind tellin' you. There's the devil an' all to pay on that beach inside ten seconds, with Tarrion yellyhooin' blue murder an' his outfit comin' runnin' up all ways to once, jabberin' to beat fifty.

"The boat!" Tarrion howls. "Get in the boat! They can't get far—"

In they went, tumblin' over one another an' cursin' most melodious. You'd have thought the end of the world was come, the way they carried on—an' Tarrion wasn't much better than any of 'em. He was just bellerin' like a bull, in a black frantic temper, an' it didn't look so good for Shag an' me, if he got a glimpse of us. Not a bit it didn't, gentlemen.

"See here," says I to meself, "it's about time you were out o' this, Joe Briggs. It ain't healthy just now—"

An' with that I got to me feet—the two fellers that'd been holdin' us had gone with the rest of 'em—an' yanked Shag across me shoulder. Next minute I was runnin' as best I could off into the dark.

"Sweet Sister Mary!" I was thinkin' to meself. "Here's a nice cup o' tea—"

Shag was heavy an' that sand was loose, an' about all there was to do was lug him into the edge o' the palms an' lie there pantin'. Tarrion an' his boat load weren't sixty yards away; I could just see 'em, a lump on the lagoon's rim. Outside, deep in the mist, the schooner's anchor was a-trip—you could hear the clack of a hand windlass—an' by the look of it she was movin' away towards the reef. I remember wonderin', half curious, how Red was goin' to hit the gap...

THEN there was another wicked 'ubbub all of a sudden from Tarrion's lot. They've missed us, thinks I, an' now hold on for squalls an' general tallywhack! Shag's come to himself a bit now, but he's plucky little use; that cove had done him up proper. He groans.

"Lie still!" says I. "Unless you want a slug some place—"

Well, Shag stops his bellyachin', an' we listens. Tarrions carryin' on fit to be tied down there, an' what he says is int'restin', to say the least. For it's not us he's lookin' for—devil a bit of it. It's that girl.

We c'n hear him shoutin' her name—yeah, her right name, Ellen—an' blowin' off outrageous. It's plumb wicked, the expressions that feller's usin', an' it'd be funny if it wasn't so damn serious again.

"Hell an' Tommy!" says I to meself. "Now what?"

There wasn't any answer to that one; just hang on an' see. I got hold of Shag an' between us we crawled a piece back into the trees an' lay listenin' again. Tarrion's still blindin' an' stiffin' there, but in a while he quiets down. There's the sound of pushin' off an' the splash of oars. The mob are rowin' like blazes, too; they ain't sold on bein' marooned in this place here, any more than Tarrion is, it looks like.

"So-ho!" says I. "Well, that's that—an' now will you tell me somethin', anyone? Where's that dam girl?"

Shag don't do more than grunt; he's still catchin' up with things, but he's pretty muzzy yet. Not that I was a whole lot more, neither. This business had me worse fuddled the more I looked at it. I went over to the trees.

"By crimes!" I says to meself. "If this ain't a first prize son of a—"

Someone taps me on the shoulder.

"Easy, there, easy!" says a voice. "Ye're not in Sydney Docks now, me bucko, an' there's ladies present!"

Red Muldoon, by the great hookblock! An' with him, I'll trouble you, no less than the young woman I'd heard not ten minutes ago colloguin' free an' easy with Tarrion, an' passin' unkind remarks about the whole kit an' boilin' of us, pleasant as you please!

CHAPTER VI.

BLOOD ON THE MOON.

WELL, it took me a minute to pull meself together.

"For the love of Jehoshaphat!" I begins.

Red Muldoon grips me by the arm. "Ah, there's enough o' that just now," he says. "Come you here, an' we'll see what's to be seen an' do what's to be done, all decent and in order."

"But what's been happenin'?" says I. "I'm all in the dark yet."

"An' ye'll have to stay so," says Red. "There's no time to be explainin' things to ye just now. We've work to do, the lot of us, before all's through—"

An' with that he turns his head over his shoulder, an' listens to the lagoon. There's still the devil's own delight of a racket proceedin' from Tarrion an' his boat load. Even from where we are we can hear him cursin' at 'em to put their backs into it an' row, an' the splashin' an' wallowin' are somethin' wonderful. Red chuckles.

"Sure, it might be a parcel o' river-horses," says he. "Well, they've an elegant little surprise waitin' for 'em, when they catch up with that schooner o' theirs, the divils!"

"Catch up with her!" says I. "They'll never catch her, rowin' that way. She'll be through the reef an' away. But who's aboard her, anyhow, Red?"

He goes on chucklin'. "No one's aboard her just now, I'm thinkin'," he says, "except mebbe a dead 'un or so. An' as for the reef, she's piled hard an' fast on that this minute. Wing Lee—an' the Lord save him for a handy yellow man!—saw to that..."

"Oh!" I says. There wasn't much else to say. The devilment of the scheme took me between wind an' water for a minute. Then I let out another yelp.

"But see here, Red—what's next? Those hellions out there'll be back, sure pop. An' they're nine to four still!"

He takes me by the arm again an' leads me down along the beach.

"Quiet, quiet!" he says. "Let you come with me, an' we'll see what we will see. Ellen *asthore*, you better go to your dad now, I b'lieve. This here's liable to be nothin' for a girl—"

"I'm comin' with you," she says. "My father's comfortable where he is—and anyway, you can go to blazes, Mister Red Muldoon!"

Believe me, you could almost hear Red's jaw hit his chest at that. Comin' from this little spitfire the way it did—an' where it did—it pretty nigh ran him off the rails. He didn't do more than grunt, an' off with him among the trees, the girl an' me trailin' him with Shag Petersen. Shag was still in a kind of a daze, but comin' up fast.

"Vot iss?" he growls to me, stupid.

"Lord knows," I says, "an' he won't tell. Shut up an' string along. We'll see all in good time, maybe—"

Well, we did that all right. Red leads the way to the edge of the strand, an' here's our own dinghy comin' slippin' along in the dark, with Wing Lee scullin' it, mousy-quiet an' as if he'd been at sea all his life. For a Chink he was the best I've struck, that tall yellow devil.

"All same done him business!" he whispers to Red with somethin' like a giggle. "Velly much damn shindy, eh?" He jerks a finger at where Tarrion and Co. are certainly raisin' hell in a large way. "Now what you do, boss? Killum, huh?"

"About there or thereabouts," says Red Muldoon—an' there wasn't any of the Irish blarney about him now. "Didn't they come after Peter yonder to do the same by him? Losers pay, in this game, bedad!"

THERE was a jarrin' note about him that I'd not heard before, though I knew Red pretty extensive, in plenty o' queer corners. It was as if somethin' or someone had gingered him up above himself—miles an'

miles above himself. Yeah, an' maybe I'd the beginnin's of a glint of what.

"See here," I says, "out with it, Red. What's on your mind?"

He turns on me like a tiger. "Just this," says he. "D'ye think I'm goin' to let Tarrion an' his pack o' rummies there be intrudin' on this one here an' her dad? *Arrah,* what next, I'd like to know. Come on now—you, Joe, only. Wing an' Shag, stay here with Ellen—"

"Nothing of the sort!" says the girl. An' Red slaps her down.

Sure. He slaps her down, ker-flop into the Chink's arms.

"Hould her there, you!" says he. "If ye let her go, I'll skin ye alive, ye cross-eyed son of an idol. This way, Joe!"

And he jumps into the boat, drags me after him, an' shoves off, leavin' her fightin' an' strugglin' lunatic in Wing Lee's long arms.

"Now," he says to me, "scull out here quiet, will ye? I've the least bit o' fixin' to do—an' don't ye jar the boat, me jewel, or ye'll be interviewin' Saint Peter in pieces the size of me thumb-nail. Fair an' easy now!"

Fair an' easy it was, by the Lord, as soon as I see what he was monkeyin' with, forward there! The full of a dynamite stick, no less—it'd slipped me we'd a couple of 'em on the cutter, along with the divin' suit an' the hand-pump we used now an' again on some of our pearlin' skirmishes.

But it hadn't slipped Red; trust him for that, the schemin' Mick. He'd been carryin' it around for dear knows how long, in his pants pocket like as not—since he'd been out to the cutter an' got it, when Shag an' me was bein' operated on by the plug-uglies. An' now he was fiddlin' with a detonator an' a fuse.

An' whistlin'. I pass you me mortal oath that he was whistlin' the heel of some Irish jig or other. Out on that lagoon, in a crazy dinghy, with nine armed men ag'in' him, an' us with just a single stick o' dynamite that was as liable to send us sky-hootin' to perdition as anything else. Didn't I tell ye at the beginnin' he was a lallapaloosa, Red Muldoon?

He finishes his maneuverin' with the stuff an' sits like he was listenin'.

"Here," I says, "lemme get out o' this! It ain't sensible—"

He puts up a finger. "Husht!" says he. "D'ye hear 'em?"

WELL, there wasn't much trouble about hearin' 'em, if that was all. By the sound of it, they'd found the schooner, jammed good an' hard on the coral there, an' they was celebratin' things with a few pious words. Again we could hear Tarrion, blarin' like the bull of Bashan in a fit—an' Red sniggers.

"Roar away!" says he. "Roar away, me bould *bouchaleen!* In a while ye'll remember us an' come skirmishin' wid yer tongue out on our trail. An' then—"

He stops, for there's the sound of oars rattlin' against thole-pins, an' a hatful more fireworks in the shape of blasphemous language, an' plenty splashin'. Tarrion's yelpin' now, for all the world as if he was a bloomin' hound on the trail, just as Red had said. Red leans across to me.

"Here ye are!" he whispers. "Now scull, ye lummox, an' if ye make a sound I'll shove this stick o' peggy's-leg down ye!"

I sculled. I'd the almighty shivers chasin' one another up an' down me spine, an' me teeth was chatterin' like castanets, but I eased the dinghy

through the mist towards the boat.

Red crouched in the bow—an' ye can call me a liar if ye want, but the beggar was still whistlin' to himself between his teeth. I dunno what was goin' on inside that flamin' head o' his—some happy-an'-glorious kind o' notions, sure to be, for this tomfool's business was just the sort of meat he lived on.

Bit by bit we got closer. Tarrion's crew were makin' much too much of a roarin' shine to be keepin' any kind of a lookout at all, I reckon, and anyhow you couldn't see thirty feet in that driftin' smother.

At last it seemed to me that he was almost aboard 'em—I could hear the coves pantin' at the oars an' the ripple round the boat's bows.

An' then it came. "Duck!" says Red, in a kind of a throttled yell, an' I see his arm go up, faint against the gray. Next second he's tumblin' back over the thwart, and I'm on top of him, holdin' me breath an' prayin' at the same time...

Wham-m-m!

It split the darkness an' the mist clear open, a blindin' spurt o' blue-yellow flame. There was the crack an' splinter of wood, a fountain of water, an' a yell that ripped across to us like the howls of the devils in hell—an' Red's on his feet again, both oars out an' rowin' fit to bust for the shore. About time, too, for that blow-up's stove in one side of the dinghy like a smashed orange-box.

BEHIND us there's some splashes, an' some groans, an' a deal of a kick-up generally, but Red ain't takin' any notice. Nor am I, if that's all. They asked for it an' they got it, an' that lagoon was full of sharks anyway. It was them or us, boys—them or us, and I ain't doin' any apologizin' for Red or meself. We went hell-for-leather ashore.

An' not a bit too soon. That dinghy was gunwale-down before we touched, an' we'd to wade the last bit, the ripples pluckin' at our toes. I was dizzy an' stupid still from the explosion, but Red didn't seem to have turned a hair. He shook himself like a big retriever dog.

"Ellen!" he called. "Come here to me, *mavourneen*—"

There was a scufflin' along the sand in the dark, an' somethin' blunders an' bangs into us. It's Wing Lee the Chink, an' he's still obeyin' orders rigid an' strict; he's got the girl tucked under his arm.

"Me catchum, boss!" was all he says.

Red steps in an' picks the missy out from his hooks without a word. She was silent too—an' there in the darkness they stare at one another. It's a full minute before either of 'em speaks, an' then it's Red.

"It's over, Ellen," says he. "Ye'll not have to run an' hide from Tom Tarrion any more—no, nor collogue with him friendly, the way you did a piece back. He's gone out o' this, the short road to hell, an' what he knew or didn't know of your dad's gone with him. Have ye anything to say? Or do I have to knock ye cold, entirely?"

It wasn't like Red Muldoon with a woman—not the way I'd seen him in years. There was somethin' new, a different note; almost pleadin', ye might say. It had me guessin' a moment, but Shag Petersen, standin' at my elbow like a shadow, comes to life all of a sudden.

"Choe," he says, "down yonder it gifs one swell view, mine friendt!

Come—we go look at it, you an' me, I t'ink, *ja!*"

Malacca gulps his rotgut and winks his wicked old eye.

" Yeah," he said. " An' that was the way Red Muldoon found his match at the last. They're married now, an' he's keepin' a store down in the Low Islands some place, so bally respectable you couldn't look him in the face. The old man's dead, o' course—another stroke got him; but there's two-three young Muldoons around to carry on the line. What they're like I dunno; but if there's any o' Red's stuff in 'em, an' she wants to keep 'em from goin' the roarin' way of their dad, she'll watch 'em when there's a moon in the sky. Blood on the Moon's their motto, that Irish outfit. They'll answer that rapparee call, as long as there's a drop of Irish bedevilment runnin' red in their veins."

THE END

Costly Ducks

KILLING more than 200 wild ducks last November recently cost three Californians more than $600, according to reports sent to the United States Biological Survey.

The duck killers pleaded guilty in Federal Court at Sacramento but claimed that the ducks were damaging the rice field where the killing took place. The court fined the owner of the field $300 and costs and one other defendant $150. The third defendant, a former violator, was fined $150 and sentenced to serve 30 days in jail.

Migratory birds doing damage may be killed only under permit.

—*Ralph Schlechter.*

Safe Cracker

By STEWART ROBERTSON

The man from New Jersey struck once

Nothing ever happened to him, sighed Graham, the professional safe opener—and then he got a call from New York's Chinatown—

THE early dusk of autumn sifted gently through Centre Street as Graham leaned in the doorway of his shop, watching the raindrops congeal, beadlike, on the greasy pavement. The spread of offices opposite became a patchwork of gloom and orange squares of light; a block away bulked Police Headquarters, a menace or a protection, according to one's point of view.

Graham indulged in the comfortable shiver of a man who knows he is sheltered from the elements and looks forward to a lazy evening with a book, then his attention was drawn to a creaking noise overhead, surprisingly loud now that the brassy tune of near-by Canal Street had been dulled by the rain. A glance assured him that it was merely his signboard swinging crazily in the gathering wind, a black and white oblong which proclaimed

that R. W. Graham sold and repaired vaults and safes. At the bottom ran the significant information:

SAFES OPENED WITHOUT DRILLING.

Closing the door against a gusty shower, Graham turned back to the warmth of the shop and walked to a desk at the rear. The remainder of the room was taken up with a regiment of safes, some massive, some squat, but all covered with a gray rime of dust.

He rearranged the desk impedimenta in precise order, skimmed the pages of his engagement book, and then began drawing whirligigs on a blotter.

What a hell of an existence was that of a safe expert! Nothing, Graham reflected, had happened to him since the war. Inheriting from his father a keen ear and sensitive fingers, he had naturally succeeded him in the business which he now ran alone. His clients were principally exasperated persons who, through lack of foresight, had memory or a defective partner, had lost some magic combination. On such occasions Graham would hunch himself against the painted steel, twirling the knob, listening patiently for the revealing click of the tumblers until the door rolled open to an obbligato of profane thanks.

There had been one or two events out of the ordinary—the releasing of a self-imprisoned and wildly hysterical stenographer, the opening of a safe in a raided Communist headquarters while the police stood guard, the frenzied working on a bank vault while the institution, unknown to its customers, honored their checks with borrowed money. But most of the time it was just a grind, and it was small wonder that a fellow sought adventure in print. Nothing ever happened in real life.

THE signboard continued to squeak as the rain poured up from the south; the door latch clicked faintly, then rattled, but Graham paid no heed. He busied himself with some hopeless gloating over a travel folder until an uncanny sensation of being watched caused him to switch around.

Twenty feet away stood a pudgy, moon-faced Chinaman dressed in Occidental clothing. He bowed politely, removed his stylish derby and shook it clear of moisture.

"Mr. Graham?" he inquired.

"Sure thing, Charley."

"My name," announced the Chinaman in perfect English, "is Willie Soon. I am interpreter for the Hip Sing Tong."

"Tong?" repeated the surprised expert. "You mean that gang of—"

"I mean the great Chinese fraternity," interrupted Willie Soon smoothly. "May I remind you that we are a brotherhood like your Elks or Shriners, newspaper stories to the contrary. And we, too, have safes, Mr. Graham. It is concerning them that I have called."

"What's wanted?"

"Our president, Lee Lum, has joined his ancestors," stated the visitor. "Hidden in his memory were the combinations to the safes of the society, which he did not have time to pass on to us. They hold our records—and various other things. I wish to employ your skill—and your silence." He regarded the white man keenly.

"I don't gossip about my customers," Graham assured him. "Your private affairs mean nothing to me. I

will open the boxes for my usual fee of thirty dollars an hour."

"At once?"

"Certainly," said the expert, who was used to impatience.

"Excellent," approved Willie Soon. "Now, I will be frank with you. The contents of the safes may cause us to become excited, interested, to the exclusion of all else. Therefore, it is proper to pay your retainer in advance."

"Good idea," Graham assured him; then his eyes sought the ceiling reflectively.

"You are thinking, perhaps, of your friend Inspector Laughlin at Headquarters?" inquired the Oriental. "Whether it would not be best to notify him where you are going?"

The startled Graham shifted his gaze to his questioner. Five minutes before he had been yearning for something different; now he was shying nervously at something a bit mysterious. "Nothing of the sort," he lied; and as an afterthought, "What do you know about the Inspector?"

"A fine man," admitted Willie Soon. "Sometimes we do business together. I may have welcome information for him tomorrow." He counted out five crackling one-hundred-dollar bills and laid them on the desk. "Overpayment should insure both speed and discretion," he remarked casually. "You see, I am anxious."

AT that dingy corner where Dovers Street nudges Chatham Square with a grimy elbow, the Chinaman steered his companion into a doorway and up a flight of unpainted stairs. These gave on a garish chop suey restaurant dotted with tables occupied principally by the furtive white couples of the district, with here and there a self-conscious sightseer. Willie Soon favored them with an indifferent glance and led the way to the rear, where they climbed another series of steps.

The floor above was one vast lavender dimness, stabbed by the tongues of inadequate candles. Graham managed to make out a cluster of marble-topped tables, at which sat only Chinese, chattering softly. As the interpreter entered the room there was a strained silence, broken by the roar of the Elevated as it careened close to the dusty windows.

Graham sniffed the fetid air, longing for the rain-washed street; but he followed Willie Soon to a booth in one corner. Behind them the conversation of the diners awoke like distant surf.

Inside the booth waited an aged Chinaman with a face like a squeezed lemon. Willow leaf eyebrows and a drooping bootlace mustache gave him the appearance of a sardonic idol, and he inspected the white man from under rheumy eyelids.

"Hung Sot," introduced Willie Soon, "a prominent member of our society. He speaks no English. Forgive me while I acquaint him with our plans."

He let go a flood of singsong, to which Hung Sot responded with a dry cackling. After several passages the interpreter turned a grave face to the expert.

"Mr. Graham," he said earnestly, "you have heard much scandal about Chinese tongs. Doubtless a great deal of it was true, but some of our Americanized members wish to end all connection with vice and bloodshed. With the death of our president I intend to improve that opportunity."

"Who killed him?" asked Graham bluntly.

The interpreter's eyes flickered. "The sands of the sea have many grains," he observed. "At any rate, he is with us no longer. I suspect, not know, that our safes will contain some interesting material. If so, Inspector Laughlin will receive certain items to convince him of my integrity. I have hopes, you see, of becoming next president, and Mr. Sot has guaranteed his aid."

Graham stared at that desiccated person with extreme disfavor.

"Can you trust him?" he inquired.

The pudgy little man seemed worried.

"I must," he said hastily. "One can do nothing alone among the Hip Sings. As in any other society, there are several cliques, especially one in New Jersey, which I fear. I value Hung Sot's friendship, for he represents many local members."

The safe expert began to feel a strange liking for his moon-faced client. "I get you, Mr. Soon. No wonder you want me to work fast. The idea is to uncover [illegible] stuff before the Jersey crowd get wind of what you're doing."

"Yes," said the Chinaman eagerly. "Let us proceed as fast as possible."

The trio passed downstairs and into Doyers Street, Hung Sot slithering along with his head cowled against the dampness. The crooked little thoroughfare gleamed luminously in the rain, Oriental silhouettes were blocked out against the light from shop windows; from an open doorway gushed an aroma of mingled ginger, li-chee, incense and dirt.

As they reached the point where the street ends its brief career by running into Pell, Graham noticed a ruddy young policeman on the sidewalk opposite. He breathed a trifle easier, then grinned at his agitation and followed the interpreter, who had turned sharply to the right on Pell and halted before an empty shop. The front had faded to a bleary red, and Graham, glancing upward, saw the usual smudgy expanse of tenement brick rising into the mist. Five or six stories, he thought, and imagined that a curtain parted cautiously on the second floor.

THE New York headquarters of the Hip Sings presented a dismal surface to the public view. So did that of its bitter rival, the On Leongs, who reigned in odoriferous majesty three flights up over a Mott Street fish shop. Both were secure from the prying eyes of the countless tourists who trod the pavements of Chinatown, foraging in the tiny shops, gaping at gaudily painted balconies, or listening to the raucous comment of illiterate guides. The tong houses, unknown save to newspaper men and the police, slumbered unnoticed.

Graham gulped a last lungful of cool air before entering what appeared to be a deserted laundry. The room was bare except for a stack of vacant shelves and a much whittled counter, behind which sat a spruce young Oriental.

"Our lookout," announced Willie Soon. "By name, Yeek Bow. He knows all our members and is my friend."

He spoke rapidly to the youth, who sized up Graham with interest, his licorice eyes roving quickly from one feature to another.

"Very happy," he said at last. "I know you now."

In the midst of a heavy silence the expert caught the stench of closely packed humanity, and he faced the

door leading to the inner room. Willie beckoned him within, and Graham found himself in a larger chamber crammed with Chinese who stood watching him bovinely. The place was shabbily furnished and almost airless, and Willie Soon smiled as he noted his companion's expression.

"You thought to see teakwood screens and a joss, perhaps?" he inquired. "Also silken robes and splashes of gilt? You will find them, Mr. Graham, only in the most estimable movies."

He passed into a narrow hall and indicated the triangular space beneath the stairs. Three four-foot safes were ranged against the wall, and Graham dropped to his knees, eager to appraise their quality. A glance told him they had been made before he was; a tentative examination made him shake his head in doubt.

"It may take all night," he told the interpreter.

Willie Soon showed signs of nervousness. He translated melodiously to Hung Sot, whose wrinkled visage remained immobile, then he turned swiftly to the white man.

"Quickly, please," he urged. "I will have plenty of lamps for you, also a cushion. Comfort should give added speed."

But Graham was already at work. Ear pressed against the time-blistered steel, he spun the polished knob warily, listening for the telltale sound of the tumblers as they rotated.

"You are trying to make the tumblers drop?" suggested Willie. "I have read of such things."

Graham was used to the question.

"No," he said, "tumblers can't drop; they've no place to go. They are simply a few brass disks placed one behind the other. Each one is graduated numerically, and each has a notch at a different number. When those notches come opposite one another, line up, so to say, then the safe is open."

The minutes crawled by. From the adjoining room came the muffled click of ivory counters as the players indulged in the gambling that is food and drink to the coolie class. Now and then a saffron face jutted from the doorway, to be withdrawn at a curt order from Hung Sot.

Out in front the watchful Yeek Bow maintained a blithesome whistling. Graham's head swam dizzily as he gazed occasionally at the two Chinamen sitting so motionless and silent. They stared back unwinkingly. Then, after two hours, he rose and stretched himself. The first safe yawned wide.

WILLIE SOON knelt swiftly, then his eyes glazed with disappointment as they beheld a neatly piled collection of ledgers, flanked by some check books and a black tin box stuffed with bank notes. Hung Sot, after one avid glance, began to rasp out what appeared to be suggestions. Graham regarded him with mounting distaste as the old man loomed above the fat little interpreter. A trickster, he decided, yet it was Willie's funeral, not his own. He took to pacing the smelly hall in an effort to relieve his cramped limbs.

Suddenly the safe clanged shut, and he wheeled to find Willie glaring at his countryman. Keeping his eyes steadfastly upon him, he spoke sidewise to Graham.

"Mr. Sot, he wishes to divide the money. I do not agree, for it belongs to the society. You know the combination, Mr. Graham, and can open this safe at any time?" He produced a pencil and paper. "Repeat it, please."

Graham did so, then gave his attention to the second strongbox. The thick atmosphere was making him cough; he unloosened his collar and laid it beside him. "Can't you open a window?" he queried.

"There are none on this floor," said Willie. "Too many eyes in Chinatown. Would coffee be a help?"

Graham nodded, and the little man began to climb the darkened stairs. His voice could be heard for an instant, then the closing of a door brought silence. Hung Sot regaled himself with a contemptuous snort.

The expert continued to work until the groaning of the dry wood heralded the return of Willie and a companion. Looking up, he saw a yellow hand sliding down the banister, followed at a short interval by a white one. Around the newel post appeared a little group composed of the interpreter, a buxom blond girl of florid coloring, and a solemn Eurasian child with eyes like shoebuttons.

Willie laid down the tray and departed for the street, where he chartered a roving taxi. As he handed the woman and the child inside, something very like emotion crossed his bland countenance, then he mustered up a strained smile.

"Bless you," said Willie Soon, looking into the depths of the moldy cab.

The white girl stared stolidly. "See you tomorrow."

"Why not, indeed?" returned the little man. He watched the taxi lurch into the cavern of Chatham Square, then scurried back to where Graham was attacking the coffee. Willie poured himself a cup, and scrunched on the floor beside him.

"That was my family," he confided. "Mrs. Soon goes to the home of her brother in Brooklyn. I have given her my pocketbook, as I do not feel at ease."

"Are you leary of this old vulture?"

Willie drank the liquid noisily. "He swore to aid me, but he does not suspect what the safes may contain, and I know he is rapacious. Still, it would be impossible to open them in secret."

"The best of a bad bargain," commiserated Graham. He lowered his voice. "Listen, Mr. Soon, I have news for you." He edged closer. "I've opened the second safe."

Willie showed no surprise.

"Hung Sot isn't wise because I kept the door shut," pursued Graham. "Do you want him to know?"

The little Chinaman sighed. "No other way. It is getting late, and I fear the objectors from New Jersey."

The expert fiddled with the knob a bit longer, then pulled gently on the handle. A harsh cry burst from the hovering Hung Sot as a score of pearly statuettes cascaded through the opening, then he shuffled hurriedly into the next room and harangued the gamblers.

"What's coming off now?" queried Graham. "Is the whole mob going to rush in here?"

"He is ordering them to leave. The ordinary members have no concern with these. Yeek Bow will remain."

GRAHAM opened the safe wide and gazed curiously at a welter of miniature mandarins, pagodas, lotus blossoms and Buddhas, all of them bearing the slightly rosy opaqueness of genuine pearl.

He picked up one of them and examined it closely. "Are these real, Mr. Soon? They must be worth a fortune! I didn't know anyone could carve pearl."

Willie shook his head. "No one can; it must be peeled. These are valuable, Mr. Graham, but not in the way you think. In China the pearl divers place metal figurines between the shells of an oyster; in six months the mother-of-pearl has grown to surround them, giving their present appearance. They are sold to tourists as solid pearl—a very fine joke, in the opinion of the divers."

"Then—"

"Of late," said Willie regretfully, "the metal figures have been hollow, containing space for opium, which is not affected by water. So many harmless shipments have been made to America that sometimes your Customs men fail to be entirely alert. Then these others slip through."

"These are what you want to turn over to the Inspector?"

Willie nodded, and indicated a mandarin. "Enough opium in him to last a white man eight days."

"You mean these are made for New Yorkers?"

"Chinese smokers can get all they want through different channels. They need it in their systems, and I can have no objection to that. But these are sold to your race through certain shops in the district, and there is death within their loveliness, Mr. Graham, a tortured, belly-shrinking death that makes life as fleeting as the sunset on a window pane. The Inspector may destroy these at his leisure."

The shuffle of departing feet grew fainter as the tongmen filed slowly out. Willie spoke more rapidly. "Hung Sot and I will remove the figurines to the safe in my apartment. It is my own—larger than any of these—where I keep a record of my police court services. And a favor, please, Mr. Graham. This house has many exits, and I may have to use one of them before morning. If so, will you personally transport my safe to your office? It will be secure there."

Graham promised.

"And if I do not call you by six tomorrow evening, you will deliver the contents to the Inspector?"

"Sure," said the expert, "but don't get jumpy. What's your combination?"

Willie did not reply. He was watching Hung Sot skulking down the hall, cackling volubly as he neared them. Willie responded briskly, then both men gathered an armful of statuettes and trudged up the stairs.

A clock drummed midnight as Graham tinkered with the last safe. The stairs creaked monotonously under the repeated trips of the Chinamen, Yeek Bow's whistle grew languorous, the rain continued to fall with the whisper of sifting sand. Another hour, and the third strongbox yielded another assortment of softly glowing nacre.

Graham wiped a perspiring forehead, and thought enviously of his cozy bungalow on Staten Island. He could hear Hung Sot jabbering angrily overhead, then a foreshortened shadow across the doorsill caused him to whirl around.

The next instant a commonplace figure stood in the rectangle—a placid, thoroughly undistinguished Oriental clad in a dripping black slicker. As he approached, Graham marveled at his utter lack of personality, one of a thousand minnows that swam in the sink of Chinatown. Such a specimen could be dredged from the shallows, could be thrown back again, without more than ruffling the surface. The newcomer's hands strayed to his pockets as he looked stonily down at the expert.

"All open yet?" he asked insolently.

Graham studied him. Somehow the nondescript yellow man seemed surrounded by an aura of vague menace as, with head cocked alertly, he listened to footsteps crossing the apartment above. His eyes took on a covetous sheen as he gazed past Graham at the pearly overflow, and then the expert, brain half drugged by the foul air, awoke to the impending danger.

"Look out!" he shouted. "Somebody from New Jersey is here! Watch yourself, Mr. Soon!"

The Chinaman stood his ground, his eyes leveled to slits, but one hand stole partly out of his coat.

"Look behind you," he said silkily, and as Graham fell for the hoary stratagem, the intruder struck at his averted skull. Before he crumpled into unconsciousness the expert dimly sensed a flurry of voices and the slamming of a door. The man from New Jersey grinned evilly, pocketed the shot-loaded blackjack, and then crawled softly up the stairs.

GRAHAM tossed restlessly on the black velvet couch of oblivion, then roused to a throbbing wakefulness and gingerly felt the swelling above his ear. The hall was pitch dark, and not a sound filtered down from the apartment of Willie Soon. The expert wondered what had taken place—was the visitor in league with Hung Sot, and had the little interpreter been done in? He rose dizzily, struck a match and relighted one of the lamps. The pearls had disappeared; that alone showed he must have been *hors de combat* for more than half an hour.

It never occurred to Graham that, as his duties were finished, he could leave the tong house in safety. A queer loyalty to his earnest little client, added to blazing anger at his own stupidity, held him on the scene. There was Yeek Bow, a declared friend of Willie's; he might know something. But perhaps the lookout also had been a traitor. Graham walked uncertainly through the door and into the semblance of a laundry.

The neat little Chinaman still sat at his post facing the front door, but his shoulders drooped with fatigue. He was braced against the shelves, hat tilted over his eyes, motionless as a waxwork. Graham called his name, repeated it, then stepped closer to shake him into wakefulness, but at his touch Yeek Bow pitched forward from the stool and settled in a limp mass below the counter.

Dead men fall with a finality that leaves no room for doubt, yet Graham turned the body over with a curiosity he had never felt in France, then he whistled with amazement. Yeek Bow had been killed with a knife blade not two inches long, the round handle protruding directly over his heart. Such an unerring stroke required close quarters, and either negligence or trust on the part of the victim. The scanner of faces, now tumbled in the graceless unconcern of death, had found his doom in the latter.

A thin current of air seeping under the door reminded Graham that ouside lay coolness and freedom, and once in the street he glimpsed the bulk of a policeman in a shining poncho advancing from the Square. It was the ruddy officer of seven hours before, and he listened hopefully as the expert outlined the night's happenings.

"Maybe it means a row, hey?" he asked. "I'd like nothin' better than to bash in a couple of yellow heads—this

kind of a beat makes a guy sore at the whole world. Nothin' ever happens like it does in the stories."

He rang a tattoo on the curb with his nightstick, and presently two more patrolmen hurried up. Pell Street began to stir out of its customary torpor; windows shot up, bewildered heads thrust forth, and a faint cacophony of voices grew rapidly in volume.

"Take the door of this dump, Riley," ordered the ruddy policeman, "and don't leave none of these Chinks inside. All right, let's get goin'."

After a casual glance at Yeek Bow the two officers and Graham trod warily up to the apartment. An old-fashioned flat, it bore silent witness to the excellence of Mrs. Soon's housekeeping. Everywhere, that is, save in the gas-lit parlor, where chaos reigned. A pair of splintered chairs sagged drunkenly against a large safe, the broken ornaments and pictures smashed awry on the walls told of a strenuous battle, but there was no sign of the body Graham more than half feared to discover.

"There ought to be some blood after all this," growled the second policeman. "How about it, Flanagan?"

"Ought to be?" scoffed the other. "Hell, there is!" He stooped over a cluster of reddish-brown spots, and chuckled grimly. "These birds usually beat it to the roof for a get-away," he told the others as they followed him, staring at a thin trail of coagulated splashes that dribbled to the window opening on the fire escape.

FLANAGAN immediately swung out and started climbing, the rest in his wake. Graham's heart was pounding as he mounted into the gloom. What waited behind the corner of that rickety tenement—the killer in the raincoat? He sincerely hoped so. But when Flanagan pulled him over the edge of the roof it was as devoid of life as the room below. The adjoining buildings were mere crayon smudges; at Chatham Square Station the Elevated lights glimmered mistily, each enveloped by its blurred halo. The rest of New York seemed hidden behind velvet draperies.

The bluecoats looked about them, fingering revolvers and unloosing a little salty profanity, then suddenly the sound of running feet echoed from the Doyers Street side of the block, and across the glowing background of a skylight scuttled the silhouette of Hung Sot. Close behind flashed a second figure, then both were swallowed in the night.

Flanagan fired twice in their general direction as all three men gave chase over the obstacles that clutter Manhattan roofs. Panting noises came to them, a crackle of Chinese in Hung Sot's voice, which ended in a wild, despairing cry, then silence. A brief, electric silence, shattered by the pulpy thud of a body as it smashed against the cobbles of a courtyard. Graham shuddered, and strained his eyes across the narrowing space. Where was the man from Jersey?

Fifteen minutes later he was back in the apartment, drinking coffee and listening to the Narcotic Squad as they roamed through the house, bellowing questions. Graham had identified what was left of Hung Sot, and the twisted body, pockets choked with pearl, had been carried to a police ambulance. A handful of awed onlookers had been composed of Bowery flotsam; not a Chinese had appeared, though Graham had felt the pressure of unseen eyes.

So far a search had failed to uncover the late visitor, and the policemen opined that by this time Willie Soon was floating down to the bay *via* a sewer. Now, drenched and weary, reaction swept over Graham, and he swayed to his feet.

"I'm going now," he told Flanagan, "but I promised that poor little devil I'd mind his safe for him. Load it on a truck and deliver it to my place about noon, will you? I guess that's the least I can do for him."

INSPECTOR LAUGHLIN rolled a cigar between his capable hands and depressed his furze-bush eyebrows. "So that's the lowdown, is it?" he mused. "Sure, I knew Willie Soon, and a game little fellow he was, but maybe a shade too heavy on the uplift stuff for his own good."

"What about the murderer?" asked Graham. "Is the dragnet out for him?"

"Absolutely," said the other, "but how the hell will we make the pinch? We're lookin', aren't we, but for what? A yellow boy who looks like just another sardine in the can. You said so yourself. A fat chance we had of nailing him in Chinatown. He probably got through a skylight, ditched that coat, and was out in the Square picking his teeth before Headquarters got the alarm."

"Perhaps, but you didn't find the coat."

"No," grunted the Inspector. He seemed uninterested. "How about letting me see that mess of pearls, son?"

"Might as well, I guess," said Graham, "but it's too bad that things happened so fast I couldn't get the combination."

He left the desk and strolled over to the massive box of steel. Outside the shop a vicious December wind whirled and eddied, seeking for an entrance.

"That damn sign of yours," said the Inspector irritably. "Listen to it squeak. It's enough to wake the dead."

Graham heard him from afar, for his gaze was riveted on the plate glass in front. "It's more than the sign," he gulped; "it's—"

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said Willie Soon, closing the door with care and smiling amiably upon them. "A fine day to be inside."

"What's this?" bawled Laughlin. "I thought you were supposed to be a stiff by now."

"Very nearly," nodded Willie, indicating a bandaged arm.

Graham came close to the interpreter. "Tell me what happened after I got slugged," he begged.

"Well," said Willie politely, "when you shouted warning, Hung Sot and self were in disagreement over the pearls. He wished to keep them for himself, for he was as greedy as a cormorant. Then came Hi Feng, an unruly member from New Jersey, to join the argument. Finally I persuaded him to withdraw, and forced Hung Sot to carry up the rest of the statuettes from the hall. I noticed with regret that you were unaware of our industry."

"Hold on," ordered Laughlin. "Did you say Hi Feng? That bird's one of your hatchet men, isn't he?"

"The kind that gives the Hip Sings a bad name—yes," conceded Willie. "He was what you call slippery."

"He would be," groaned the policeman. "I want him myself for a job or two beside this one on Yeek Bow."

Willie appeared not to be listening. He addressed himself to Graham. "Hung Sot grew treacherous," he went on, "and after stealing some

pearls he fled to the roof after attacking me. I followed him."

"So that was you dodging around," said Graham. "How—?"

Willie continued smoothly: "I found him concealed behind a chimney. He ran from me again, and then your men fired close to us. It frightened Hung Sot so that he backed over the edge of a roof. Very unpleasant."

"But how did you get away?"

"Dumbwaiter shafts have trapdoors," revealed Willie. "I slid the rope to the basement—much faster than even the footsteps of the law. Then by subway to my brother-in-law in decorous Brooklyn. I was anxious to leave, knowing that police shoot first and talk later."

"Just a minute," boomed Laughlin. "This Hung Sot, now—you didn't push against him by accident, or the likes of that?"

Willie looked him straight in the eye. "Unthinkable," he breathed.

"Not to me, my lad," countered the policeman, "but I've a notion I don't care much if you did, at that, because I know that with you running things, your tong won't give us much trouble. Self-defense would cover it. And now let's have the opium—that's all I'm interested in."

The interpreter stepped to the safe and deftly threw the combination, but as he pulled on the handle he looked at the Inspector with mute apology.

"I have tried to bring all you wanted," he murmured, then yanked the door wide. Out toppled something clad in a dank black raincoat, and while the white men stared in wonder it was all but hidden by an avalanche of rosy pearl. Laughlin dragged at the shapeless huddle and exposed the face of Hi Feng, darkened now to a dull magenta, with a neat bluish hole in the forehead.

"One shot, eh?" mused the Inspector. "Funny thing none of my men heard it." He rounded sharply on the Oriental. "Where's that silencer?"

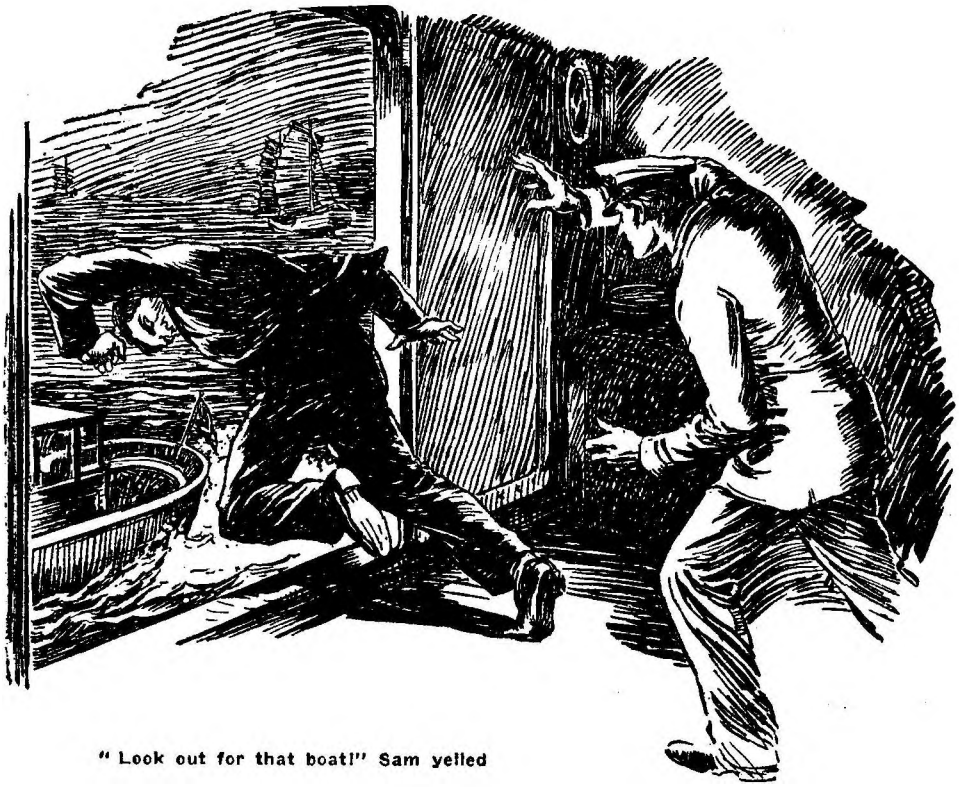
Willie Soon regarded him impassively. "Two thieves have joined their unworthy ancestors," he said absently, "and eight thousand dollars' worth of contraband has come to you. You and I will enjoy lasting peace, Inspector, so why annoy ourselves with details? Let us say that the silencer"—he smiled in an embarrassed manner—"is on my lips."

THE END

Plow Designer Whittled Models from Potatoes

THE plow invented by Jethro Wood in 1814—with mouldplate, share, and landside cast separately—forecast modern plows. But Wood had great difficulty in getting workmen to mold his plows as he wanted them. He was taunted with being a "whittling Yankee" because he whittled away bushels of potatoes before he had a miniature model plow that suited him. Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, said, "No citizen has conferred greater benefits on his country . . . none has been more inadequately rewarded."

Tom Tupper.



"Look out for that boat!" Sam yelled

Murderer's Paradise

By

GEORGE F. WORTS

It takes a clever man to show tricks to Orientals — but, then, Singapore Sammy Shay wasn't exactly dumb

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN the palatial yacht Victory arrived at Singapore, four people who had set out on it from San Francisco were not aboard. Oliver Baxton, the American multi-millionaire owner, had died at a near-by island. Ray Baxton, his foster-son, had disappeared in a small boat during a gale. Porter Baxton, his son, had been sent home from another port of call. Jeff Carmichael, the chief radio operator, had disappeared during the same storm in which Ray Baxton was lost.

Marthana Bondy, fiancée of Porter Baxton, sought out Singapore Sammy Shay and told him the strange tale. She said she believed Jeff Carmichael had been murdered and thrown over the side. She asked Sam, with the permission of Ben Rosen, the Baxton lawyer, to take charge of the investigation into the disappearance of Ray Baxton. Sam readily agreed, because he wanted to know what had happened to his friend Jeff, and avenge his death if he had been murdered.

This story began in the Argosy for May 16

Sam got a hint that Ray Baxton might be on a distant isle—Murder Island it was called. He planned to take the surviving members of the party there to conduct a search.

Meantime, Sam tracked down Bruno Reddy, an oiler who had ruined the engines of the Victory just before it made Singapore. Sam captured the man on a deserted ship in the harbor.

CHAPTER XIII.

REDDY TALKS.

SINGAPORE SAMMY did not want a corpse under his thumb. He wanted Bruno Reddy to deliver a long and useful monologue. Keeping the thumb in position, he reached out with the other hand and found a wrist. He rolled the half-conscious victim of Japanese wrestling science onto his face, forced the arm up behind his back, and felt for and found another sensitive spot.

When he withdrew his thumb from the man's neck, his prisoner uttered a deep and gasping groan.

"If you make a false move," the red-headed man panted, "I'll break this arm at the shoulder. Take it easy—and start talking."

"Who the hell are you?"

"Just a guy."

"That red-headed guy they call Singapore Sam?"

"You're right, Mr. Reddy. Now, talk."

"Sure, I'll talk. What the hell else can I do?"

"Who killed the wireless man on that yacht?"

"You mean Jeff Carmichael?"

"Yeah."

"Why are you so interested?"

"Don't get tough or I'll break this arm—and your neck, too. Stop stalling, Reddy. Talk."

"I'll talk, but I want to find out how you stand. Why do you suppose I'm in this—for my health?"

"You tell me, Mr. Reddy, and get to the point."

"Ouch! All right, all right! But why can't we pull it off together? There's more dough in it than you ever saw in your life!"

"Who from?"

"Ben Rosen. I could hang him! He gets a million a year from the Baxton Corporation. What I've got on him is worth two million. I'll split it with you. Ouch!"

"Quit stalling, smart guy, or it'll hurt."

"It ain't a stall! I'm tellin' yuh! It's Ben Rosen! He killed your pal and he killed Ray Baxton!"

"Yeah? Let's have the whole story. Let's hear why you crippled the port engine on the night of April sixth, and why you crippled the starboard engine on the way in yesterday?"

"Okay! Because I saw Ben Rosen stick a knife into Ray Baxton and throw him overboard! And I saw Ben Rosen stick a knife into your pal Jeff Carmichael and throw him overboard. I did it to attract attention. I figured the whole ship would turn out and they'd find Baxton and Jeff Carmichael missin'. But it didn't work."

"Why didn't you report it to your skipper?"

"Because I didn't want a knife in my back! How did I know who all was in on the deal?"

"The skipper?"

"Why not? It's bigger dough than any of 'em ever saw in their lives, ain't it?"

"How about that launch?"

"That launch snapped her towrope in the squall. That launch had nothin' to do with it."

"Why did Ben Rosen stab Jeff Carmichael?"

"Because Jeff saw him kill Baxton. Ben Rosen threw Baxton over the after rail. I just come above for a breath of fresh air before turnin' in. I saw Jeff come out of the after cabin just as Rosen threw Baxton over the rail. I saw Rosen follow Jeff up to the radio room and go in there and stick the knife into his back. I hid behind a lifeboat and saw him come out and throw Jeff overboard. Listen, Singapore Sam. I'm shootin' straight with you. I want you in on this. I gotta have help. It's too much for one man. It's a chance for the clean-up of a lifetime. Let me up, willya?"

"Not yet."

"But I want to show it all to you."

"What?"

"The write-up of it all. It's what I've been doin' ever since I've been hidin' out here—writin' it all up. I've got every detail of it. I've got names and dates and times. There's nothin' missin'. If you'll let me up, I'll show you. I've been workin' in the chief's room, between decks, tryin' to get it finished. It's almost finished. When it's finished I'm gonna put it in a safe deposit box in a bank, and I'm gonna let Ben Rosen know it's hid. If he tries anything fast—"

"Who was that guy in the red sash you killed?"

"It's all down in black on white. He was workin' with Rosen, but he split with Rosen, and he was tryin' to chisel in on me—blackmail. I rubbed him out because he was a chiseler. Take me down to the chief's cabin. I'm comin' clean, ain't I? Hold onto me any way you want, but take me down there, and if I'm lyin', you can twist my neck off. I've got everything in that write-up. I've got conversations and all the details. I've got a hundred pages written up. Take me to the chief's room and see for yourself."

Sam said: "Okay, Mr. Reddy. If you're lying, you'll regret it."

MAINTAINING his hold firmly on the captive wrist, Sam let his prisoner up. "If you try to kick, or break loose," he warned him, "I'll give this a twist."

"I'm no fool," the oiler said, and started aft.

Sam held onto the wrist firmly. Bruno Reddy led the way to a stairway aft. Sam held him with one hand and used his pocket torch with the other. Rats fled in waves from the white beam and from their approach. They went down the stairs and started along the orlop deck.

"It's half way forward, on the port side," the prisoner said.

Singapore Sammy had so far believed very little of what Bruno Reddy had told him. The oiler was bluffing. He knew it. Sam was taking him below decks, to the chief's room, simply to call that bluff. Once the bluff was called, Sam intended to bring a little more pressure to bear on Bruno Reddy's shoulder joint. He would learn the truth if it took all night.

Now and then, Sam turned the beam of the light into the oiler's face. It was done deliberately, to dazzle the man's eyes so that, if he suddenly played a trick, his eyes would be so blinded by the repeated glaring light that he would be at a serious disadvantage. And this trick was destined to have unforeseen results.

The oiler played his trick just as they were passing one of the opened cargo ports. What his dazzled eyes did not see was the darkened harbor patrol boat that was approaching. He

pretended to stumble. He cried: "Look out, I'm falling!"

And Sam momentarily released his hold. It was all Bruno Reddy needed. He snatched his wrist away, and he sprang toward the port.

As he did so, Sam saw the bow of the long and powerful police boat come slicing through the black water alongside.

He yelled: "Look out for that boat!"

The oiler turned his head as he ran. Sam caught only a twisted grin of scorn on the battered and bloody face of the oiler as he dived.

Sam ran to the port and looked down. He saw the sudden phosphorescence of the man's body added to the electric-green wake of the speeding boat. He could follow, as if in an animated X-ray, the passage of the escaping man under the hull—and his swift and horrible encounter with the propeller.

What had been the phosphorescent outline of a man became in an instant a shapeless whirling mass, which spun about in a blur and was then ejected.

Shivering, Sam flashed on his light. In the bright beam of it, the broken and mangled body came rolling to the surface, and Sam caught a dreadful glimpse of a head cleaved open from forehead to chin. Then the broken mass rolled over slowly and senselessly in the wake, and slowly sank.

The patrol boat had stopped. A man shouted an order. The softly humming engines were in reverse. A searchlight flashed on just as Singapore stepped back out of sight. He ran across the canted deck to the open port on the other side, and blinked his pocket torch at the waiting *fokie* as a signal to come alongside and take him off. In the time it took the sampan boy to execute this order, Sam ran to the chief's room and briefly investigated.

He was not disappointed to find no pile of manuscript. He had known that Bruno Reddy was lying, perhaps in all particulars, perhaps only in some. Yet what the oiler had told him was ample proof that he had known the full truth and could have given Sam valuable information if he had desired. With his sudden and horrible death, Sam realized, had gone his only hope of solving the murder of Jeff Carmichael in Singapore.

As he was boarding the sampan, he was wondering just what part Ben Rosen had played in that murder. He was very anxious to meet the famous corporation lawyer.

The sampan was half way to shore when the patrol boat overhauled it. The searchlight came on, picked out the red-headed young man standing in the bows, and flooded him with light. A voice shouted: "Sampan ahoy!"

"Ahoy, patrol boat!"

"Is that you, Captain Shay?"

"Aye!"

Silence ensued aboard the patrol boat, then the searchlight went dark. The patrol boat's engines gave a sullen snort, and she shot ahead and vanished. It was evident that all the police of Singapore had been ordered not to molest Captain Shay tonight!

CHAPTER XIV.

TOUGH CUSTOMER.

SINGAPORE SAMMY landed on Pulau Hantu Point because it was farthest from the congestion of Singapore and nearest to his next objective, which was the Westover Rubber Plantation, four miles out on the

Alexanura Road. He was now about to engage in the desperate undertaking of moving Ben Rosen, Dr. Hobb and Marthana Bondy from their hiding place to his schooner, the Blue Goose—without the knowledge of the newspaper men or the police!

Just how desperate an undertaking it might prove to be was indicated when he attempted to start out for the plantation in secrecy. He took a gharry. The gharry had not gone three city blocks before he discovered that he was being stalked by two men in rickshaws and one man afoot.

Reaching the Botanical Gardens, he resorted to a simple trick to shake off this pursuit. He reached up and slid a bill into his *syce's* hand and told him to keep driving. The gharry was approaching a deep shadow cast by a thicket beside the road. When the gharry reached the shadow, Singapore Sammy slipped out quietly and entered the thicket.

He crouched down in bushes, saw the two rickshaws pass, then the man afoot, and another gharry. He doubled back to a higher road, hailed another gharry, got into it and gave the *syce* directions.

The trick worked perfectly. Throughout the long drive to the Section Ten bungalow, he was not followed.

The Section Ten bungalow was on a private road of its own, a half mile from Alexanura Road and in the heart of the Section Ten rubber grove. Sam smelled the little settlement long before it appeared dimly in the starlight at a turn in the road. The familiar odors of hydrochloric acid, used in coagulating the latex, and the smell of smoldering wood from the curing sheds hung heavily in the hot, breathless night.

The bungalow was apparently bustling with activity. Lights blazed at all windows, and in the dooryard a large and picturesque assortment of Chinese had gathered. Near the porch lay a large and handsome Chinese coffin, but it was a coffin only in shape. Its coloring had been borrowed from a circus wagon. It was of bright red lacquer, with gilt and sky-blue ornaments. A Cantonese boy was squatted near it dolefully playing a three-stringed Chinese lute. In the darkness, a quartette mournfully sang.

All of this was in response to Singapore Sammy's orders, left with Chang Yin, the undertaker, some hours previously for a Chinese funeral befitting a mandarin.

Chang Yin walked out of the shadows from whence came the mournful tones of the quartette. Everything, he said to Sam in Malay, was in readiness. Where was the corpse?

Sam answered: "Where are the costumes?"

"In the coffin, *tuan*."

A guttural voice projected itself from the doorway of the bungalow. It irritably wanted to know what in the devil all this was about. Sam walked up onto the veranda. The man in the doorway was blond, fat and unmistakably Dutch. He stared at Singapore's red hair in the streaming light and cried: "Ach Gott, mynheer! You are Captain Shay, at last!"

"Yes."

"I am Torvin Van Vleet. You are welcome to my house. My guests are very nervous and impatient. Follow me, please!"

Sam followed him through large hot rooms and into a screened veranda at the rear of the house. A dim light burned on a table and showed Sam the pale, drawn faces of three people—two men and a slim blond girl.

All three were standing, facing the doorway. They stared at him as he strode in, and Marthana Bondy cried: "Oh, Sam, Sam! I'm so glad you're here!" In her white linen dress, she looked younger than she had last night. But her face looked older. It was wan with fatigue.

The two men had not moved. Both looked haggard. He recognized them at once as the mysterious pair he had seen last night in the beefwood thicket —the elderly hunchback, Ben Rosen, and the late Oliver Baxton's personal physician, Dr. Elton Hobb.

The famous corporation lawyer was chewing an unlighted cigar. Dr. Hobb stood with folded arms and regarded Singapore Sammy with an air of fatigued amusement.

BEN ROSEN said in a heavy, throaty voice: "So you're Captain Shay!"

"The famous Captain Shay!" Dr. Hobb added in an amused voice.

The girl said quickly: "What's happened?"

"Just a moment," the lawyer drawled, shifting his cigar to the other corner of his mouth. He placed his hands on his hips and stared steadily at the red-headed man in the doorway. He said again, "So you're Captain Shay!"

Sam had not been prepared for hostility. He said quietly, "Is there any question about it?"

"I want to have a talk with you," the lawyer said, in that heavy, throaty voice.

"There isn't much time for talking," Sam answered. "Every policeman and secret service man in Singapore is looking for you. If you want to get aboard my schooner, there's no time to waste."

"Just—one—moment," Ben Rosen said slowly. "I want to know what's been done and what's being done. I would like some kind of report."

"Won't that wait?" Sam said mildly.

"It will not!"

Marthana groaned: "Oh, Lord! Can't you forget for a minute that you're not addressing a board meeting? Captain Shay is an expert. We've placed our troubles in his hands. We're taking his orders."

Ben Rosen said harshly: "Before another step is taken, I insist on knowing what has happened and what this fellow's plans are!"

"But you heard him say there isn't time!"

The hunchback ignored her. "You can make your report now, captain. What have you found out?"

Sam quietly answered, "Nothing of importance. We have to go to the island."

"Did you find Bruno Reddy?"

"I did. I tracked him to a derelict in the harbor where he had holed up. He got away from me, jumped overboard and got fouled in the screw of a police boat."

The hunchback stared intently at Sam's green eyes. Ben Rosen's eyes were brown and velvety, and Sam wondered if his brusqueness, his air of importance, his suspicious attitude were a deliberate pose. He knew how shrewd, how clever and how ruthless this man must be. He was a deep one. If he was playing a game, it would be a clever one. A man brilliant enough to earn a million a year from an American corporation didn't deal in simple schemes.

"How about that fellow in the red sash?"

"I found him at the door of my

hotel bedroom with a knife in his back."

"When?"

"Dawn."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"Who did it?"

"Bruno Reddy."

The velvety eyes were narrow and watchful. "What else have you done, Captain Shay?"

"Made all the necessary arrangements to get you aboard my schooner, as Miss Bondy requested."

"Secretly?"

"That's right."

"Very well," Ben Rosen said, in that heavy, throaty voice; "before we proceed to a consideration of your plan—"

"There's no time to discuss anything more," Sam said impatiently.

"No," Marthana firmly agreed. "There'll be time to talk on the schooner. Sam, are these Chinese—"

"I insist," the hunchback broke in, "on a distinct understanding before we take another step." His contemptuous attitude was more and more irritating.

Marthana said: "Now look here, Mr. Rosen; Captain Shay knows this part of the country. He's not a hireling. I know you're upset. We're all upset. But I insist—"

"I was coming to that," the hunchback stopped her again. "Just how much is this worth to you, Captain Shay—what you've done since Marthana contacted you, and the use of your services and schooner for this undertaking?"

SAM did not answer. His Irish was up. He knew that Ben Rosen was upset, and he suspected that Ben Rosen was accustomed to authority and power. In this predicament he was powerless, and it doubtless angered him to have to rely on someone else.

Marthana said swiftly: "I think you're taking the wrong approach. Sam isn't a hireling. He's in this entirely because his best friend was murdered."

"Thank you, Marthana," the hunchback said coldly. "I happen to have had a certain amount of experience with men and with money. What's your price, Captain Shay?"

"Miss Bondy is right," Sam said, controlling himself. "I'm not in this for the money."

The shrewd eyes hardened. "Captain Shay, if you think for a moment that, just because you're working for the Baxton Corporation, you're going to hold us up—"

"I don't give a damn about—" Sam began hotly.

Marthana cried: "Mr. Rosen!"

"Who is this fellow?" the hunchback shouted. "What do I know about him? What are his credentials?"

"He's a friend of Jeff Carmichael's!" Marthana said angrily. "That's enough for me."

"Aren't you apt to be a little biased?" Dr. Hobb asked. The tall, handsome young man had been standing some distance apart, with his hands in his pants pockets, his expression one of whimsical amusement. "It seems to me," he drawled, "that Mr. Rosen is right in making all these arrangements beforehand."

"But I tell you," the girl cried, "Sam isn't interested in money. I begged him to help us, and he's willing, but only because of Jeff!"

"And I won't take a step," the hunchback snarled, "until we know exactly where we stand and what this fellow's plans are. This is a danger-

ous and delicate situation. No one must suspect that Ray Baxton did not come ashore here; no one must suspect that we have slipped out of Singapore. There must be no bungling."

"Like the smallpox case?" Sam asked. He had been trying to control himself, but Ben Rosen's bullying methods and Dr. Hobb's air of smiling contempt were too much for him. "Every man aboard the yacht was suspicious. And how do I know what was really back of it? What are your credentials?"

The hunchback and the doctor made a sudden movement toward him as if they were going to attack him. Whatever the impulse was, they checked it. And whether it was merely a betrayal of nerves at the cracking point, or the involuntary confession of two rogues at whom suspicion was unexpectedly pointed Sam could not say.

Ben Rosen said harshly: "How we chose to handle our problem before you were called in is none of your business. I have asked you two pointblank questions. I want answers to both. What are your plans for getting us secretly out of Singapore, and how much do you want for your services and your charter?"

"We're going through Singapore as part of a funeral procession," Sam answered quietly, "and I'm going to charge the Baxton Corporation just what it costs, and not a dollar more."

"Let's go," Marthana said.

"Not yet!" the hunchback barked. "I'm not through with this fellow yet. I'm not satisfied—"

"There's no more time for squabbling," Sam said grimly. "There'll be a week or ten days for it on the schooner. Do you want to go aboard, or do you want to stay here? Make up your mind!"

"I won't be talked to—"

"Okay. Suit yourself. I'm not wasting any more time. I'm going to Murder Island. You can go or not as you damned please. Marthana!"

"There's no argument," she said crisply. "I've got utter and complete faith in you, and I'm sick and tired of people who can't take simple orders given by an expert."

Sam glanced at the hunchback, then at the doctor. "How about you two? Make up your minds! Are you coming or aren't you?"

Ben Rosen was glaring at him. "Yes."

"Yes," Dr. Hobb said.

CHAPTER XV.

CHINESE FUNERAL.

SAM raised his voice and called Torvin Van Vleet. He came in, pale and anxious-looking. Sam said to him, in Malay: "Tell Chang Yin to bring that coffin in here." And when the Dutchman had departed on this errand: "Where's your luggage?"

"In here." Marthana opened a door which gave upon a large closet and disclosed a small mountain of suitcases. "Can you handle it all?"

"Yep. Before I tell you about this plan, there's another important point to be settled. This whole colony is in an uproar over Ray's Baxton's disappearance. Are you going to leave that up in the air?"

Marthana answered: "That's what we were arguing about when you came in. It's what we've been arguing about all day long. Have you a suggestion?"

Torvin Van Vleet returned, still looking anxious.

"Yes," Sam said. "You have gone on a month's tiger hunt with the Ma-

haraja of Johor. He lives just across the straits. He is an old friend of mine and will back me up. You and Ray Baxton, hating all this publicity, have gone to Johor and are now guests of the maharaja. Mynheer Van Vleet, how does that strike you?"

The Dutchman nodded vigorously. "It is perfect."

"Give us a chance to get through town—about two hours—then telephone all the newspapers, the consulates and the governor's residence. Mr. Baxton and these people did not wish their whereabouts to be known until they were safely away."

"Very good, *mynheer,*" the Dutchman affirmed.

"You can say something to the effect that Mr. Baxton is disgusted with all this curiosity; that he is grieving over his father's death, and wanted absolute privacy." Sam looked at Ben Rosen. "Is that satisfactory?"

The lawyer worked his lips. His eyes remained hostile. It was evident that any order not given by himself went very much against the grain.

"Yes!" Marthana cried. "It's a marvelous idea, Sam. Now—about the funeral."

"We're having what is known as a Tai Pan's funeral. That means a Number One funeral, such as is given a mandarin, and will attract more attention but cause less curiosity than an ordinary funeral." He didn't explain that paradox, but went on: "I'm sure I wasn't tracked here. Chang Yin is absolutely trustworthy. We have only to play our parts. I'll explain that in a moment."

Chang Yin and his oldest son had come in with the coffin. The two Chinese removed the lid. The coffin contained blue and white garments. "These," Sam explained, "are our disguises. In these pots are make-up. Chang Yin, being a clever undertaker, is clever at the art of make-up. We are to be made up as Chinese, of course. We are mourners."

"What do we do?" Ben Rosen grumbled.

"You mourn."

The highest salaried corporation lawyer in the United States made no further protest, although he grumbled and muttered to himself. While Chang Yin busied himself making the faces of Ben Rosen, Marthana Bondy and Dr. Hobb resemble, as closely as the art of make-up would permit, the faces of Orientals, Sam and Chang Yin's son packed the luggage into the coffin. There was room enough for it all.

And while Sam was making up his own face at a mirror and adjusting a black wig over his fiery red hair, Chang Yin and his son were carrying the coffin outside and forming the procession.

Marthana went to another room to change into her costume. All the garments were the blue and white of Chinese mourning. When Sam had changed, the lawyer and the doctor were ready, and when Marthana returned, wearing a black wig, a long, white jacket buttoned to her neck, and loose blue trousers, he looked the three of them over critically. They might not have passed close scrutiny in the daylight, but they were passable enough for a night inspection.

And of them all, Ben Rosen could most easily have fooled the sharpest eyes. It was amazing to Sam that the hunchback, with his prominent Semitic features, should have become, with the aid of a little greasepaint, so perfectly Chinese. In his white and blue garments, with the little black cap on his head, he might have

been an elderly and benevolent mandarin.

WHEN they went outside, the procession was formed and ready to start. Torch bearers led the way. They were followed by the cymbal-beaters. The purpose of these was to drive devils from the path and vicinity of the coffin.

Behind the cymbal-beaters were Buddhist priests, in funereal white, each swinging a smoking incense pot. Their purpose was to prepare the way for the departing spirit into the first of the several layers, or heavens, of Nirvana, the ultimate heaven. Behind the priests came the mourners, the four disguised Americans and a score of hired mourners who would wail and beat their chests with their fists in despair.

The coffin followed the mourners. Behind it was the band, numbering fourteen pieces, which would play continuously. The rear was brought up by the banner-bearers, a dozen in all. White banners, carried on tall staffs, set forth the merits of the departed. Chang Yin carried these in stock—sentiments to suit the merits of anyone, from a poet to a merchant prince. And scattered along the procession were the dragon boys. The dragons were of paper, and of different bright colors. They floated and rippled at the end of sticks, as the boys ran in and out of the procession.

The purpose of the dragons was a dubious one, which Sam Shay had never quite understood. They had to do with immortality, or with the hopes of the deceased for a re-birth in a better world. Like the word "maskee," the dragon could mean almost anything. It was a symbol of royalty, it was an emblem of the highest courage, and it stood for death and a hundred things in between.

Sam and his protégés took their places among the hired mourners and the procession got under way. It could, of course, be heard for miles. This plan, if it worked, was a sound one, and was based on the old rule; to avoid attention, attract as much as possible.

As they fell in with the hired mourners, Sam explained to his companions: "The best way to attract attention is to do nothing. Mourners howl, sob, yell, beat their breasts and tear their hair. Be careful of your wigs!"

Dr. Hobb might have been a youthful Chinese business man. Marthana, in the light of the torches, was a demure and lovely Chinese maiden. She fell into her part promptly and convincingly. She sobbed. She beat her breast, as the other women mourners were doing.

The doctor showed almost as much willingness and adeptness. At first, he was self-conscious, but it was not hard to fall into the spirit of the occasion, with the hired mourners playing their parts so well. Soon he, too, was howling and beating his chest.

Ben Rosen was the slowest of them all. His fierce resentment at being ordered about still showed itself, but when Sam said to him, almost savagely: "Get busy and mourn!" the hunchback began howling, too. Then he, too, fell into the spirit of it.

As Chinese funerals are always noisy, and as such processions, because of the large Chinese population, are everyday occurrences in Singapore at all hours of the day and night, in spite of the efforts of the British to confine them to the daylight hours, Sam Shay's "Tai Pan funeral" entered the city without attracting more than casual notice.

Vehicles drew off the road. Most of the spectators, aside from tourists, who gave the procession more than passing notice, were other Chinese, whose interest was not in the mourners but in the size of the procession and the elegance of the coffin. Some of them followed the procession.

It took Sam's funeral two hours, marching in the straightest possible line, to reach the mansion of his old friend Ling Kee, the rice dealer.

Ling Kee, fat and perspiring, and more than a little frightened because of the blasphemy of it, welcomed the funeral to his compound. The cymbal-beaters surrounded him at the doorway, so that evil spirits would not enter the house. The coffin was carried inside. Four of the mourners accompanied it into Ling Kee's ceremonial parlor. The others remained in the compound, the band still playing, the mourners still howling and beating their chests, the banner-bearers moving slowly about so that the curious could read the sentiments emblazoned on the white flags, and the dragon boys running about the compound and shouting.

The four mourners who had accompanied the coffin into Ling Kee's ceremonial parlor were, of course, Singapore Sammy and his three protégés. He was reasonably sure that his scheme was successful so far. Throughout the course of the procession, he had watched the sidewalk crowds; had seen colonial spies among them, and was sure that his elaborate scheme for spiriting the lawyer, the doctor and the girl out of Singapore was so far unsuspected. The next step was, however, more precarious.

Under cover of the darkness—and the bedlam in the compound—he must smuggle all the luggage and his three protégés into Jardine's nearest godown, which adjoined Ling Kee's back yard.

The coffin would remain in this parlor for a day and be appropriately mourned over by the priests and hired mourners, then the band, the priests, the mourners, the banner-bearers and the dragon boys would be dismissed, and the coffin would be smuggled back to Chang Yin's undertaking parlors.

THE luggage was removed from the coffin and carried by coolies into the godown. Ling Kee engaged the Chinese watchman at Jardine's in conversation outside the godown while Sammy helped Ben Rosen, Dr. Hobb and Marthana into the 100-gallon casks, piled luggage about them, fitted the three lids in place, and tightened the hoops.

In the darkness of Ling Kee's backyard, he removed the wig and stripped off his mourning garments. These he used to scrub the make-up from his face. He had worn his jacket and white ducks under the mourning garments, so that he was once again the man the Singapore police, the Singapore newspapermen and the colonial spies were so anxious to find.

He returned to the godown, briskly told the watchman to have the three casks put aboard the Blue Goose immediately, and returned once more to the busy congestion of the Singapore streets. He was promptly found by the vigilant secret service and trailed all the way back to the Blue Goose!

The red-headed man was a little alarmed when he saw the congestion on Sheer's Wharf and aboard the schooner. Newspapermen and cameramen were lounging about. Representatives of the governor and of the American consul were waiting for him.

A small roar went up when he appeared, and he was promptly surrounded. The fact that the yacht Victory had entered the harbor of Singapore without the Baxton crown prince aboard was now apparently established to everyone's satisfaction. And it was equally certain that the red-headed and mysterious schooner captain not only knew much more than he cared to admit, but was the only man in Singapore who knew anything at all about it! The complete disappearance of Ben Rosen, Dr. Hobb and Marthana Bondy had made the mystery more tantalizing than ever. Where were they? What was it all about?

On his way to the end of the dock, Sam was asked by upward of a score of men where they were.

"I don't know."

"Where's Ray Baxton?"

"Gentlemen, I don't know."

"Are you clearing?"

"I am. Chop-chop!"

This news went through the gathering in another small roar. The Eurasian secret service man who had spoken so sternly to Sam outside the jail grabbed him by the elbow. He looked ugly.

"Where are you going, captain?"

"Aboard my ship. I've got a clearance for San Francisco. If you don't believe it, ask the harbor master. Ask the American consul!"

He shook off the Eurasian's hand and went aboard. Flashlights flashed.

The Blue Goose was swarming with men. Rufe Pound met him at the rail. He looked haggard and bewildered.

"Skipper," he panted, "what the hell is it all about? I tried to keep 'em off. They've been through this ship from stem to stern the past three hours like a swarm o' rats. What's up?"

"We're checking out as soon as Jardine's boat puts some new water casks aboard. Have they come?"

"Not yet. What—"

"We're clearing the minute they come. Stow them in Number One hold."

MEN came filing out of the companionway as Sam went aboard. They looked serious. The opinion seemed to prevail that Sam Shay was up to some of the trickery for which he was so notorious. His only fear was that his permission to clear might be countermanded at the last moment. He was the key to Singapore's latest and most baffling mystery.

More reporters and secret service men surrounded him on the after deck.

"Where is Ben Rosen?"

"I don't know."

"I'll bet you don't know!"

"You're right, mister!"

He saw Jardine's supply launch approaching. It came alongside. Chills raced along his spine when he saw the three large new casks, as yellow as butter, each suddenly as large and conspicuous as a burning hotel.

It seemed incredible that those three casks would come aboard unsuspected. Rufe Pound was bawling orders. He was forward, near the hatch into which the casks would be lowered.

More grim-looking men filed up from below. Most of them wore white drill. The knees of many looked as if they had been crawling about on them, and Sam realized that these men, reporters and secret service men, had had orders to search the ship minutely.

He was fascinated by the three large casks, but he forced himself not to look in that direction. He wanted no more attention than necessary attracted to those three precious casks.

An order was shouted. Blocks

creaked. Sam said generally to the tense, hard-faced men surrounding him: "Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied that I'm telling you the truth?"

"Certainly not!" a stout, red-faced man snapped. "You're up to some of your tricks. You're going to try to smuggle those three people out of Singapore!"

Sam looked at him with cold green eyes. "Why should I?"

"I don't know," the red-faced man sputtered. "Why are you always up to some mischief?"

"I'll tell you the truth," Sam said. "I'm sick of all this. That's why I'm checking out. Since last night, I've been thrown in jail twice. I've been hounded and persecuted. I want to get away from it all." He saw the second cask come swinging aboard and drop slowly into the forward hatch. He shouted: "All visitors ashore, please!"

There was a reluctant movement toward the dock. Perhaps twenty-five pairs of eyes were watching him. He had never seen so much concentrated suspicion in his life.

A winch engine clattered and hissed. An empty hook on the end of a line soared out of the forward hatch. One more cask!

"All visitors ashore, please!" Sam herded them toward the rail. "Unless you gentlemen want a ride to San Francisco, you'd better get off this ship!"

A coolie aboard the Jardine supply boat was throwing a loop about the last cask. Men began climbing from the Blue Goose to the dock. A voice yelled an order and the third cask sailed up into the air. Out of the tail of his eye, Sam watched it—and, to his horror, it continued to sail!

The third cask had slipped from the loop. It struck the rail of the schooner a glancing blow and caromed off into the water.

CHAPTER XVI.

STOWAWAY.

RUFE POUND was roaring curses in pidgin at the careless coolie on the supply boat. Someone caught the rim of the cask with a boathook. Hands pulled it aboard the supply boat.

The stout-faced man said suspiciously: "What's in those casks?"

Singapore Sammy gave every evidence of a man robbed of the last shred of his patience. His eyes blazed. He clenched his big fists.

"I'll tell you!" he roared. "It's Ray Baxton! He's chopped up in fine pieces! Get the hell off this ship! Willie! Throw off those lines! Rufe! Get that cask stowed aboard and start the engine!"

He must have given a convincing display of temper. He wondered who was in that third cask, and hoped it wasn't Marthana. He heard the thud of it as it struck the deck at the bottom of the hold. Rufe disengaged the tackle and ran aft. The *serang* was casting off the lines. The deck under Sam's heels throbbed as the auxiliary engine came to life.

The last of Sam's visitors climbed over the rail and jumped to the dock as the Blue Goose began to move. Sam, at the wheel, looked along the line of white, brown and red faces. More questions were shouted at him. He answered none of them. Clear of the dock, he put the wheel over and dubiously eyed the shipping which cluttered the roadstead. There were still so many chances for a slip-up! At the

last moment, the governor might send a patrol boat after him and order him back for another inquiry.

The disabled Victory, as white as a moth, as deserted as a graveyard, fell astern. Sam wondered what kind of a day Captain Jayne had put in.

He caught himself holding his breath until the pulses in his ears thumped. A patrol boat crossed his wake a hundred yards astern. Her searchlight flashed on, centered on him, flashed off.

At five knots, the Blue Goose slipped through the roadstead and stood out to sea. The lights of shipping dimmed, and the glow of Singapore sank lower on the horizon. But the danger wasn't yet past. When Tanjong Teregeh was well astern, Sam called the mate and *serang* aft and instructed them to search the ship from cutwater to counter for stowaways.

The search took them an hour. When they reported that the ship had been thoroughly searched, he ordered the sails raised and the engine stopped. A good breeze from the northwest was springing up. Sam gave the wheel to Rufe and said: "The course is due south through the Karimata. Are you sure that girl isn't aboard?"

"That native cutie? No, skipper. I know she ain't aboard. She come aboard about an hour after you took her away the last time and I shooed her off. She come aboard again about an hour before we checked out, and I shooed her off again. She ain't aboard. No, sir. No stowaways!"

Sam went forward with a lantern, and descended into Number One hold. He called: "Marthana!"

Her voice, muffled, answered from one of the casks: "Hi!"

He loosened the loops, pried up the lid with his fingers and pulled it off. Marthana was crouched on the bottom, surrounded with bags and suitcases. Her Chinese make-up had melted and run. She was so stiff that Sam had to lift her out. Her legs were asleep. She was nearly fainting from the heat.

"Sorry I couldn't let you out sooner," Sam said. "I had to make sure there weren't any stowaways."

Muffled yells came from the other casks. Sam said: "Who bounced overboard?" And the muffled voice of the doctor answered: "I did!"

Sam freed the two men and helped them out. The lawyer was in a state of collapse, from the heat. Dr. Hobb, in spite of his fall, was unhurt.

When they were rested and had stretched their muscles, Sam took them above and aft. Rufe, at the wheel, stared at the procession as if he were seeing disembodied spirits.

"Stowaways?" he blurted.

"Passengers," Sam answered.

"Chinks!" Rufe growled. "What are we doin' with Chinks?"

"Americans," Sam answered. "You watch the wheel, Rufe, and don't strain that brain of yours."

He took the passengers below and to their cabins. All three wanted to bathe and change. Sam showed them the showers, then he called Ah Fat and told him to fetch their luggage.

He went on to his own room. He was suddenly dog-tired. He had been on the go, without sleep, for more than thirty-six hours. He was hungry and dirty and disgruntled. He poured himself a stiff drink of Scotch and sat on the edge of his bunk to drink it.

He told himself that he wasn't clever. He was nothing but the hard-boiled skipper of a trading schooner, and he was going to match his wits against one of the smartest, cleverest lawyers in the United States—a man

who was a master at the arts of deception, guile and intrigue. He had only one advantage: he knew these countries better than Ben Rosen did.

Sam tossed off the drink and decided to take a bath and change into fresh clothes. He went to his closet for a clean white suit. There were white jackets and white duck pants hanging in a neat row on hangers. Below, on the floor, were light-weight white shoes in a neat row. Above, on the shelf, were sun helmets of various sizes and shapes—six of them in a neat row.

As he reached into the closet to take down a coat, one of the sun helmets mysteriously bounded from the shelf, struck him on the head, bounced and flew halfway across the room.

Something moved. He caught the gleam of jade-green silk behind the row of sun helmets. This was puzzling, because nothing was kept behind the sun helmets but a pile of work pants. Then he caught a familiar intoxicating perfume. Next he saw a pair of shining dark eyes.

"Koori!" Sam cried.

CHAPTER XVII.

WOMEN STICK TOGETHER.

THE Princess of Saballa wriggled, giggled, rolled over, pushed the rest of the sun helmets off the shelf, and swung her legs over the edge. Sun helmets fell all about Sam and went bouncing to all parts of the cabin.

Koori clasped her small golden hands about her knees, grinned radiantly and burst into an explanation in Saballanese, with gestures. She waved her hands and kicked her feet.

"Come on down out of there!"

Sam held up his hands. She held out her arms, jumped, squealed, and imprisoned his head in her strong young arms. She kissed him and cuddled tight against him.

The red-headed man patiently pried her fingers from his neck; gripped her securely by the waist and tossed her none too gently to the bunk, on which she landed safely; bounced once and remained upright with the apparent permanence of a barnacle, and laughed joyously as if it were all a jolly lark.

He went to the doorway and yelled: "Rufe! Come here!"

Rufe yelled for the *serang* to relieve him at the wheel, and came below. He walked into the room, stopped, stared at Koori and said plaintively: "Well, can you feature that!"

"You shooed her off," Singapore reminded him.

"Sure, I shooed her off. Twice! How did she do it?"

"She doesn't speak English."

Rufe lost his look of chagrin. He said: "She don't have to, skipper. What you gonna do with her?" And when Sam did not answer: "I guess maybe it's the hand of fate, skipper. If I was you, I'd quit tryin' to lose her. My, but ain't she cute! Look at them eyes! Look at them cute little hands and feet! She's just like a doll, ain't she? Skipper!" he cried.

"Yeah?"

"Get a load of them lashes! They're an inch long! Just lookin' at them lashes—don't it make you feel affectionate all over?"

"No."

"Skipper, you sure must be made o' stone. Look at that shape. If that ain't the cutest shape—"

He stopped. The door had opened. Ah Fat came waddling in. He stared at Koori, then at Sam and said ami-

ably: "My, my, my! What thing hab got?"

"Lemme answer that one," Rufe said. "The skipper's got him a gal, and he don't seem to know what to do with her."

"Mally the lady," Ah Fat said promptly. "Velly plitty. Velly cozy. Maskee!"

"I believe," Sam said suspiciously, "you two fatheads knew this girl was hiding in that closet. You smuggled her on board!"

His two loyal employees protested violently. Too violently, perhaps. Sam was convinced that Ah Fat, that sentimental Oriental, had been the ringleader. But when accused, the cook was so volubly wounded, so eloquently indignant, that Singapore had difficulty in restraining a grin. At any rate, the thing was done, and punishing the two protesting romantics would not help matters.

Singapore said sternly, "I've been trying to tell you that we've got a tough job on our hands. We're going to Murder Island. Before we get back, there's going to be blood spilled. You can chalk that up right now. We've got one woman aboard already. One's plenty. We can't put back to Singapore. We can't put in any place. We have got to dodge the steamers. What are we going to do with her—throw her overboard with a bunch of belaying pins tied around her neck?"

"Put in at Borneo," Rufe suggested. "There's plenty of deserted coastline on Borneo. But it would be a crime. It would be murder. Them savages would eat her alive!"

"Too much silly talkee," Ah Fat growled. "Why not mally the lady? Velly plitty. Make velly nice litty wife."

"No," Sam said firmly.

"How much wanchee?" Ah Fat replied briskly. "Mebby I mally."

Sam looked at him sternly. "Ah Fat, you're an unprincipled scoundrel."

"Ah Fat's right," Rufe declared. "Just look at her, skipper! What's the matter with her? Ain't she a little dream o' feminine beauty?"

The three men looked at Koori critically, as if for flaws. Her eyes sparkled like jewels. They darted from face to face, but they returned to Sam's. She smiled at him radiantly.

"She's pretty enough," Sam said. "But I don't want her."

"Why not?" Rufe demanded.

"I don't want a woman."

"Don't you like her?"

"I don't want her."

"Skipper, take a good look at her."

"I am looking at her."

"And you still don't want her?"

"No."

"Well," said the golden-skinned maiden on the bed, in perfectly clear English, "that ought to settle it. He doesn't want me."

THE three men stared at the lovely island princess, and Sam said, in a thick voice, "What's that?"

Koori got down from the bunk. She was not more than five feet tall, but she was as belligerent as a fleet of dreadnaughts.

"If you think I'm enjoying this," she said swiftly, "if you think it's a pleasure to sit here and be insulted by three hulking brutes—"

"Wait a minute," Singapore said. "Major Ram Singh said you didn't speak English. You brought it on yourself. Speaking for my crew, we apologize. Now, kindly explain yourself."

Her huge, dark eyes lingered on his mysteriously. She wasn't smiling now,

and the absence of her smile gave her small, golden face another kind of beauty, mysterious and dazzling.

"My father has been trying to get rid of me for a year. He is practically penniless. When you saved his life, it was a heaven-sent opportunity. He thought you were a soft-hearted American."

Sam suspected that she was lying. "There's nothing I can do," he said, "but put you ashore at the nearest land. That's Borneo."

Koori's eyes were suddenly large with terror. "Oh, you can't do that! I've never been anywhere alone. I've never traveled alone!"

"Where," Rufe asked, "did you learn to speak English so good?"

"In a Hongkong convent school," she answered, without moving her large, frightened eyes from Sam's. "You won't put me ashore. Please don't put me ashore!"

Ah Fat had left the corridor door ajar. A face peeped in. Blue eyes grew wide with excitement, and Marthana caroled: "How perfectly delicious! Am I intruding?"

"No," Singapore said. His face was suddenly scarlet. "Come in, Miss Bondy."

Marthana was wearing a fresh white dress. She looked cool and crisp after her shower.

"A stowaway," Singapore explained. "She was hiding on the shelf in my closet."

The blond girl looked at Koori with a puzzled smile. The contrast between her golden-haired, white-skinned blondness and the island girl's golden coloring, with her blue-black hair and thick black lashes, was startling, but Sam wasn't aware of it.

"Mebby I talkee, huh?" Ah Fat inquired helpfully. "Last night, taipan, he go 'longside that alley. In that alley he look-see big bhobbery. That black man him tly snag li'l missy's papa's—"

"Somebody else had better try," Marthana interrupted. "I'm a stranger here myself."

"Ah Fat," Sam explained, "is trying to say that I was in a rickshaw last night when this young lady's father was being attacked by black footpads. I happened to scare them off and he was so grateful that he gave me a lot of presents, including—including her. She's just told me that her father is broke and has been trying for a year to get rid of her, and he figured that, being an American, I—"

"That," Marthana interrupted, "doesn't make it much fun for her."

Koori was looking at the blond girl hopefully. She said: "He wants to put me ashore. I'd be terrified. I've never traveled or been anywhere alone."

"You can share my room," Marthana said promptly. "It has two bunks."

"We can't take her along," Sam said firmly.

"What are you going to do with her, then? She can't swim back to Singapore, and we can't put back, and we can't put in at any port, can we?"

"No," Sam admitted. "But—" He stopped, because he couldn't say what he thought. Possibly Koori was telling the truth. Possibly that incident with the footpads and the Sultan of Saballa in the alley hadn't been a deliberate and clever trick. Possibly Koori's persistence was nothing but a docile observance of old Oriental customs.

At any rate, she had him coming and going. There was no possible way of getting rid of her. She would have to stay on the Blue Goose. But Singapore resolved to watch her.

" And now that's settled," Marthana said firmly.

" You wait," Ah Fat said. He nodded genially at Sam. " You like?"

The island princess said to Marthana, " Thank you. If you hadn't been here—" She did not finish, but glanced sorrowfully at Sam. " Borneo!" she murmured.

" Oh, he wouldn't have put you ashore on Borneo," Marthana said cheerfully. " He's terrible, but not that terrible. Come on."

MARTHANA took the Princess of Saballa to her cabin, and Sam's last recollection of Koori that night, as she left his room, was of her large, wistful eyes, her faint, mysterious smile. It was such a look as a woman in love might have given her lover, and it made Sam feel extremely uncomfortable.

Ben Rosen, when he heard of the stowaway, was cynical. And when Sam told him of the circumstances of the sultan's rescue, he was skeptical and suspicious. He was evidently determined to be quarrelsome and troublesome, to assert his authority, and to show Singapore Sammy that he had a very low opinion of him.

Their conference in the dining room did nothing to relieve the tension. Sam tried to conceal his growing suspicion of the hunchback and the doctor, and as for them, neither made any attempt at concealing his mysterious resentment of Sam.

As if Sam were a suspicious character on the witness stand, the lawyer questioned and cross-questioned him. He tried to trick Sam into contradictions. Sam, for his part, shot questions at Ben Rosen that were, if not confusing, at least infuriating.

He wanted to know just what Ben Rosen had seen on the after deck of the yacht on the night Ray Baxton disappeared. He wanted to know why Ben Rosen hadn't concocted some better scheme to hoodwink the crew than the smallpox hoax. He wanted to know why Ben Rosen hadn't, immediately on wakening from his drunken stupor, ordered the captain to put about and make a search for the young man.

To none of these questions could Ben Rosen give satisfactory answers. Sam and Marthana sat on one side of the table, and Ben Rosen and the doctor sat on the other, facing them. Thus were these forces aligned—Ben Rosen and Dr. Hobb *versus* Sam and Marthana. And thus they were aligned to the end.

When Ben Rosen accused Marthana of suspecting him of complicity in the disappearance of Ray Baxton, she said: " You're too smart for an inexperienced girl. I don't know."

Ben Rosen glared at her, but carried the discussion no further. He was very nervous. He drummed on the table, he stroked his nose, he chewed one cold cigar after another. Watching him, Sam's suspicions continued to grow.

Dr. Hobb said little, only a word now and then to defend or affirm the hunchback. His attitude was one of amusement. When Sam spoke, the handsome young doctor watched him with an air of scorn or contempt.

A golden dawn was at the portholes when Marthana jumped up and said that all this bickering was getting them nowhere. She asked Sam to go on deck with her and watch the sunrise. They went above and walked forward and into the bows. With her elbows on the rail, her eyes dreamily on the bow wave, knifed up into foaming pink from the ink-blue water, she began to talk.

It was the first time she had voiced definite suspicions of Ben Rosen to Sam. She said she believed that the whole trouble was that his scheme, as originally planned, had gone astray—somehow.

"But I don't see what Rosen's motive would be. He always seemed sympathetic with Porter. He fought with Mr. Baxton over that will. I was sure he wanted Porter to inherit the Baxton empire—not Ray. The simplest plan would have been to have Ray killed in some way that looked accidental, so that he could have the corpse for legal purposes. If Rosen is at the bottom of this, and if his scheme did not go astray, what is his motive?"

Sam answered: "Perhaps Rosen doesn't want Porter Baxton to inherit the Baxton empire. You've seen how he loves power and authority. Perhaps Rosen is planning to seize the corporation."

"How?"

"With no one to prove that Ray is dead or alive," Sam replied, "Porter is powerless. Rosen can take the case into the courts and keep it there for years. He could have the corporation thrown into receivership and be appointed receiver. There are a dozen schemes he could use to get control of the corporation. It's one of the biggest fortunes in America. It's enough to tempt any man. He's smart, but if he is at the bottom of this, if he's responsible for Jeff's death, I'll find it out."

Marthana said in a faint small voice: "You'd kill him!"

"I would."

She said presently: "What will we find on that island?"

"I don't know."

"Cannibals?"

"It isn't likely to be inhabited, except of course—" He hesitated.

"By whom?" Marthana said quickly.

"Some kind of gang." He didn't elaborate that. He had given it thought, but one guess was as good as another. It all depended on Ben Rosen's innocence or guilt, and, if the latter, upon what his plans were. If Ray Baxton had been kidnaped by one of the gangs which infest the South Seas, the worst in all known human nature could be expected. Wanted criminals, escaped convicts, human wolves of the sea comprised some of these gangs.

THE golden color in the east brightened, and the crimson tip of the sun appeared on the horizon. The light crimsoned the tips of the blue waves. Red rays from the sun struck up into masses of cumulous clouds which looked as solid as though carved from stone; illuminated them from within in a glory of colors. It was a moment of breathless and indescribable beauty.

Marthana suddenly began to cry. She dropped her face into her hands and cried silently. Sam laid his arm gently across her shoulders and said huskily, "You'd better turn in, old timer."

She took her hands down and straightened up and looked at him, trying to smile. Her eyes were wet. Her cheeks were wet.

"I'm disgusted with myself, Sam. I'm so tired. It all seems so futile. Why are we going to this place? What are we going to find? I'll make a terrible confession to you: I'm not in love with Porter. I'm going to go through with it because I think he needs me. But I don't love him any more. After I really knew Jeff—I couldn't. I've never loved anybody in my life but Jeff."

She put her hands to her face and began to cry again, in that silent way. Sam looked grimly past her at a school of flying fish which broke just ahead of the bow, but he was unaware of their amazing grace and the silvery beauty of their return to the blue water.

He was sorry for Marthana, but there was nothing you could do for a girl who loved a man who was dead. He took her firmly by the elbow and led her aft to the stairway, and down the stairs to her room.

He opened the door upon a room flooded with rosy sunlight.

Koori, in the upper bunk, was sitting up staring with wide, alarmed eyes at the opening dor.

She wore white pajamas, presumably Marthana's.

Her eyes, on Sam's green ones, were suddenly dark with terror. Her golden face was somber and mysterious. Her lashes moved lazily down to her cheeks and she smiled faintly.

Marthana said, in a choked voice: "You're such a good egg, Sam."

And he said, "You're a pretty good guy yourself. Turn in!"

He went to his room. He suspected that his present charter could lead, before it was over, to enough drama, enough trouble, to last a man a lifetime. But what he could not suspect was the mysterious and amazing and horrible way in which the future would disclose the fates of his passengers and himself.

He fell on the bunk with his clothes on, and did not wake up until supper-time.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

One Plowing of Potatoes Enough

IF weed control in potatoes is not a major problem, the extra work of more than one good, deep cultivation probably will not pay. In a three-year test by the United States Department of Agriculture at Presque Isle, Maine, one-cultivation potatoes yielded slightly more on the average than potatoes cultivated five times.

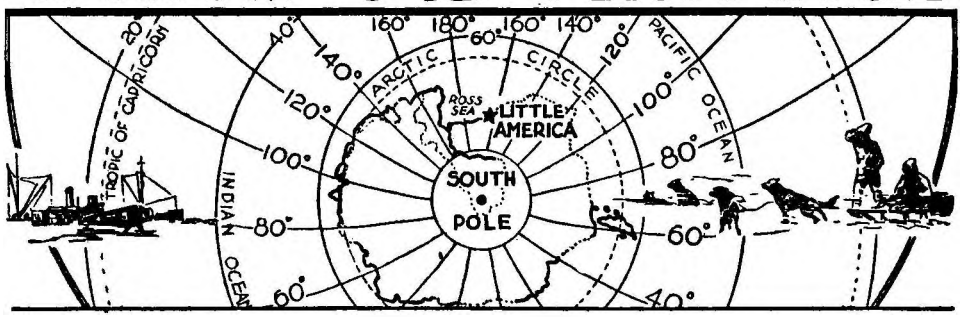
In both cases there was a light cultivation two weeks after the potatoes were planted and before they were up. The one-cultivation potatoes were well ridged. The potatoes cultivated five times were ridged moderately. Both plots were hand-hoed once to kill weeds.

When cultivation is necessary to control weeds, it should be shallow. Deep cultivation prunes the potato roots and the freshly-tilled soil loses moisture. These cultivation experiments were on fall-plowed sod land fitted in the spring for a good seed bed.

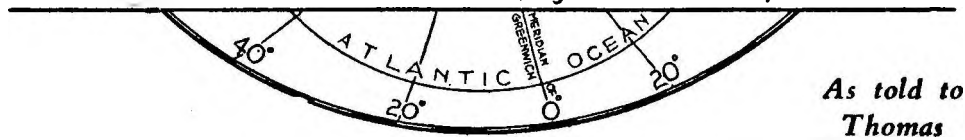
Up to ten or fifteen years ago, farmers and crop specialists believed that row crop tillage aërated the soil, conserved moisture, increased availability of plant food in the soil and suppressed weed growth. Other studies besides those on potatoes indicate the fallacy of some of the supposed benefits from frequent tillage.

—*Roger Yase.*

WHITE ADVENTURE



BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER GEORGE O. NOVILLE, U.S.N.R.
Personal Aide and Executive Officer, Byrd Antarctic Expedition II.



Green Moon

As told to Thomas Calvert McClary

With the Second Byrd Antarctic Expedition — an eye-witness account of daily life at Little America

WINTER throttled Little America. For four months we would know only the light of the moon and blazing auroras, and the pitch, clutching blackness of the Antarctic. The sun had set. Around our unseen horizon a lessening thin ring of gray showed for a few hours each day.

Then came the first real blizzard, rising and shrieking out of nowhere. The whirring little anemometers told the story. Gusts would rise to higher than a hundred and twenty, at which point the recording needle jumped off the record. How much higher, none could say. Shackleton's Expedition had recorded fierce gusts of wind rising above two hundred and fifty miles an hour not many miles distant.

We confined our curiosity to the anemometers and the whistling, hissing grate overhead. Gales could spring up in ten minutes, but they died out gradually No man went out in the least uncertain weather—not even to forty and fifty foot distant caches—without guide lines in hand and an ice mask over the face. Snow particles hard as crystals cut like myriad tiny knives.

After the gales came the dead calm, when the heavens opened for man's gaze and the cold fell to fifty, sixty, sometimes eighty below zero. Men would tumble onto the surface in heavy clothing, glad to be free of the two miles of tunnels buried beneath the snow. Flares and flashlights showed familiar bumps and hollows leveled by wind and drift. New patches of *sastruggi* might be found, great parallel streaks of snow cut and raised symmetri-

cally by the wind like a giant washboard.

New lengths would be added to the stovepipes peeping through the drift in the sickly green twilight. Guide ropes surrounding camp on the surface would be shaken free of drift and ice and raised to safety heights. Men would grunt and sweat—even in that cold—as they labored with shovels to clear hatchways down into the city. A survey party would locate Hermann to be sure he had not been drifted over and lost.

Once Lewisohn nearly froze to death inside a hatchway during a blizzard. Bundled up, he was standing near the entrance listening to the wild symphony of the gale outside. When he turned to come back he found his feet frozen fast in a mounting pile of drift so fine had it driven in around the door.

During calm weather men would go topside with flares and get in what skiing they could within the confines of the guide ropes and short ski run. It was the lesser of the two evils of facing the weird, pale green twilight or remaining below.

Excepting when a wind was blowing, the cold was not disagreeable. Men dressed for it, but there were always occasional touches of frostbite where faces had been damp, or touched by a breeze, or where the wind had found its way through clothing. If a man was frozen, as it sometimes happened, the pain did not begin until the thawing out process. This led the greenhorns into some rather icy moments. The old-timers would tell them that they had been frozen and didn't realize it, and to take ice rubdowns. Of course the ice coming against a body not frostbitten was just like a freezing shower.

The galley became the favorite gathering place, and a large pot of coffee would be found on the stove at all times. Carbone, the maestro singing cook, had not had time to get topside since entering Little America, but one day, when a large party were going out for ski exercise, he was told to dress up and come along. There was no wind, the moon was shining at its full intensity, and the mercury was a gentle fifteen or twenty below. In that dry atmosphere, that was pleasant weather for exercise. Nobody was particularly heavily dressed.

We waited for the cook an endless time. Finally the hatch door opened to show the strange apparition that was Carbone. He had not missed a single equipment call when fitting up, and now he appeared swaddled up in enough gear to carry him safely out to Advance Base, including two fur parkas (we were dressed in windbreakers over sweaters), gigantic airplane outer mukluks—about three feet long—a trail blizzard face mask, and a thirty-day trail ration bag over one shoulder! Over the other, he struggled to balance skis which he could not use.

Carbone was floored by the strange scene around him. After staring incredulously through his mask for a long moment, he ripped it aside, gave one horrified look at the pallid green twilight, one squint at the green moon overhead, and dove—I mean the word literally—down the hatch! After a long search, he was discovered in a far corner of the galley fervently lighting innumerable candles to innumerable saints.

"A *green* moon!" wailed Carbone. "I sign on as cook, and they bring me to purgatory!" No bribe, explanation, or threat could get him back on the surface for the remainder of the winter.

OF course this started the Moon Made of Green Cheese argument. Doc Perkins, Doc Poulter, Zuhn and Bramhall took up the cudgels of contro-

versy and stated that there was no certain proof that the moon was not made of green cheese! They called attention to the Milky Way, and finally worked out a scientific hypothesis that the moon really was green cheese, challenging any of the other scientists to disprove them. By the end of the winter they had half of the camp wondering if the moon really was green cheese or not. The seriousness of the arguments reached flaming heights.

The first task of leisure moments for every man was to arrange his own "house" conveniently. These " houses " were men's bunks. In the little box-like spaces appeared an assortment of individualized luxury which would have done credit to an ocean liner. If any prowler so much as disturbed a pillow of a neighbor, there would be a hullabaloo like a Turkish massacre. Bunks began to look like Rube Goldberg cartoons. A lot of ingenuity was used in these arrangements, and the first man who rigged up a contraption for reaching his socks and boots down from the rafters without leaving his sleeping bag was a seven-day wonder.

There was one man on the ice who was a confirmed hypochondriac. Every day he would come down with some unknown new " disease " or ailment. His bunk shelves looked like a regular apothecary's shop. He had Doc Potaka wild, for he could think up new things wrong with himself faster than Doc could make up medicines bitter enough to " cure " him.

One night he moaned into his sleeping bag with loud announcements that he had some new Antarctic fever. He was interrupted in midsentence by his body suddenly going rigid. These palsied spasms continued at about three minute intervals until the invalid was scared to death. *This time he really did have something wrong!*

Doc Potaka came down with his usual bag full of colored sugar pills and castor oil, but he took one look at the sufferer and realized that this time something certainly was up. The man was having a spasm, lying with mouth open, white as a sheet, and quivering in a stiff paroxysm. When he stopped shaking, Doc tried to question him about his " fit." The ice would be no place for an epileptic. But every time the sufferer started to answer the Doc, he would be seized with another tremor, go rigid, and shake all over.

This even had Doc Potaka worried, and he studied and tried to question the man for a full half hour. No good. The trembling would cease, the man would relax and moan, and finally get up wind to speak. But the moment he started to talk, another tremor would seize him.

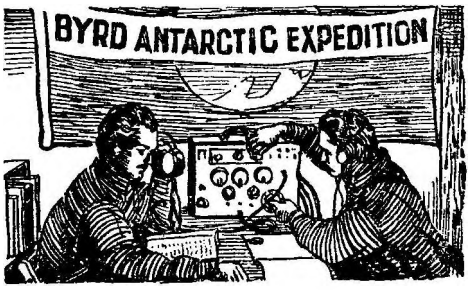
FINALLY there was a suppressed giggle from the group of men gathered at the far end of the shack. Doc went on a little tour of investigation and found that the aviation gang, under Bill Bowlin, had wired up the man's sleeping bag with fine copper wire through the foot of the blankets, and had attached a small hand generator. Every time he started to speak, the gang would give a few twists on the generator. It worked up just enough juice to straighten him out, but not enough to harm him.

Doc pronounced this the most miraculous cure in medical history. The Great Ailer did not even have so much as one bellyache for the rest of the winter!

It was discovered early in the winter that the BAE II was distinguished by an orator. Charles J. V. Murphy, New Yorker and historian of the Expedition, could no more help making speeches than a crow can help flying. He had a great sense of the dramatic and was always arriving to stop " fights " with a booming speech about morale and acting as gentlemen—when no fights were at hand!

Of course, it was difficult to tell from the lurid language and heat arguments whether a war was on or not unless you were present from the start. Murphy was saved from his weakness by a quick sense of humor in emergency. But when he dared, he would continue right along with his oration and finally succeed in reducing the men either to tears or snores. It was always a little beyond him that other men

were not more interested in elevating and serious discussions. He spent the winter trying to interest them in Swinburne and Plato and Einstein, when what they wanted to hear was " Mademoiselle from Armentières " or Ginger Rogers over the radio.



Tall, handsome, reserved Murph was an ex-reporter who directed the weekly Little America broadcasts and got the jitters every time he got before the microphone. He was a ragged and worn out man when he came out from a broadcast, which was the big weekly event at LA. No gang of opera stars ever showed more guile to get rôles than the men at Antarctic showed in either getting onto the program, or in not getting onto it. Among those who wanted to " star," the idea was not so much being in the performance as having the folks at home actually hear their voices. Radio messages were transmitted by dot-dash, and this was the one means of saying hello to the U.S.A.

Murph was very squeamish about dirt and blood, and was one of the " Soapy Five " who actually washed his hands before every meal. He shared this act of belligerent aggression—so termed by Rip Skinner—with the Admiral, who was forgiven because cleanliness was his hobby, the British Innes-Taylor, Doc Potaka and Clay Bailey.

When it was desirable to get Murphy's goat, which was any old time, somebody would lure him into the " slaughter house " where seals were summarily ripped apart, or look around for somebody with a banged or cut arm and ask Murphy to bandage it up. In the latter event he would manage, but he would be far sicker than the injured man. Murph was very serious, particularly about intellectual matters, but not so intellectual that he did not manage to be the highest paid member of the Expedition!

Murphy adopted explorer headdress, which eventually reached the state of luxuriant tresses. It made him look doubly romantic, and he was alternately accused of growing a disguise to fool his wife when he returned or of getting ready to stagger the Clark Gable fans in some colorful movie.

HAROLD JUNE was about the most unsettled and unfindable member of the BAE II. He bunked in the tiny office, infirmary, and operating room of Doc Potaka. At least, this was his official bunk. But following the fire, Doc had quickly collected all of the medical equipment inside his hospital section of the Administration Building, with the remainder flowing out into, and blocking, the tunnel. When anything had to be located or moved, Doc would pile boxes up on June's bunk with the remark " we'll put them there for a short time." They would still be there three days later. If June managed to navigate over the pile of boxes and crates outside the door, he would usually find his bunk cluttered with instruments and medicine, and no other place to put them. The result was that for the entire winter, any call for June meant searching every tunnel and cache at LA.

THERE was not much drinking at Little America, probably because there was not much to drink. But " a wee nip " was a constant hope, and men would plot and scheme for weeks to get as much as a half pint between three of them. However, it is worth noting that due to the small consumption of spirits and the effect of the climate, good two-bottle men back home could get on one " beaut " of a bender with two good drinks at the Antarctic.

Carbone was chief villain. He would come wandering out from his pots and pans smelling like a liquor store. Any curiosity over the lingering smell of vanilla extract would bring forth the information that there would be cake the next day. There would be cake, all right, about six of them requiring possibly a quarter bottle of vanilla. But a glance at the requisition sheets would show Carbone had drawn enough vanilla to make cakes for an entire army!

However, he was not alone in his sinning. There was a startling widespread use of mouthwash. "I can't understand it," Corey said, puzzled. "There are no cold germs, and the stuff tastes like the devil." Then somebody happened to glance at a label and noted it said thirty per cent alcohol!

Penguin Fighter Grimminger was one of the chief optimists. He did less drinking and more hoping than any man on the ice, excepting teetotaler Doc Poulter. He nearly wore himself down hunting for the hidden liquor cache, and the concoctions he made up hoping they would produce at least one per cent alcohol would make a chemist for a hair restorer company blush with shame!

Grimminger's little scientific cubicle was next to Doc Potaka's, and Doc early learned that Grimminger had a remarkable interest in medical work, and that it was seemingly accompanied by considerable "evaporation" of the alcohol supply. This was a problem, as alcohol had to be kept on hand in the infirmary, but it couldn't be if Grimminger's medical interest continued. Finally Doc rigged up a bottle of alky labeled kerosene, and casually asked Grimminger if he could leave it in his place as Doc didn't want it near the medicines. The famed Penguin Fighter said certainly, and the bottle sat right over his head for two months. Occasionally Doc would come in to get a "refill for his lantern."

About midwinter, Cox had a tooth extracted, and being in considerable pain afterward, asked Doc for a shot of straight alky. Doc said sure and called over to Grimminger to "bring in that bottle." Grimminger brought it over, and hid a grin while Doc poured out a shot of the contents. He watched Cox's pleased expression, and went forth to tell the camp that Doc had pulled a fast one and kidded Cox into believing a glass of kerosene was straight alky. Then he began to put two and two together and came racing back to Doc.

"Why, sure, that was real alcohol!" Doc grinned. "You've been protecting the supply for two months!"

"Oh, my Lord!" gasped Grimminger with a sick look.

But he noted Doc had put the bottle up on one of his own shelves. The next time Doc left his quarters, Grimminger sneaked in for a little "evaporation work." It was a large-necked bottle, and the liquid poured fast. Grimminger had a capacious throat. Suddenly he stopped gobbling and choked. Then he took time to smell the bottle. He nearly broke down in tears. Doc had switched bottles, and Grimminger had gotten real kerosene!

THE messhall at LA was too small to accommodate all the men at once, and shortly after the Great Kerosene Cure it became noticeable that the men at the second night mess were getting something from somewhere. And they were getting a lot of it! Some of them would come skating out from a beef dinner as if it had been a banquet. This was only the second mess group and the most careful investigation failed to show how they were getting tight when no liquor was being served. Doc Perkins, June, Taylor and myself made regular reservoirs out of ourselves drinking liquids to see if coffee, tea, soup or anything else was spiked. As June commented bitterly, all we got was a belly-ache for our pains. Carbone swore nothing funny was being done to the food.

June came in late one night and ate at second mess. He ate two helpings of everything, and he came rolling out of the messhall like a captive balloon, did a few ground loops down the tunnel, and a falling leaf down a hatchway. The Antarctic De-

tective Agency got quickly and jealously to work, and discovered the cause in time to make tests for evidence and enjoy themselves thoroughly.

Big pans of a fruit concoction were being mixed for dessert, including raisins, canned peaches and canned pears. The first mess would eat their helpings and have no particularly pleasant effect. But in order to clear room for second mess, Carbone would put the pans out in the tunnel which was freezing cold, and they would remain there about half an hour. Apparently the operation of freezing and thawing caused fast fermentation in the mixture, and by the time the second mess got around to the fruit dessert it would be equal to a champagne punch!

The tractor drivers had all gone out to Advance Base to build the Admiral's winter quarters, and on returning found themselves out of luck for a stove for their garage. All the stoves had been issued. This wasn't a bit funny, excepting to the dog drivers and aviators, because the garage was usually around 40 below zero, and the metal of the tractors chilled the men so that they couldn't work.

Skinner and Van der Wall promptly constructed a coal burning monstrosity big enough to heat the Empire State Building, and screamed to high heavens when they were only allotted one and a half bags of coal per week. They could have dumped in their full week's supply and lost it among the clinkers! But the supply officer's heart was colder than their garage, and one and a half bags remained their allotment. It was astonishing, from that point on, how rapidly the coal supply in the other buildings diminished, and how long the tractor men would stretch out their coal ration! It got so that the minute a Caterpillar man sauntered into a shack, somebody would ring the tocsin, and two gimlet-eyed and heavy-jawed men would drop whatever they were doing and rush to sit atop the coal bin.

It was at this point that Carbone's court of admirers increased so as to include all the tractor men, for Carbone was the Antarctic coal baron. His was one department which simply had to have the coal he asked for. But happily for the rest of camp, Carbone was a natural born hoarder. He produced what he called "The Gigolo Bolt"—a name which still remains a mystery—which locked his galley at certain hours of the day. Caterpillar men, disguised in frozen grease, used to bare their fangs and growl at the bolt, but it kept them out of the precious coal bin.

THE three most sought after men at Little America were Carbone, Corey and Doc Potaka. Carbone could make up special pies and delectable titbits for his flock, Corey could put a man on a food cache detail from which workers staggered away burdened with private loot, and Doc Potaka could hand out indisputable requisitions for a nip now and then. It became a regular contest as to which man could do most to please one of "Their Majesties." If a new joke was cracked down in the old messhall which might amuse Carbone, there would be a mad rush to see which man could get up to repeat the joke.

The artist, Paige, hit upon the idea of getting portraits of every influential member of the community started, so as to avoid work details. It was a great gag. The portraits were never completely finished. The slightest hint that he was wanted to do some hard work would bring forth the remark that it was too bad, as he was just getting to work on the portrait

of the fellow who was in charge of the detail.

This gag was so successful that Paige paid court to Carbone and started a portrait of the Great Maestro, but he forgot the artistic temperament of singers and chefs. Carbone watched the progress on his portrait, much puffed up, until one bad day a dog got its tail into some paint and then whacked it across the Maestro's portrait. Carbone came in before Paige could fix it. After that, poor Paige nearly starved to death in fear of poisoning. His mere shadow on the galley door would bring a torrent of fluent Italian invective, and a meat cleaver slamming into the door sill.

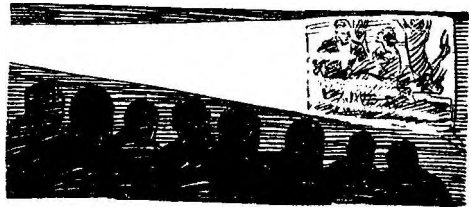
There was not very much time for loafing. Each department had heavy work schedules ahead. The scientists were up to their necks with observations, research and computations. The cosmic ray work of Bramhall and Zuhn was so important that they were excused from nearly every work detail. Doc Poulter, as well as being Senior Scientist, was Expedition Handy Man. He could repair anything from a fine Swiss watch to a spare camera lens. He was good at so many things that he was held in some awe, and even the dog drivers admitted he knew as much as ordinary human beings.

But the idol fell on the first day Doc was assigned to assist Carbone. Doc wandered all over Little America for two hours with a garbage bucket in his hand looking for a place to dump the garbage! "Don't want to throw it near a shack," Doc let out unthinkingly. "Might bring rats." There wasn't a rat within twenty-five hundred miles of Little America!

Carbone met one major defeat on the ice. He was under the delusion that the messhall should be just that. He was quickly shown his error. After each meal the hall was cleared, and carpenters and dog drivers moved in en masse. The messhall then became the carpenter shop, or dog harness factory, or dog inoculating infirmary, as the case might be. It was here that the thirty-four dog sledges were built for spring work.

TWICE a week movies were given. On these nights, the messhall became "Penguin Theater," reserved seats only. There was just room to crowd every man in by putting tables against the walls and stretching benches crosswise. There were no aisles. Every man took the same seat each time, and woe betide the latecomer seated in the back of the hall. He was given no passageway, simply picked up and passed unceremoniously over the heads of the audience and dumped into his seat. Periodically, the motors froze up, and as the movies were talkies, there were some weird effects.

Steve Corey always had some surprise for the men on entering; a bar of chocolate, a box of crackers, a box of popcorn. This was the Little America "currency." Trading and betting was carried on in various items of gear and special titbits, and it would have amazed some of the proud blanket manufacturers to see one blanket (retail value thirty-five dollars, U. S. A.), being bet against five or six nickel bars of chocolate at times!



Carbone's bunk was next to the screen and known as the Royal Box. During shows, Carbone would recline grandly like a Roman Emperor and nibble on special foods not wasted on the common herd in the pit below. Haines, Taylor, Corey, Van der Wall and Grimminger sat against the wall atop a mess table by right of conquest. They were a formidable team, known as The Rail Birds. Petersen ran the show, two features and a news reel—a year or so old—and whenever the picture starred one of his movie loves, it was just too bad. Petersen would stop the machine in the middle of some particularly cherished scene while he made goo-goo eyes at his screen dream girl!

Other entertainment included Carbone's good voice, Quin Blackburn's atrocious one, some weird noise known as the Killer Whale Orchestra, two phonographs, Boyd, Van der Wall and Carbone (Continuous Clown Act, and The Foolish Forum, which was a series of lectures and discussions upon serious topics supposedly under the direction of Doc Poulter. But Doc was muscled out by Murphy, not even Doc Poulter's brain being able to cope with the seriousness of Murphy's thoughts. Our radio reception was excellent, thanks to John Dyer, and there were the continuous arguments and friendly feuds between various groups.

THERE was also a semiregular publication, *The Barrier Bull.* Everybody wrote for it, and everybody read his own published piece with great acclaim. Under the guidance of The Serious Thinkers, the publication outshone the Congressional Record and was guaranteed to cure insomnia in five minutes. *The Barrier Bull* carried some hilarious cartoons, however, and the true confession experiences of some of the men on the ice concerned headline moments of recent history.

Bob Young gave a gunner's account of the Battle of Jutland. Innes-Taylor told of an Alaskan gold rush. There were whale stories, sea yarns, aviation tall stories, undersea myths, stories of danger and daring in every adventurous line from steeple climbing and mountain scaling to deep coal mining, big timber cuts and gun running.

The Barrier Bull ran one questionnaire for which all else was forgiven. The only complication was that men answered some questions seriously and some with howls of merriment. I quote it, and leave it to the cipher experts to detect where answers were made with tongue in cheek.

The following are the final results of *The Barrier Bull* questionnaire. After each question are listed the first and second choice:

Who has the greatest affection for dogs?.....Potaka; Moody
Who is the greatest lover?.....Noville; Siple
Who is the expedition clown?.....Murphy; Dane
Who is the worst radio man?.....Waite; Corey, Dane
Who is the worst dog man?.....Herrman; Taylor
Who is the worst scientist?.....Wade; Rawson
Who is the worst tractor man?.....Morgan; Swan
Who is the worst airplane pilot?.....McCormick; Bowlin
Who is the greatest bull thrower?.....Murphy; Carbone
Who is your favorite cow?.....Southern Girl; Iceberg
Who is your favorite dog?.....Don; Pinock

Who do you think most representative of BAE II?.....Hump; Morgan
Who is the most likely to end in a penitentiary?.....Fleming; Dyer
Who knows the most about women?.....June; Lindsey
Who is the boss in LA?.....Paige; Byrd
Who is the most intelligent?.....Poulter; Perkins
Who is the most helpful?.....Paige; Rawson

What do you expect to do on returning to civilization?.....Drink; drink
What do you miss most?.....Food; elevators
Who is the worst skier?.....Ronne; Cox
Who expresses himself the most fluently?.....Bailey; Carbone
If LA adopted human sacrifice, who would be the first sacrificed?.....Noville; Grimminger
Who is the greatest sit-by-the-fire?.....Taylor; Miller

Who is the neatest?.....Albert; Young
Who is the sloppiest?.....Ike; Waite
Who is the handsomest?.....Hutch; Corey
Who is the most polite?.....Perkins; Bramhall
Who is the biggest grouch?.....Miller; Taylor
Who is the biggest crabber?.....Taylor; Smith

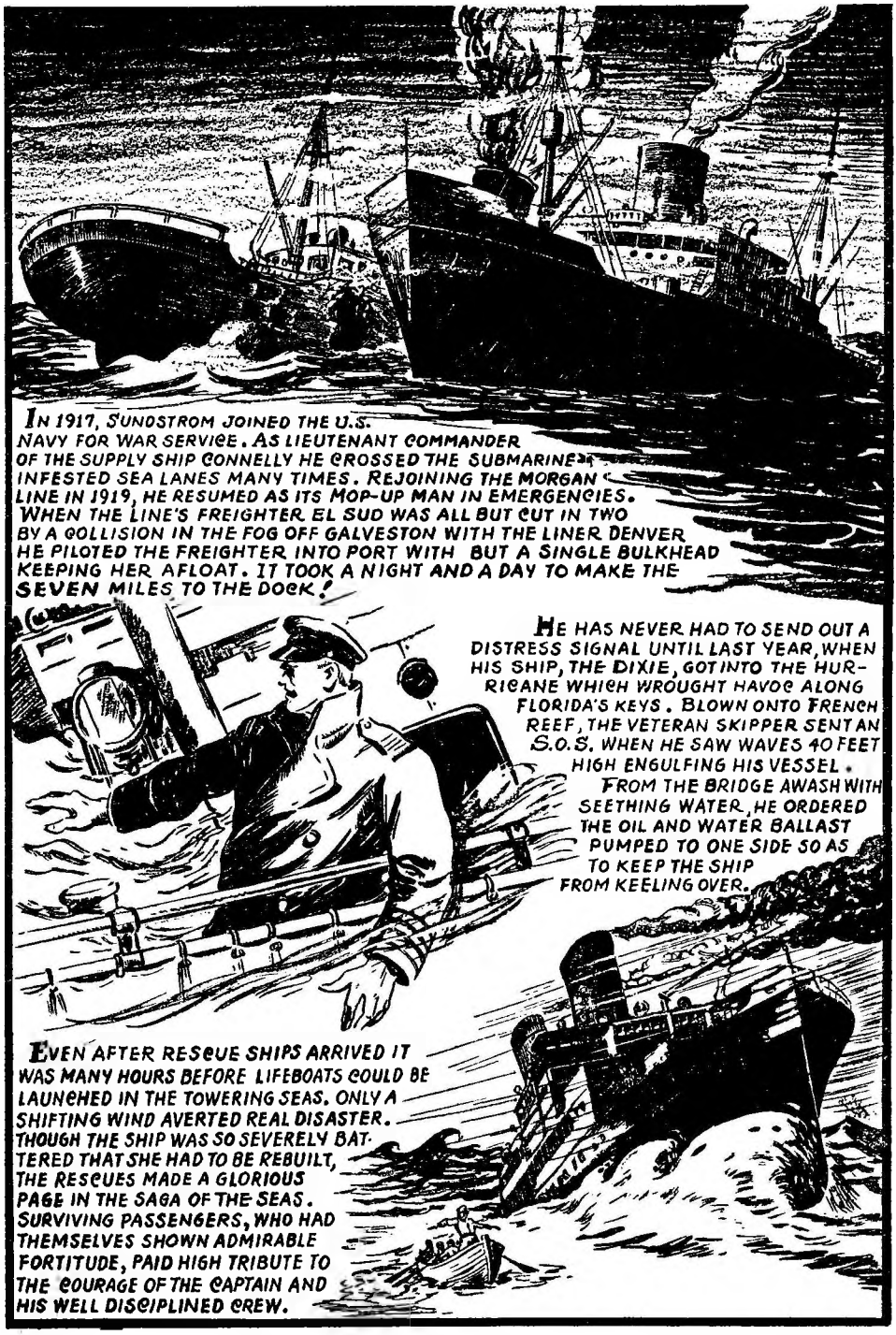
Who has the best set of whiskers?.....Dane; Miller
Who is the best dressed?.....Corey; Lewisohn. Worst?.....Rawson; Wade
Who bathes most frequently?.....Fleming; Stancliffe
Who has the greatest appetite?.....Grimminger; Dane

Who is the champion bunk director?.....Noville; Paige
Who is the greatest wire puller?.....Clark; Swan
Who is the most popular professor?.....Rawson; Perkins
Who is the best parachute jumper?.....Fleming. Worst?.....Skinner
Who is the most temperamental?.....Lewisohn; Taylor
Who is the most likely to succeed?.....Paige; Haines
Who is the camp goat?.....Young; Dustin
Who has the rosiest cheeks?.....Albert; Hill
Who is the greatest singer?.....Carbone; Ike

Who has done the most for the University?.....Ike; Dane
Who has the best chance to succeed in marriage?.....McCormick; Bowlin
Who is the most athletic?.....Demas; Abele
Who is the camp sport?.....Zuhn; Bramhall

Following the above publication, the editors of *The Barrier Bull* suddenly became very hard to find, and all guns and long knives were locked up securely. This seemed to be a great mistake to the editors of the rival tabloid publication, which had blossomed brilliantly and died quickly, due to the fact that there was not enough space to print what the Professors, Cloud Shooters, Caterpillars and Flea Worshipers thought of each other. *The Barrier Bull* succumbed in midwinter due to a shortage of mimeograph paper. Its editors were finally forgiven for its publication, because of the strangely morose and sinister effect of the green moon.


CAPTAIN
Men of Daring
by STOOKIE ALLEN
HERO of FRENCH REEF
A skipper of the old school who would go down with his ship, Captain Sundstrom has more than a casual acquaintance with hurricanes. He's been through six and he rode out all of them except one. That one—the most violent ever known in the Florida straits, blew his ship onto a reef and put him eye to eye with disaster. True to tradition, he stuck to his post while he got everyone safely off.
Capt. Einar Sundstrom
BORN IN SWEDEN IN 1884, SUNDSTROM COMES OF A SEAFARING FAMILY. AT FOUR HE EMIGRATED TO AMERICA WITH HIS MOTHER. WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOLS IN GEORGIA HE NURSED BUT ONE AMBITION—TO GO TO SEA. SO AT 16 HE SHIPPED AS SEAMAN ON THE BARK MADAGASCAR OUT OF BROOKLYN AND WENT 'ROUND THE HORN UNDER SAIL.
AFTER 3 YEARS ON WINDJAMMERS HE SIGNED WITH THE MORGAN LINE AS QUARTERMASTER. HE WON HIS MASTER'S PAPERS IN 1910 AND WAS ASSIGNED TO THE LINE'S TANKER SERVICE. IN 1914 HE RAN A TANKER INTO TAMPICO, MEXICO, TO BRING OUT AMERICAN REFUGEES — IN CARRYING OUT THIS ASSIGNMENT HE TOOK THE RISK OF BEING RAKED BY FIRE FROM THE GUNS OF THE PORT.



Next Week: Wild Bill Donovan, a Fighter

Bigi whimpered like a stricken cur

Big Game

By

MAX BRAND

"A lot of lecherous parlor-snakes and gutter vermin; little fools of girls with pretty, cheap faces; sleek, greasy-eyed actors. I'm dying," said Big-shot Bigi, " and that's all I have near me!"

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

AN attempted suicide started Terence Radway, big game hunter, on the biggest hunt of his life. He prevented Helen Forman from taking her own life in a New York tenement, then he got her story from her. What he learned sent him out, with cold rage in his heart, on the trail of a group of men who exploited girls who had theatrical aspirations. Helen Forman had been one of these.

The first man Radway encountered was Hugo Bigi, the motion picture magnate. Radway slipped into Bigi's well guarded apartment and warned him that he had only thirty days to live. Shortly afterward Bigi came to Radway, told him he had reformed, and was willing to furnish Radway with the names of the higher-ups in the ring.

Meanwhile, Helen Forman, apparently back in the grasp of the syndicate, telephoned Radway and asked him to come out to the Long Island Sound estate where she was—ostensibly a headquarters of the ring. Radway went. He saw Bigi brought in, apparently to be killed. Radway rescued Bigi from Alfred Coburn Thomas, one of the gang, but Thomas gave the alarm as the two men were escaping.

This story began in the Argosy for May 9

CHAPTER XVIII.

BIGI'S LAST WORDS.

OUT of the ground-darkness, unbelievably low, a gun boomed with a flat, crashing sound. By the snake-tongue of light Radway saw Jack Hill flattened against the gravel, his gun raised and held in both hands like a short rifle. Radway drove a bullet into that long body and ran straight on past him. He saw, dimly, that Jack Hill had twisted into a round ball like a wounded caterpillar, like a thing of many joints. And he heard the man begin to scream. The bullet must have torn through half the length of his flesh.

Behind Radway came the padding footfalls of Bigi. He increased his pace. The footfalls diminished in volume. Radway slackened his gait. The Italian drew nearer again, gasping out something that Radway could not understand.

Other sounds rushed on wings from the house. Men were shouting, their voices torn off short in the midst of words. Doors crashed like gunshots. Windows screeched up. And through it all sounded the siren scream of Jack Hill's unending yell of agony.

They reached the fence. Radway, leaping to the top of it, looked back and saw Bigi standing like a blind man, fumbling at the boards. With a curse of impatience, Radway dropped back to the ground inside. He never had seen panic do to a man what it seemed to be doing to Bigi. He laid hands of iron on the Italian. His fingertips seemed to strike right through to the bone. And so he lifted Bigi bodily to the top of the fence. The effort threw the blood up into the brain of Radway with a boom. He heard Bigi whimper like a stricken cur; and then the heavy body plumped solidly down on the other side as though Bigi had neither hands nor feet with which to ward off the fall.

Radway, pricked by an electric knife of horror, was over the fence like a greyhound.

Bigi lay face down on the side of the road, unmoving. Radway turned him over. His hand thrust into something hot and wet, that made his fingers slip.

Only then he understood why Bigi had lagged in that flight for life, and what Bigi had been gasping as he ran. The bullet from Jack Hill's gun had missed Radway, but it had driven into the body of Bigi.

"Bigi! Bigi! D'you hear me?" muttered Radway.

"Ah, Madonna!" breathed Bigi. "Ah, my God, the stars are whirling into lines of light . . . I am dying . . . Help me! Bring a doctor! Help!"

He was trying to scream out the words. There was the straining vibration of a screech in his throat, but the volume was only a whisper. Far more clearly, Radway heard the men who were beating about through the bushes in the grounds of the house.

Bigi began to sob: "Get me ice. Get me a pack of ice. My belly—it is torn in two . . . Radway, can a man live when he's shot through the middle? Can he live? Radway, Radway, what have they done to me?"

"They've killed you, Bigi," said Radway.

He kneeled by the wounded man and his eyes looked once, desperate with eagerness to be off, down the little country lane that dipped over the hill.

"True," said Bigi, in a voice that turned suddenly quiet, and at ease. "They've killed me, Radway. Ah, man, do you know what I see? The silver olives and the black cypresses. Italy! *Dio mio, che fortuna maladetta!* To die in the dark. To die in the dark. Radway, if one of those stars could shrink its distance from us and give me the light of a sun to die by. But even a ray of starlight should be enough to let a rat see its way into its hole. I've been a rat, Radway. Ah hai! If you knew the talent there is in me, that I've thrown away. To please *them*, the dogs! And to fill my belly and turn me rotten. To turn good, honest muscle into filthy fat! That's what I've done. I ought to leave great plays behind me. Radway,

the people I've given life to on the screen ought to be close at my shoulder, now. Noble souls! But where is the nobility? A lot of lecherous parlor-snakes and gutter vermin. A stink of cigarette smoke. The hands of a clock pointing to a late hour. Little fools of girls with pretty, cheap faces and soft bodies. Men full of 'it.' Sleek, greasy-eyed actors. That's all I have near me. Radway!"

"I hear you," said Radway. His muscles were no longer jumping and twitching with eagerness to be gone. The cold of Bigi's death was holding him like a stone in place.

"A queer damned thing comes over me," said Bigi. "We're born with a debt, to pay the best that we can. To what? To God? To the world? I don't know. I've paid in copper and counterfeit. Radway . . . There was gold in me!"

"I think there was," said Radway. "I'm sorry for you, Bigi. By God, I'm sorry for you. Tell me what I can do for you—it's a matter of messages I can give for you. That's all. Do you want to trust me with word for Nell, for instance? Is she anything to you, Bigi?"

His agony ran out into his voice as he asked. Bigi said: "For her? Do you want to know her secret?"

"If it's right and honest for me to know," said Radway.

"Right? Honest?" said Bigi. He tried to laugh, and the laughter was a horrible grotesque of whispering mirth, with a bubbling sound behind it. "Honest?" whispered Bigi. "I'll tell you about her and honesty—"

It seemed as though he were lifting himself to place his lips closer to the ear of Radway, who leaned to listen. But it was only the blind convulsion of the last struggle that had given Bigi strength. That power went out of him. He fell back with a force that knocked the air from his lungs in one whistling sigh.

"Bigi . . ." murmured Radway.

And then he realized that he was speaking to nothingness. Bigi was still there, but Bigi was gone into infinite distance. He never would return.

He was as lost in the past as withered old Egypt.

SOMETHING rattled and bumped against the fence, close by. Radway snaked his way back into the bushes and saw two men run hastily out into the road.

An electric torch slashed the night, whirled the big, dim trees into view like ghosts, and glittered over the brush. Radway could have picked off the pair of them with consummate ease. A savage contempt set his lip curling.

The voice of Alfred Coburn Thomas said: "What's that? What's that in the road?"

The light from the pocket torch spilled across the body of Bigi in a huge, loose ellipse that shrank down to a small, bright circle. Thomas stood erect, holding the light. It was Pete who stooped beside the dead man.

"He's blown down and he'll never get up, again," said Pete.

He pulled open Bigi's coat.

"Lookat!" said Pete. "Right through the kitchen."

Thomas pulled from his face a strip of the surgeon's plaster and cursed because of the pain it caused him.

"Where's Radway? That's the question!" he said.

"I don't know, and I'm not gunna hurry to find out," said Pete.

"Are you turning yellow?" demanded Thomas.

"So are you," answered Pete, "if it comes to trailing Radway through a night like this. We need three or four more in the committee before we go calling on that bird . . . Let's take care of this hunk of dead meat. That'll give us something to do."

"I think you're right," said Thomas. "Anyway, friend Radway can't last very long. He's sold out from the inside, and he'll never know how. Take the head and shoulders."

They picked up Bigi between them. The arms of the dead man hung down and

brushed the grass as they carried him slowly down the road.

"Is it straight that Radway got into the house and done you up into a parcel?" asked Pete. "Why didn't he slog you when he had the chance?"

"He's a fool with ideas about fair play," answered Thomas.

"He'll get plenty of play from the chief once the old boy sinks a hook in his gills. He'll get played to death, the poor damned sucker," commented Pete. "Here's the gate."

They passed through.

Other sounds ran significantly through the night. The horn of an automobile snarled down the driveway of the house; someone was shouting loudly in the garden, where the screeching of wounded Jack Hill no longer sounded. But Radway stood up and started on the return journey. He could see that one pair of hands was little use at this place. He had to get to a power greater even than that of "the chief," whoever he might be. He had to reach that calm mind, that steady and strong spirit, John Battersby Wilson. And on the way, he had to wash a certain sticky stain from his hands. Wilson would probably solve the mystery at a stroke, now that the site of the enemy had been located.

WHEN he got to the club, Battersby Wilson was in his room. Radway reached him with a house telephone; and a warm concern sprang into the voice of Wilson instantly.

"Are you all right, Terry?" he asked. "Safe and sound?"

"Safe and sound," said Radway.

"I'm going to have to let a plainclothes detail look after you, my dear lad," said Wilson. "I'm busy for the moment . . . but come straight along."

When Radway got up to the room he found Battersby Wilson saying good-by to two elderly men, one with a fighting face and the other a lean and reverend old aristocrat, who was saying: "I agree with Jack Leicester. They've tapped our wires and they're selling us from the inside."

"I'm glad of it," answered Wilson.

"Glad?" cried the other.

"If they tamper with us long enough, we'll catch them in their own device," said Battersby Wilson. "In the meantime, I want you to watch yourselves; closely. They mean murder, my friends, if murder will help them a single step on their way."

"They've been having me shadowed for a week," said Leicester. "But I don't mind that. It shows they're afraid. And that's what we want them to be. A scared fighting man has to lose in the long run."

The two went out. Wilson, as the door closed on them, turned and gripped the hand of Radway a second time.

"I've been half thinking—" he said.

"Listen to me," said Radway.

He sat down at the desk in the corner and began to draw lines on a piece of paper.

"Here's the South Shore. Here's the Drive. Here's a lane that turns off to the right as you go north. Here's the hill, or ridge, or whatever you want to call it. Here's the house, where *they* live. Or a part of them. Not the one they call the chief, however. There's a dead man out there. Bigi. Dead. Another man wounded. That tall, lean Jack Hill. Badly hurt. I put a slug into him in a place that hurt. Rush some men out there and they're sure to find a few things worth while . . . Here in the lane they'll find a wet spot on the ground, just opposite two birch trees. That wet stuff is the blood of Bigi. Nail 'em, Battersby. Haul in the people in that house and you'll have enough testimony to crack something wide open."

"I'll have them rounded up inside the hour," said Wilson. "Just wait here for a few minutes . . . I don't wan't this call to go out over the house wire. They seem to have tapped our wires in some mysterious way."

"They're selling you out from the inside, Battersby," said Radway. "I heard Alfred Coburn Thomas say so this evening."

"From the inside?" murmured Wilson. "Yes. I think perhaps they are."

He lifted his head and sighed, but for one moment a shadow crossed his face and darkened it to iron. Then he left the room.

A fire smoked on the hearth. Radway gathered the embers to a flame. He could not sit down. Electric tinglings kept running through his body, flickering across his brain. But gradually the room itself began to have its effect upon him. For Battersby Wilson often stayed at the club instead of at his house. He used to say that the monotony of club life was, at times, an antidote for the pressure that exists in any house, no matter how well organized. Only in the club he could be delivered from his friends. So he kept a study and a bedroom at the club and he even had moved a section of his library into these quarters.

The walls were lined with oak cases from which the solemn, brown-backed pigskin glimmered in compact rows. It was rather characteristic of Battersby Wilson that he should have bound his books uniformly in pigskin which time and long usage had dyed to a rich brown. He went in for no bright little luxuries. All was solid comfort. He would not even have an upholstered chair in front of his desk, but sat for long hours on hard wood, with a rigidly straight back to support his own square, heavy shoulders.

In the corner of the room there was an old-fashioned safe that reminded Radway more than a little of the similar one which he had seen in the cellar room behind Alfred Coburn Thomas that same evening. Like the other, its lock seemed a plain Yale mechanism. If there was a weakness in Battersby Wilson, perhaps it was that he clung to old effects, old ideas, old ways of doing things. "They," against whom he fought, were not likely to be found outmoded and out of date.

They might secure priceless advantages for that very reason.

So Radway began to consider his old friend with a certain amount of pity, with a desire not only to help him but to protect him from his own inefficiency of method. Yet all the while there was, strangely, the same sense of awe remaining in his mind with which he habitually thought of the great Battersby Wilson.

WILSON returned. He kept his quiet dignity, but his eye shone like the eye of a boy, almost dangerously bright.

He said: "Everything is under way . . . I wish that I could be out there with the boys."

"The boys are apt to find an empty house," said Radway. "Once those people find that I've escaped from 'em, they're going to do some fast moving, I think. But Jack Hill is a badly wounded fellow. They can't throw him around carelessly. Battersby, how much do you think the rats are tied in with the crooked grafters here in New York?"

"I can't tell, exactly," answered Wilson, "but my guess is that they're hand in glove . . . Go into your room and go to bed. I'll come in there and listen to the story, in a few minutes. But you're about done in, Terry."

Radway went to his room. It was true that he was very tired. He stood under the shower for a long time, letting it strike him with the violence of a needle spray that turned the water into dust and whipped up the blood under his skin. Afterwards, he dried himself with a rough towel, pulling it strongly across his body until his muscles were well worked out. A light supper which he had ordered was now brought up to his room. He ate hungrily, slid into bed, and pushed the soft of a pillow under the back of his neck. The weariness was beginning to run out of his body, carrying him downhill, as it were, towards sleep.

Battersby Wilson came in and sat for a time patiently, never pulling his eyes from the face of the narrator, while Radway went over the events of the night as briefly as possible.

Afterwards, Wilson got up and walked the floor. He paused near the fireplace to say: "This girl, Terry. How far is she under your skin?"

"I don't know," said Radway.

"How far is she under your skin? Speak out, now."

"Just as he died, Bigi was about to tell me something that would have cured me of all thought of her, I think," said Radway. "But I lost the chance there."

"Would a report about her wipe her out of your mind . . . if the report were black enough, I mean?"

Radway sighed and studied the ceiling.

"She's in your blood, poor lad," said Wilson.

"I don't know," said Radway.

"She's in your blood, Terry, isn't she?" repeated Wilson.

"I think she is," answered Radway.

"God help you, then. You're not the sort to give up your woman easily . . . Is this going to be the story of a hunter hunted? Terry, go to sleep. Sleep sometimes helps a man where even God Almighty can't."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SONG ON THE WIRE.

THE next morning Radway slept late, very late. There was a feeling in his bones, in the very marrow of his bones, as though eyes had been watching him through the night and that it was well for him to collect all of his strength before he moved again on the jungle-trail of New York, towards Alfred Coburn Thomas and that mysterious "chief" who stood behind him. It was, in fact, almost noon before Radway got himself out of bed and through breakfast. He ate heartily, against his morning custom. Then he showered and shaved and dressed. At one o'clock he was barely ready for the street when Battersby Wilson came in, perturbed, deep-eyed from the lack of sleep. He stood a moment staring towards Radway, speechless, letting his eyes find out what he wanted to know.

Radway said: "I'm fit as a fiddle. What tune have the police been playing for you, Battersby?"

"The police?" said Battersby, gloomily. "The police? They've played no tune at all No tune at all! Ah, my God, Terry, I wish that I were young again! I wish that I were capable of physical action on a high plane—that I could put my own hands on these affairs! But I have to assign everything to others. This investigation of Manhattan crookedness and corruption, I have to leave it to the ears and the eyes and the craft of other men. How far have they sold themselves to the people they are supposed to investigate? How far are they reporting the truth to me, or merely surface things of no importance? I tell you, I feel that I'm striking at feathers. I'm only raising a wind with the blows. I make the feathers float more lightly. It's a damnable business, Terry . . . The obscure, half-witted rascals return a report to me that the house where you saw one man die, and another badly wounded . . . that same house, examined from head to foot yesterday, yielded us nothing! Absolutely nothing. They skipped out, as you were afraid that they would. I'll tell you what the rescals took the time to do, however: they closed and shuttered every window and drew the covers over the furniture. My men reported that the house apparently had not been lived in for days!"

"Rot!" said Radway.

"Yes. Perfect rot."

"Did they get the right place?"

"Yes, the right one, apparently."

"No fresh marks of tires on the driveway in front of the house?"

"I suppose the old marks were rubbed out by the machines that the police arrived in."

"The confounded, dundering, damned blockheads!" exclaimed Radway.

"They are exactly that. I hope not something more. I hope not bought and paid-for blockheads, Terry."

"What shall we do, man?" demanded Radway, striding through the room.

"I don't know. I'm trying to think it over. And my brain stops working. It comes to a full pause. Because in this entire city, Terry, it seems that there's not a man that I can trust except Terence

Radway. What are the two of us against the machine? It makes me feel a little helpless and hopeless, old fellow."

"What next, Battersby? Tell me what to do next and I'll try my hand."

"Stay here in the club and don't stir. I may need you at any moment. Be sure that I won't spare you, Terry. The devils have the wind of you, now, and I don't think it will make any difference to your safety if you run from New York as far as the other side of the world. There's a Murray Gloster that I want to talk to you about . . ."

Here the telephone rang. It was a message for Battersby Wilson and set him humming with discontent.

He hung up and said, shortly: "I'll be with you again . . . I don't know when . . . before to-morrow morning. Be patient, Terry, will you?"

And he hurried from the room.

RADWAY was patient. He read a book, had a late lunch, lounged, saw the sky turn blue outside the window of his room, heard the day turn into night on the street beneath. The campaign for quiet in the streets was producing some results, but New York is so huge that even the drawing of her mighty breath is enough to set the nerves vibrating.

The night had well commenced when his telephone called him, and he heard the voice of Helen Forman over the wire, small, musical, sweet along his blood.

"Where are you?" he asked.

"If you knew, would you send the police or would you come yourself?"

"I'd come myself," he said.

"I won't believe that you're silly enough to do that."

"Are they still all around you?" he asked.

"Not 'they' . . . I've left them. I'll never see them again."

"Do you mean that?"

"I mean it."

"And what's happening to you now, Nell?"

"I'm saying good-by to you, Terry."

"I'll come and say it in person."

"That's no good, Terry. Suppose that they *should* follow me, and run me down, and then find you with me . . ."

"I don't care about that."

"You have to care. You know what they are and what they'll attempt, now. But you don't know their power. Terry, you don't know how far they can reach and what they can do when they've made up their minds."

"Nell, stop talking rot. Where are you?"

"I can't tell you."

A door opened—perhaps the telephone booth was swinging a little ajar. A pair of husky voices was singing the chorus of a song about patent leather shoes that had "stepped so many places" they were "wrinkled like old darky faces." The door was jerked shut—at least the singing and the thin whine of the orchestra disappeared.

"I thought I had to hear your voice again," she was saying. "When I hear you even over the telephone I can see your whole face, Terry, and right down to the sleek of your shoulders . . . no wonder even 'they' are a little afraid of you."

"Nell, I've got to see you."

"You can't. You can't ever see me. This is good-by."

"I've got one thing to tell you."

"I don't want to hear it. I don't dare to hear it. Good-by, and God be kind to you, Terry."

Her telephone clicked back on the hook. Over the wire came only a dull buzzing, and then a sad, insistent, lonely wavering of sound. Radway hung up in his turn. He pulled out a handkerchief and dried his face, which suddenly was wet.

HE tried the number of Bess and held the receiver patiently while the bell buzzed, died, buzzed again and again at the other end of the wire.

At last an impatient voice exclaimed: "Yeah? Yeah? Who is it?"

"I want to speak to Bess," he said.

"I'm Bess," she said.

"You may be better, but you're not Bess," he said.

"Oh, well . . . hey, Bess. Here's another one for you . . . She says she's busy. Good-by . . ."

"Wait a minute. She's not too busy to say a few words to me."

"This mug wants to talk to you, Bess," said the girl at the phone. . . "She says what's your name?"

"Old Hundred and Twenty Dollars is my name."

"Wait a minute. That rang a bell with her . . . Here she comes, Lucky."

Bess said over the wire: "Hello, Handsome. Where you been since a whole year ago? What you doing with yourself now?"

"Trying to remember a song I heard . . . You know all the songs, don't you?"

"Do I look that way?"

"You look just the right way, Bess."

"What's the song? Is there a dance that goes with it?"

"It goes like this."

He hummed and then whistled the refrain.

"I never heard it," she answered.

"Maybe it's something new?" he asked, gloomily.

"It's not new. Hasn't got any of the new stuff; hasn't got any hurt in it. It's something old. Got any of the words?"

"About patent-leather shoes . . ."

"And blues?"

"No, shoes that have stepped so many places they're wrinkled like old darky faces."

"Oh, that's an old one. That must be five years old."

"I think I heard it somewhere recently. I thought I might hear it again."

"You come up here and I'll play it on my piano. We gotta little party on, Big Boy, but I'll check out some of the rest and just make the place comfortable for you. What say?"

"I think that song is running somewhere around New York. I can't come out, Bess."

"Wait a minute . . . Listen, Rose . . . Listen, Sammy . . . Were they singing that song about patent leather shoes that been places, and wrinkled all up like old darky faces? You know. It goes like this."

She sang a line or two. Then she said over the wire: "Why, there's a pair of black faces singing it down at the Blue Rooster, just now."

"Thanks, Bess. I knew you could find out for me."

"Shall we meet you later on at the Blue Rooster, Handsome?"

"Not to-night," he said.

"To-morrow night?"

"That sounds okay to me," said Radway. "So long."

He hung up and stood for half a moment, fighting back the impulse, but he knew that it had mastered him even as he resisted it. He got into a dinner jacket and left a note for Battersby Wilson, saying:

"I'm out for just a short time. Hope to be back before midnight."

But even as he wrote it he felt in the stir of his blood that time would be of no importance to him, and this night might lead him farther than any other day of his life.

CHAPTER XX.

BLUE ROOSTER.

THE Blue Rooster used that color and no other, for the tables, the walls, the rugs, the ceilings all varied from the gray mist of morning blue to the dusky weight of twilight blue, purple stained. It was the guilty air of prosperity that goes with a new and bustling entertainment place. One floor was not enough for it. The entertaining was done on the deep balcony above, with its own recessed dance floor, its own smaller array of little tables. Those who wanted the full, garish sweep of the music dined above, but those who wanted greater quiet could find it on the first floor where, in some of the smaller,

inner rooms, only the blaring choruses of the songs penetrated faintly and the slight throb of the cadences was felt rather than heard. Radway got a small table in a corner near the larger room on the ground floor. He ordered a bottle of Rhine wine, rather dry, and some soda to give it the dash of life. He ate olives with it; for heavier food he had no hunger.

It was the look of the place that sickened him, the damned, sneaking whisper of feet on the heavy rugs and the sense of the women whom he could see by the sound of their voices better than by a bright light. This was a little quieter than that dull imitation of Paris night life where he had seen the girl with Alfred Coburn Thomas that other time; but what was there about this phase of life that drew her into it? It seemed an unreal setting, cheap glass to surround the sheen of a real jewel. And then he told himself, savagely, that he simply was being a fool. He had been about the world enough to have better sense, but after all, wiser men than he had lost their wits when just the right woman got into their blood.

Overhead burst the chorus of the song he had come to hear: about patent leather shoes and all the rest of that silly rot. A rattle of tap-dancing went with it. A few people applauded when it finished. Other music started, a fresh crowd swarmed out onto the floor. And he sipped his wine and wondered at himself. If she chose corners of the night world like this, it was an advertisement of her inner nature, and he was ten times a dolt if he did not allow the light to strike in on her and show her to him as she was.

Or, if he really had to see her, why did he not make inquiry, or stir about the place? A profound disgust kept him from moving from his table. Time went by under his feet and left him there, distraught. The Negroes were no longer singing. The orchestra had muted its horns and left the air to the violins.

A woman began to sing in the room where he was sitting. He resented this. It seemed an unnecessary intrusion upon his privacy; but who should expect privacy in such a place? He would not look at her. And yet the voice was very gay, happy, and with a fine, strong rhythm of youth, one of those flawless sopranos that almost have a cutting edge, high in the brain, but which art has softened and rounded. It was the sort of song one could expect—about love, and eternal faith, and a damned silly rhyme, of course, about June and moon. And yet some of the fragrance of spring night blew over him, unexpectedly. He looked up. The song shattered to bits. He was staring at Nell Forman dressed in a fine film of white, with blue flowers at her breast—corn flowers, at that season.

She had seen him, and the sight had stopped her like a handstroke. People began to turn their heads and wonder, but she made a gesture, touching her throat in excuse, and at once was swinging away through the chorus.

The waiter beside the table of Radway was looking at her with his face turned into a red moon by the width of his approving smile, as the song ended. And there was a good round roar of applause as she finished. Radway stood up, reaching for her with his glance, and she came straight to him. She looked a bit frightened as she slipped into the chair opposite him. Two waiters were hurrying a plate and service for her.

Then the music broke out above with unusual violence and gave them privacy.

"WHY the devil do you do this?" he asked. "What part of the game is it? Why do you have to sing in a low dive like this? You could make money on the stage, with a voice like that . . . and the rest of you."

He stared at the thinness of the dress, his jaw hard-set. It was not indecent; but the bloom of her body shone through a little and that made him savage as a personal insult.

"Why do you do it?" he repeated.

She kept smiling down at the table, but her lips trembled, suddenly, and he saw tears in her eyes.

It was a blow that shook him to the heart. He tried to reach back into his mind for comforting words, but he could find nothing to say. This was not a part of his former knowledge of her. It was something so new that he would have to do a great deal of rearranging. At the same time came the bursting hope that when that rearrangement should be finished, all doubt of her would be lost from the picture.

She was doing a good job of hiding her emotion, lifting her glass of wine to him, smiling over it so that no one would be able to spy upon her mind. But her eyes dared not lift to him at the same time.

She was saying—still maintaining her smile for the public eye: "I had to have money before I could leave New York. I knew that no one could find me here. Nobody would suspect. I was safe. I thought I was safe. And the proprietor here knew me. He'd offered me a hundred dollars for any evening that I'd sing for his place. So I came. I didn't know where else in the world I could get a hundred dollars. I came here. I didn't dream that you could find me through a telephone call. How did you manage it? *Why* did you come?"

"I don't know," said Radway.

"You know everything you do," she insisted.

"I had to come. When I heard your voice, I had to come. I knew it would be like this, though."

"Like what?"

"Some sort of selling of yourself."

"Is it wrong . . . to sing?"

"In a place like this, where the men will handle you with their eyes."

"I'll put on a wrap, Terry, before I sing again."

"You're not going to sing again."

"I have to."

"For the money?"

"Yes. And the promise."

"I've money enough for you."

"I can't take it."

"Isn't it clean enough?"

"It's—it's too clean," she said.

"What the devil do you mean by that?"

"I couldn't pay you back."

"Who talks of paying back?"

She turned her hand in a small, strange gesture; and he remembered suddenly how they had sat on the lawn together.

"What's in your mind, really, about me?" she asked.

"I think you could tell me what's in my mind," said Radway.

"I think I could," she said, a haze coming over her eyes as she spoke.

"I wish that you wouldn't turn dreamy," commanded Radway.

"I won't."

"Look me straight in the eye, then."

"I am, Terry."

"Now tell me what's in my mind about you."

"I think it's the great thing."

"Do I love you?"

"Yes. You do."

"It's only one of those infatuations," said Radway, scowling.

"No, it's as clear as heaven."

"It couldn't be clear, knowing what I know about you."

"I don't say that I'm worthy of it."

"Do you think it's the real golden lightning that's struck me?"

"I think it is."

"Has it so much as grazed you?"

"No."

"That's not the truth," said Radway.

"It *is* the truth," said the girl.

"Speak it after me," said Radway. "I, Helen Forman, tell you, Terence Radway, that I never shall be yours, to have and to hold, in sickness or in health, till death do us part."

She said: "I, Helen Forman, tell you, Terence Radway, that I shall be yours, but never, Terry, to have and to hold. Because death—because death—"

"Take hold of yourself," directed Radway. "Try another sip of that wine. Don't talk for a moment . . . I'm going to take you out of this rotten place as soon as you have hold of yourself a little."

"You can't, Terry."

"I can, and I shall. I'll take you out if I have to carry you. Do you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Will you go?"

"Yes."

"Nell, do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Bigl . . . what was he to you?"

"He? Ah . . . nothing! Nothing!"

"I almost know that you're lying. But look me again in the eye and repeat it, and I'll believe you."

"He was nothing but a horror to me, Terry."

"I'll believe you in spite of my own eyes and ears . . . Nell, how many men have you loved before me?"

"None."

"I'll believe that, too. In spite of the devil inside me I'll believe you as I'd believe an angel . . . What's the matter?"

SHE had turned as white as her dress, suddenly, staring aslant into the mirror beside her.

"Jim Dyckery!" she said. "He just passed by that door and looked in at me. He knows that you're with me. They've managed to find the way . . . He's one of them! Terry, we've got to get out of here at once."

"Now! We start now!" said Radway. He dropped money on the table and stood up with her.

They crossed the room, went down the hallway.

"I have to go into the dressing room for my cloak," she said. "I'll be back at once."

"You won't leave my sight. Stay here with me," he directed.

"Three seconds . . . Only three seconds, Terry!"

She smiled at him over her shoulder as she passed through the door. Radway, turning, looked up and down the hall. Half a dozen people were passing. Any one of them might be a mortal peril to him in spite of that gun under his coat. He could not tell where danger lay. He could see with a clear eye, and yet all was thicker and darker to his senses than the deepest jungle.

He counted to three. He counted to ten. He tapped on the door of the dressing room. An attendant in a white apron responded.

"The lady who just went in . . . the girl in white . . . the singer . . . is she there?" he asked.

She was shaking her head as he reached the last words.

"She went out through the side entrance," she said.

"Went out—through what?"

"Through the side entrance."

"Was anyone with her?"

"Yes. Another lady came up and spoke to her."

"Who? What lady?"

"I don't know . . . I only heard the name Bess . . ."

"Where does that side door lead?"

"To the alley beside . . ."

He got to the alley in half a dozen seconds. A car was backing out from it into the street. He reached the side of the car with a bound and looked in. A fat-faced woman in the rear seat and a fat-faced old man beside her, snapping: "What the devil . . .?"

The pale-faced chauffeur gave Radway a withering look and turned his car into the traffic on the street. He looked wildly and helplessly around him. He felt the emptiness of his hands. They seemed to him the hands of a child.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAN OF WALL STREET.

IF ever emptiness, if ever despair closed over the soul of a man like water over the lips of the drowning, so it closed now over Radway and perhaps that was why he turned suddenly towards a face that was at first only vaguely familiar, and then he recognized the big fellow who had gone striding across the lawn of the Alfred Coburn Thomas house. It was that new and gigantic force in the banking world, Chandler Ormer Gregor. A light, chill rain was falling but Gregor's top coat was care-

lessly open, hanging like a cloak from the points of his heavy shoulders. He carried his hat in his hand, and the rain had powdered the pale upflare of his hair with light. His dinner jacket could not give him more than half the look of a civilized man. Radway followed a resistless impulse when he stepped to Gregor and stopped him; for the man looked like a hunter.

"Mr. Gregor," he said, "pardon me for stopping you, but we're mutual friends of Battersby Wilson. My name is Terence Radway."

He saw a gleam of hesitation and doubt, as it were, cross the eyes of Gregor. Then the big fellow put out his hand.

"I remember, now," he said. "Only the other day Battersby was talking about you."

"I want to ask you two or three questions. Do you mind?" said Radway.

"Not at all. A pleasure. You see, I'm remembering now exactly what Battersby said about you . . . Here's my car. Shall we step into it out of the rain?"

They got into the big limousine.

"Glad to take you wherever you want to go," said Gregor.

Radway mentioned Wilson's club and the direction was given to the driver.

"The other day," said Radway, "I was sitting behind a bush, about sunset time, spying on a house in the country. Near your own house, I gather."

"Spying?" said Gregor. Then he laughed. "Not a big game hunter any longer, Radway, but a hunter of men now?"

"I am, for the time being," said Radway.

"Well, as you were sitting behind the bush . . ."

"I saw you come walking over the lawn with a dog. You spoke to the men who were out there."

"I remember," nodded Gregor. He turned his head and watched Radway while he listened. The driver was sliding the heavy machine with consummate adroitness through the jam of traffic.

"Do you know who owns that house?" asked Radway.

"A very charming old maid. A Miss Elizabeth Wallace. Names have their own values, Radway. Ever notice how many old maids wear that name of Elizabeth?"

"I think I have. Miss Elizabeth Wallace . . . she's not at home now?"

"Not now. She's rented her place."

"To whom? Do you know?"

"Not exactly. I've seen a fellow without eyebrows around the grounds acting like the master."

"Do you know his name?"

"Tomason, or some such name."

RADWAY smiled a little as he heard Gregor give the name its foreign equivalent.

"Alfred Coburn Thomas, I think," he said. "You don't know anything about him?"

"Alfred Coburn Thomas?" repeated Gregor. "Alfred Coburn Thomas? Yes, I know something about him. Just a moment. . . . I'll have it pretty soon. Seems to have jumped my memory. But I saw him out there this evening just before I started in for town."

"This evening! Out there?" cried Radway.

"What's the matter with that?" asked Gregor.

"But that house was raided late last night or very early this morning."

"Raided?"

"By the police. They found it closed. Covers over the furniture. All the windows shuttered. . . . And yet last night one man was shot to death and another badly wounded on the grounds of that house. This is the damnedest strange thing that I ever heard of! The police are searching everywhere for Alfred Coburn Thomas . . . and yet you say that you saw him out there this evening?"

"I certainly saw him," said Gregor. "Murder? Do I understand that there's been a shooting scrape in my own neighborhood?"

"How far away is your house?"

"Half a mile."

"You must have heard a chatter of guns. You might almost have heard the screaming of the wounded man. You almost surely would have heard it!"

"I have as good a pair of ears as the next man. But . . . no, if the wind were not right, the noise of anything under a cannon would never blow to us through all the trees, I suppose. This is a strange story, Mr. Radway."

He looked down at Radway a bit aslant from the corner of his eye.

"My story isn't strange," said Radway. "I saw the dead man. I saw the wounded man and heard him yelling for a long time. . . . And I know that the police raided the place."

"How do you know that?"

"From Battersby Wilson."

"Battersby Wilson? You couldn't know on a better authority!"

"Alfred Coburn Thomas still at the Wallace house?" muttered Radway.

"I saw him there. I took the side road through the trees. He was on the lawn. No mistaking those pale eyebrows, when the sun was striking him full in the face."

"He wasn't skulking about?"

"Why, he had his hands in his pockets and he was smoking a pipe."

"The devil!" exclaimed Radway. "Was he alone?"

"No, there was a pair of people with him. Sturdy looking pair of fellows."

"Did you notice the house?"

"Not particularly."

"At least, were the windows shuttered?" asked Radway.

"Not that I remember. No, now I recall that at least two of the windows were wide open."

"Mr. Gregor, are you motoring out to your home to-night?"

"I am."

"Will you give me a lift that far?"

"Are you going to the Wallace house?"

"I think that I may."

"Radway, I don't want to interfere. I believe in the special rights of the individual in every way. But I can't help wondering if you're not doing something dangerous."

"I've got to check that house," said Radway. "I've talked pretty openly with you, but what I've said is buried, of course."

"Perfectly. You shall do as you please if you'll grant me one favor."

"Whatever you say."

"After you've made your tour of inspection, come over to my place and spend the night."

"With the greatest pleasure."

"I'll just let the servants know that a guest is coming."

He spoke through the tube to the driver and presently they pulled up at a cigar store.

There Gregor got out in person. He was gone a full five minutes and came back, saying, with a sort of calm impatience: "Something will be done about our telephone system, one of these days."

"Something ought to be done," said Radway.

"Something *will* be done," answered Gregor.

THEY passed on out through a New York shining with rain and with street lights. Gregor seemed lost in thought most of the time, though he said as they swung clear of the main stream of traffic: "You think this is safe . . . to go on your search alone?"

"I think that the police have been bought," said Radway.

And he was silent again. His own thoughts were whirling. Alfred Coburn Thomas, the unseen "chief" for whom all of "them" were working, wounded Jack Hill, the body of Bigi, all these drifted through his mind; and always he returned to the mystery of Helen Forman. She might have been, on the other occasions when he was with her, the bait for the trap, the lure to lead him on; but this last time her actions made no sense whatever.

He could swear that when she left him for the dressing room, with that smile over her shoulder, there had been nothing in

her mind except to return at once to him. The very fragrance of adventure breathed from her. And yet she had disappeared.

Bess was tied into the thing in some way. The old flame of Murray Gloster had met Helen Forman and changed her utterly. There had been no time for long conversation. In ten seconds, Bess had to draw the other girl away. How could she have done it except through the strength of some all-controlling word? That, no doubt, was the answer. Some Open Sesame, some single syllable, perhaps, had swept from the mind of Helen Forman all thought except that of obedience.

Trees began to sweep past them with a rush. Already they were shooting up the slope towards the familiar ridge. The outline of the trees against the rainy sky, even by that night-light, seemed to Radway like a well-known face. The tires hummed and swished.

"Now!" said Gregor.

The chauffeur halted the car.

"This is about as close as we can come, conveniently, to the Wallace house," commented Gregor, throwing off the lap robe and pushing forward in his seat. "I'll go along with you."

"You? I can't let you. You're ten years too old to come with me. Excuse me for saying that."

Gregor let a moment of considering silence elapse before he remarked: "Very well. Will you know the way back to my place?"

"Not yet."

"Take the first turn to the right, just up the lane and over the edge of the ridge. Carry straight on down the lane. You don't want the car to come back and wait for you?"

"I want to be alone. Thank you a lot," said Radway, and descended to the ground.

Already he felt that the car might have been standing too long in the lane, throwing the power of its headlights far ahead, brilliant in the wet trees, and lifting in a dull cone above the tree-tops. He saw the gesture of Gregor's farewell, like the brush of a bat-wing inside the window of the car. Then it swept away, the red tail light wavering over the bumps until it turned sharply from view, to the right. The radiance of the headlamps flared among the trees along that drive, and then they too were gone. In the distance, presently, a horn honked; and Radway was alone in the night.

He went down the lane to that gate which had been opened by Pete and Thomas when they were carrying away the body of dead Bigi. Before he opened it, he listened for a time. But all that he could hear was the sharp dropping of the rain from the leaves of the trees. The rain itself had stopped, but the water was still collecting on the leaves and falling. It made sounds oddly like quick little footfalls, running near, retreating with a scamper, coming again.

He passed through the gate and, circling over the wet lawn—the cold of the rain leaked in above the tops of his low shoes—he reached that point in front of the old house where he had first seen the window of Helen Forman's room. It was shuttered, now, but behind the shutter there were unmistakeable streakings of light. All the rest of the front of the place was black, but that one glimmering window was enough for Radway.

He came back slowly across the lawn. The pillars of the porch were wet and slippery now, of course, but he determined to try to enter the house by the second story, as he had tried before. And it was then that he heard a choked sound, almost like a sob. But he knew what it meant; someone stifling sneeze. Someone waiting in the cold dark on the front porch of the Wallace house!

He circled to the left and came up the side of the house with breathless care. From the corner he peered around onto the porch. Only by degrees his eyes were able to walk into the double thickness of that dark, but then he made out four silent forms, crouched or seated, patient, never speaking a word. He saw them, and a faint gleam of steel in the hands of at least two of them.

CHAPTER XXII.

GREGOR'S HOUSE.

IT seemed to Radway definitely certain that they had been posted in this spot to wait for his arrival, as though they had been informed beforehand that he was coming, as though they knew how he had climbed to the porch once before and were sure that he would adopt the same procedure for his second visit. Of course they could not have dreamed that he would come again; but a savage hate of them tempted him to turn his gun loose on them as they crouched there in a line. One bullet might plough through all four bodies. He even waited for a moment that was like a hesitation before he drew soundlessly, carefully back.

After all, he had learned what he had come to find out. The Wallace house had not only been occupied that evening, but it was occupied even now! And up there behind the shutters of the girl's room, was she already waiting? And for what?

He could give to Battersby Wilson now the definite proof that the police upon whom he relied were bribed liars of the worst sort. And out of his discovery was it not possible that Wilson would make an instrument for cleaning up the graft of New York from the very bottom?

The satisfaction of that thought brought the teeth of Radway hard together and set him smiling faintly in the dark of the night. He returned at once to the gate that opened upon the lane, passed through it, and turned up towards the entrance to the Gregor place. He felt a queer, deep pity for Battersby Wilson, embarked on his great work of the purification of the city and blocked by the very forces which should have been helping him. He felt a shame, too, for his own country in which a great-minded foreigner like Gregor was permitted to live as a neighbor to a banded group of thugs of the blackest description. It seemed a violation of hospitality.

The Gregor drive opened before him, the same slow pattering of raindrops from the trees accompanying him in a stealthy march on either side, until he saw before him the warm, cheerful glow of lights and then made out, by degrees, the face of the Gregor house.

It was rather unlike that of the Wallace place. At least there were no gaudy little wooden towers to make it like a wooden imitation of a castle. It seemed wider of arm, more substantial, and a little less old. But still it had a great deep porch across the front, and a columned veranda down two other sides. As he stepped up onto the porch, he felt a trifle ashamed of his appearance. Where he had brushed through some tall grass, his trousers were wet almost to the knees, and his shoes were half filled with water. He pressed the bell and heard the discreet murmur of it far in the interior. Almost instantly the door opened. It made not a whisper of sound. The man at the door was pulling it open, stepping back with a bow. He had a face carved out of wood, after the style which the English love to see in their domestics, as though all emotion should be left to the masters and none of the precious essence absorbed by their inferiors.

"Mr. Radway, I believe, sir? Will you come in, sir? Mr. Gregor has been expecting you."

Radway went in and gave up his overcoat. The weight of the big Colt under the shoulder he became acutely aware of, a useless encumbrance in a place like this . . . and yet half a mile away four thugs waited on the porch of the Wallace house with weapons in their hands. People could say that that was America; but his country would be changed. There are more than a few Battersby Wilsons in the land, and more than a few Radways to enlist under them.

He said: "Even before I see Mr. Gregor, may I use a telephone?"

"This way, sir," said the man; and he led Radway into a telephone booth that was not a booth at all, but a little comfortable room with a miniature fire burning in a corner grate, and walls of paneled wood, and a brilliant little Persian rug completely covering the floor with its de-

sign of formal green pine trees. The desk at which he sat was carved ebony, exquisitely dainty. There was a pad of good linen paper for notations, and there were three pens with varying nibs to suit convenience. Radway dialed the number and looked around him again. On each wall was one picture, all by one of those rare old Dutchmen who painted with the fire of an Italian and the closeness of a miniaturist. It seemed to Radway that this little telephone room, more than towering skyscrapers, more than great ballrooms, was significant of what wealth can be.

HE got Battersby Wilson almost at once and Wilson cried out with happy surprise.

"This time I was sure that I'd never find you again! I was sure that they had you, Terry. How did they lure you out of the club? Where are you now?"

"In the home of your old friend, Chandler Gregor. Is that safe enough to suit you?"

Battersby Wilson laughed.

"How did Gregor manage to kidnap you? . . . Oh, you're safe enough with Gregor. Safer with him than with me, I daresay. Have you been out there exploring the ground of your last adventure?"

"I couldn't keep away from it," said Radway.

"All quiet?"

"All quiet," said Radway, "and four men with guns in their hands waiting for someone in the dark and the cold on the front porch of the Wallace house."

"What?"

"Waiting for whom? Not for the fellow who shinnied up one of the pillars of that same porch the other night? You don't think that they were waiting for me?"

"God knows, Terry. But what are you telling me? You don't mean to say that the scoundrels actually have swarmed back to their covert on the very heels of the police raid?"

"That raid must have been faked. The police were bought off. Gregor saw Alfred Coburn Thomas on the lawn of the Wallace place as early as this evening before sunset."

"Impossible, Terry! If that's true, then I'm harnessed with scoundrels, Terry. Scoundrels! They've sold me behind my back."

"They have," agreed Radway. "What I want to tell you is this: Unless you pick your men on the police force with a good deal of care, they'll be leading you where you'll get a bullet in your back one of these days. But there's one thing to do now, and do fast."

"Speak out, Terry. My own brain has gone to rags and tatters. Every rascal makes a fool of me. I can thank God that I have one man like you to lean on."

"Then get a good round number of the best men in the police department. Only, don't go to men that you've used before. The Commissioner will give you any assignment of detectives and regular police that you want. Get a dozen of them. Enough to sweep this entire gang at the Wallace house out of existence. . . . Before you make the raid, stop here at Gregor's house for me, will you? I'm going to be in on it."

"I couldn't leave you out, Terry. You can command the entire expedition."

"Can I, Battersby?"

"Who else knows the ground so well? At least, by night."

"Battersby, it's going to be the event of my life. We'll need plenty of men, though. Plenty of 'em! Make sure about that, will you?"

"I'll have twenty men along, Terry. Don't worry about that. Twenty picked men. And I'd rather have twenty picked men from the police force of New York than twenty picked men from all the armies in the world."

"How long before you'll be out?"

"Inside an hour and a half, I hope. We'll clear the way with sirens till we're out of the city, and then we'll come softly enough."

He laughed exultantly, and Radway hung up a moment later. He was walking on his toes like a dancer when he left the

little telephone room and found the same servant waiting for him in the hall with the same implacably wooden face.

"Mr. Gregor expects you in the study, sir," he said. "But if you care to come to your room first, sir, and change the wet part of your clothes . . ."

He led Radway up the stairs. They rose from the big entrance hall with a fine, spacious, old-fashioned sweep, for in the other days architects were not cramped in their style; either they built a New England house like a tidy ship or like a mansion. This was a mansion. The age of it was glossed over by the fine care which it had received.

They were in the upper hall, now, with the servant showing the way and yet half-turned, deprecating the fact that he was walking in advance. Even the hall was decorated with expense and care. The taste of Gregor might have been termed a little outlandish because he had chosen to make the hallway into a Chinese world, long, narrow, gleaming with lacquer and glowing with color. In the niche at the head of the stairway—a big apse sunk into the wall—squatted a Buddha carved from some pale, jade-colored stone. It seemed, indeed, to be carved from one enormous block of pure jade, and the sight of it took the breath of Radway.

He stood for a moment regarding the ruthless, inhuman contemplation of the statue. The thing startled him, it was so like someone he knew but could not place, so like some man he had seen not very long before. The sense of nearness in time rubbed elbows with him, but he could not make the comparison more exact.

Down the hallway they passed screens painted with flowers, with birds, and at the very end there was one of those solemn and wonderful brown paintings of a mountain scene, with one pitiful, weak little human crossing a stream.

"That Buddha back there," said Radway, "looks like someone I've known. Is that usual? Do people generally find that it resembles one of their friends—they can't say whom?"

"The statue, sir," said the servant, "generally is remarked as having a certain likeness to Mr. Gregor. In his moments of repose, sir, I should add."

He turned to the left and opened the door of a room, standing back for Radway to enter. And Radway passed through the doorway in a brown study. Gregor in active conversation, Gregor in strong dispute, certainly bore not the slightest likeness to the statue, but in the automobile, in moments of pause during the conversation, it was true that Radway had been impressed by the massive, impersonal abstraction of the great banker.

A sharp cry and the sound of a blow knocked these ideas out of the head of Radway entirely. He whirled about and saw the servant shaking his head in solemn apology.

IT might have been anything. The bark of a dog—its cry of fear silenced instantly by a blow; or the startled yip of a child; or even one of those single bird-notes which one hears in the woods.

And yet the conviction remained to Radway that it was the first note of a woman's outcry, covered at once by the quick closing of a door.

"What was that?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir," said the servant. "We hear queer noises from the kennels, at times."

"That noise came from inside this house," said Radway. "How did it sound to you?"

The servant lifted both hands and shrugged his shoulders a little. "The truth is, sir," he said, "that in a household where female domestics *will* be employed—an extraordinary custom in this country, sir, where sometimes even the clothes of the master may be laid out by one of the maids!—I should have suspected that that noise, if it did not come from the kennels, might have been caused by one of the maids crying out . . . and then having her face soundly slapped!"

He uttered the last of this with a sort of grim gusto that made Radway laugh

The servant, in the meantime, was pointing out the bathroom, opening the window at Radway's request because the room was slightly over-heated, and then leading into a dressing room of considerable size, with a solid line of suits on hangers along one wall, two other sides with deep shelves behind light, cloth-covered doors and the shelves piled with stacks of haberdashery above, with shoes ranged along on the floor, everything from hunting boots to pumps. The fourth wall was equipped with a mirror and more closet space.

"Whose outfit is this?" asked Radway.

"It is for the guests of the house, sir," said the servant.

"What's your name?" asked Radway.

"Granger, sir."

"Granger, there's enough stuff here to outfit a regiment."

"The trouble is in the outsizes, sir," said Granger. "If all men were exactly five feet ten" . . . here he straightened himself and put back his shoulders . . . "there would be no difficulty, but there is the short-fat, the short-fat-humped, the medium-big, the tall, the tall-lean, the tall-broad, and the very-tall-thin, and the very-tall-big, like yourself, sir. And as a matter of fact it has been hard to maintain a complete outfit for each of these types. You, for instance, sir, would be pinched in any of the coats here. I should be constrained to offer you one of the coats of Mr. Gregor himself."

"You won't have to," said Radway. "But I'd like a pair of dry socks and—well, one of those pairs of boots."

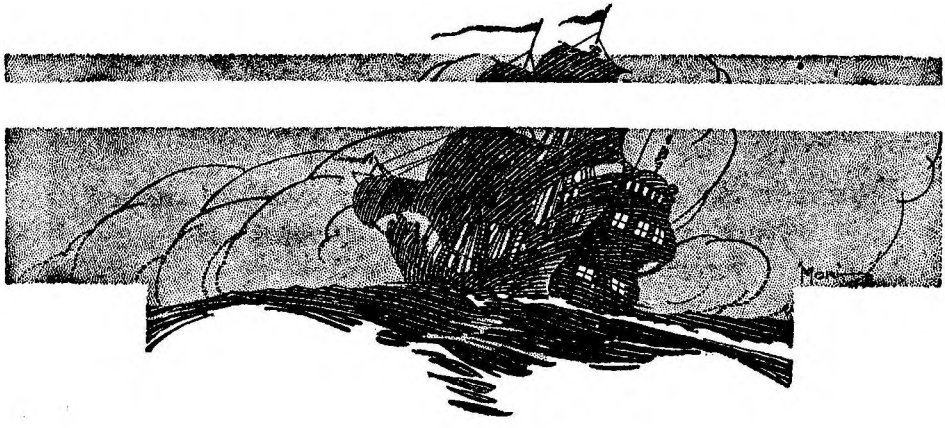
"They are for hunting, sir," said Granger, shocked. "I fear that they would not be appropriate for . . ."

"I may do a little hunting later on, and the grass about here is high and wet; damned wet. Just let me try a pair of those boots."

Granger ventured a single glance of additional protest but he was far too well trained to speak another word on the matter. The boots which fitted Radway laced half way up the calf and he ruthlessly stuffed his trousers down inside the strong leather. The soles were not hobnailed; the heels were a heavy, corrugated rubber, stronger than leather. When he stood up in those boots, he felt a stronger man.

He went down with Granger at once. It was eleven forty-five by his watch; the police with Battersby Wilson ought to arrive by one at the latest. The Wallace house could be surrounded and raided by two. And around about four in the morning he would probably be stretched in the cool comfort of that soft bed at Wilson's club, finding the whole adventure not so difficult after all, in retrospect.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



Broken Snowshoe

By
WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

They fell on him like an avalanche

Bitter enemies and the still more bitter wrath of the icy North make Jean Fontaine's attempts for freedom and happiness a nightmare

A BROKEN snowshoe rim may be of great or small importance, according to circumstances. In the case of Jean Fontaine, one bitterly blue cold afternoon when he was still far in the bush, it was in itself a serious accident. But what happened to Fontaine because of that broken rim was

like a legend of the old days when the werewolf walked abroad in Canada and there were men who were ready to fight anything from the powers of nature to the demons of the pit.

The rim of the snowshoe had snapped and a snag upthrust through the snow had ripped the mesh clear of the wood. Something would have to be done, for Fontaine could make no progress with one foot sinking into the snow. Three hours' march lay between him and the village of Ste. Anne des Monts, and it would be dark in an hour. Moreover, that winter the wolves had come down from the north.

So when he saw a little cabin, barely peeping out of the high piled snow, with a streamer of smoke rising from the chimney, Fontaine thought that his patron saint had taken a hand. He would not have to build a fire. Here was a warm place where he could stop and borrow some rawhide. Why, they might even lend him a pair of snowshoes!

Fontaine knocked and pushed open the door at the sound of a bass voice that called "Enter!" and then he stopped, with the door of split planks slowly swinging shut behind him; halted and gazed at four remarkable human beings who regarded him from benches near the stove. He felt something under the left breast of his jacket and knew that his heart was dancing a jig, with more than one reason for its capering.

One of the inhabitants of this camp was a girl, and she was reason enough for any heart to dance. A cloud of misty black curls clustered around a face with a better complexion than one sees on any of the fine ladies of the Rue de la Fabrique in Quebec; blue eyes with blue devils in them challenged Jean Fontaine, for he had fine fair hair and a pointed, bull terrier jaw. The girl was a hundred pounds of something to desire, dressed in a clean white skirt and jacket made from Hudson's Bay blankets.

But the three men! Fontaine's mind leaped back to the ogres in his childhood picture books. They were tall, they were broad; from the chin of each a black beard fanned down over a thick chest. Menacing eyes looked over these whiskers. The men were almost exactly alike, except that one had more than a sprinkling of gray in his thatch of black hair. No one of them spoke.

Now Jean Fontaine, they said in Ste. Anne des Monts, was a young man who would just as soon step on the devil's tail as to take a drink of white whisky. He began to think angrily that this was no welcome for the bush, where there is more need than elsewhere for men to be brothers. His interest in the girl gave way to wrath. He bowed mockingly from the waist and said:

"Good day, everyone!"

For seconds there was no reply to his greeting. He had taken off mittens and his fur cap as a matter of course. Now, boiling at not being asked to share the fire, he began to put them on again.

"If I am not welcome," he said, "I will go. I thought I had entered the dwelling of human beings, but now I perceive that I was mistaken. I go, *messieurs,* but I shall return at my pleasure, for *mademoiselle* is the most beautiful creature, it seems to me, that has ever been set like a gem in the snows of Quebec!"

A little flowery, perhaps, and very daring, but Fontaine wanted at least to stir that monumental and malevolent calm by which he was confronted. He did. The oldest of the three men growled in his throat, but before the

growl could turn to words the girl had sprung to her feet.

"Good!" she cried. "Here is the first *voyageur* who has dared to say his soul was his own in this cabin! *Monsieur,* permit me to present you to my uncle, Vulcain Larocque, and his two sons, Grégoire and Rodrigue! I am Suzon Larocque!"

SHE indicated them with a white little hand which seemed strangely unsoiled by labor for the hand of a bush girl. The men gave no sign. Fontaine laughed, flushed, and swept the three bearded faces with a bold glance.

"Mademoiselle Larocque," he said, "I am Jean Fontaine, a woodsman. Half an hour ago I was an ordinary man. Now I am the most favored among mortals, for I have seen you and heard you speak!"

Bright spots burned in the cheeks of the girl. She laughed, and the devils in her eyes danced.

"I am wondering whether you will be happy among the angels," she said. "For you may join them if you keep on the way you have begun!"

The head of Rodrigue turned and he looked at Grégoire. A rumble deep in his chest came to the surface.

"Cut into strips and smoked, he would make good meat for the sled dogs," he said.

"Or," replied Grégoire, in an identical voice, "he could be frozen and preserved, and used as a warning to others!"

"No!" thundered Vulcain, with a vigorous shake of his head. "Live bait for a panther trap! He might poison the dogs! He might thaw out! But inside of a panther he can do no harm at all!"

Now this was fantastic talk, and yet, as all the world knows, men disappear in the bush and very little can be done about it. Certainly these three strange men were angry; there was no joke about that. And now the girl evidently decided to bait them. Or what was her intention?

"Take off your coat, *monsieur!*" she exclaimed. "We are about to eat and you will have soup with us! Grégoire, get fresh water for the tea! Rodrigue, make up the fire! And you, my uncle, fill the woodbox! It is not too early to do the work for the night!"

Fontaine's legs gave way under him and he sat down, stricken by amazement, as these three giants obeyed the girl. Never before had he seen, in the bush, men doing the work of women when there was a woman about. Why, the ordinary chopper's wife brought in the wood and water while the man, tired from the ax, smoked and warmed himself.

The girl sat on her bench, with white hands folded in her lap. She smiled at Fontaine. There was a dimple in her cheek; one of those dimples designed by a mischievous nature to upset the reason and even the common sense of men.

"I shall have them get out a fine piece of pork that we have frozen, Monsieur Fontaine," she said, "and I shall tell Uncle Vulcain to make johnnycake, which he does very well!"

By this time the lower jaw of Jean Fontaine was hanging. Rodrigue, having built up the fire, went outside. Fontaine and the girl were alone in the cabin.

"Do you mean to say they cook for you?" he asked, in an awed whisper.

"But, yes! They do everything!"

"And you? What do you do?"

"I? Why, sometimes I go out and follow a trap line a little to see what is

caught. The air and exercise are good for my complexion. I read. I sew. Look, *monsieur!* I made this suit! Is it not the equal of anything that one could find in Quebec?"

"Scandalous!" gasped Fontaine. "Outrageous!"

"What?" she cried, springing to her feet with flaming face. "How dare you? This suit is nearly, if not quite, perfect!"

"I did not mean the suit!" Fontaine told her. "I mean what is in it!"

"I am scandalous?" she exclaimed. She whirled and pointed through a window. Outside Fontaine saw the three Larocques with their heads together. "They are talking about you, madman! Do you realize that if I said the word they would skin you like a fox and stretch your pelt to dry?"

ALL at once Jean Fontaine knew that he had experienced the disappointment of his life. He had found a girl who outwardly was all that the heart of man could wish for, but inside she was like a nut that had no meat. He was heartbroken and furious. He was in a mood to seek whatever trouble could be found.

"Before the Larocque family skins its fox it will have to catch and conquer him," he told her, in a white heat of anger. "But for the moment that has nothing to do with me! I am concerned with you now! You not only have a streak of hellcat in you, which is somewhat to be admired, but you are worthless!

"If I were going to marry you I should paddle you until you made up your mind to cook for your husband, which is a woman's business! *Bon Dieu Seigneur!* I ought to paddle you anyway, just as a matter of principle!"

The girl went white to her lips. She walked close to him and thrust her delectable little nose down close to his.

"I defy you to lay a hand on me!" she hissed. "You are a bully! You do not dare! You are afraid!"

Through a bleak, wraith-filled moment they looked into each other's eyes. It is possible that Fontaine might have controlled his anger, but she struck out like a kitten and slapped him on both cheeks. As lightning strikes he grabbed her. He shook her. Then, as she was going to scream, he kissed her full on the mouth. And immediately thereafter he took her across his knees and spanked her with an iron hard hand and no restraint, while her shrieks filled the cabin.

So great was the satisfaction of Jean Fontaine with that paddling that he waited in his fierce enjoyment, alas, a moment too long! If he had left off three seconds sooner he might have been able to get to the rifle that he had set down against the wall.

But it seemed to him that he had not put power enough into his arm, and even after he realized that the men of the family Larocque were due to burst open the door he brought his hand down in one final blow that brought a squeal of pain from the struggling form on his lap.

The door left its hinges. The three men came in like a human avalanche. Fontaine set Suzon on her feet and sprang away, but there was a corner behind him and he was lost. Wedged there he had no chance at all against three men, any one who outweighed him by thirty or forty pounds. The quality of steel was in the body of Jean Fontaine, but he could not do miracles.

Jean got his fingers into the whiskers of Rodrigue and Grégoire and knocked their heads together. But while he was

doing that old Vulcain kicked him in the stomach, bit him on the shoulder, and tried to gouge out an eye. Fontaine went to the floor with three men on top of him. The torrent of their wrath would probably have killed him if they had not got in each other's way.

For several minutes Jean was a man half asleep, in a thick fog. When he began to awaken, and the fog cleared, he discovered that he was sitting doubled up, with the snow in his ears. He realized that he had been carried out of the Larocque cabin and dumped like a bit of refuse. There were his snowshoes, and both of them were now broken. There was his rifle, with the stock splintered and the lock smashed.

Mittens and cap lay beside him, filled with snow. The Larocques had taken nothing from him. They had simply cast him and his possessions forth. To what? To probable death. A man cannot travel in the bush without snowshoes. If he tries to travel he wades breast deep, perhaps until he is exhausted and then he stops, to repeat that effort until he can go no farther.

A WEIRD howling came down the faint breeze. Jean shuddered at his first thought of wolves and then his ear told him that those were the voices of dogs, the Larocque sled dogs. They were not at a great distance. He looked at his snowshoes and drew his knife. The blade had been broken off close to the hilt.

There went the last hope. If he had had his knife he might have tried to mend the snowshoes and go on. Now he was helpless.

The voice of destiny suddenly whispered to him. It was manifest that he had to turn back. He wanted that girl, in spite of her faults. Now he admitted it to himself.

He would go back and take her, with a couple of pairs of snowshoes from the cluster in front of the cabin door. If the Larocques killed him it would be quicker than being frozen or eaten by wolves. Thus again a broken snowshoe took charge of the life of Jean Fontaine.

Finding himself intact as to bones, Jean waded to a dead pine and managed to break off enough branches to make a little fire. He climbed another tree and found that he was not too far from the cabin. A strong man could make it, in spite of the snow, and Fontaine was not only strong, he was of a fiber so tough that it was remarkable even in a country where endurance is taken as a matter of course.

The shadows were already growing long and the heavy curtain of night drew in slowly but surely. By the time it was full dark Fontaine was leaning against the wall at one end of the cabin and going over a window there with his bare fingers. At this end, he had noticed, a room had been partitioned off. It was here, then, that Suzon slept

Jean drew back as a light suddenly flared inside. He waited and cautiously thrust his head forward. A candle had been brought in and set on a little table. Undoubtedly this was the tiny chamber of Suzon Larocque, but surely no one had ever before seen such a room in the cabin of a family of trappers.

There were actually sheets on the bunk, and a pillow with lace! At the other end of the room hung a bright curtain, behind which one glimpsed more clothes than any bush woman ever had. There were a half dozen pairs of moccasins, and real shoes, on the floor. And everything so neat and dainty that Fontaine longed more than ever to hold in his arms again the creator of this nest.

"She would deserve it all, and more," he muttered to himself, "if she did not think so well of herself."

Now evidently Suzon had come in with the candle and gone out again on some errand. She would come back immediately, without doubt, for in the bush people go to bed very early. Fontaine's problem was to get into that room before she did.

He tried the window. To his amazement it opened easily. So this remarkable girl even had fresh air at night, like a great lady! For in such a cabin one might expect to find the windows nailed in place with nails which had reposed there since the beginning.

Fontaine went through the opening, and righted himself. The latch of the door leading to the main part of the cabin clicked. He sprang behind the curtain where the clothing hung. Suzon Larocque came in and closed the door behind her. He saw her turn and very carefully slide a bolt into place.

FROM under her jacket she took a cloth-wrapped bundle and put it down on the table; and from one end of that bundle peeped a slab of johnnycake and a slice of cold pork. The girl pulled on toque and mittens. Then she took up the parcel and went toward the window. She climbed out into the night.

The heart of Jean Fontaine danced another jig. One does not feed good pork to sled dogs, and he was the only other animal supposed to be out in that crackling cold night. She had decided to save his life! Her heart had warmed toward him!

He thrust his head out of the window as she turned the corner of the house. Then he was out, and following her. She put on a pair of snowshoes from those at the door of the cabin, took another pair under her arm, and set out along the trail that had been made when Jean was carried into the bush. There was enough light from a crescent moon so that she could follow the shadowy indentation in the snow.

Jean came behind on snowshoes which he borrowed from the cabin door. They were at the edge of the bush when he drew up beside her. One arm slid around her waist and halted a handsbreath from her suddenly opened mouth.

"If you start to scream," said Jean, "I shall certainly stuff your mouth full of mitten!"

Her body stiffened backward, trembled, and came to rest.

"Species of an animal! You aren't yet dead?"

"A man who has kissed you cannot die!" exclaimed Fontaine. "He is immortal! What is that under your arm?"

"Johnnycakes for the chickadees!" she told him. "It is their breakfast."

"Happy birds," laughed Jean. "You think of them, but you do not think of a poor starving man, who has risked death for your kiss! However, chickadees do not eat cold pork!"

"Thou cousin of the devil!" she cried. "I hate you! You risked death to spank me like a child! What humiliation!"

"It was good for you!" Fontaine told her, calmly. "It made a Christian of you! Shameless! To let men wait on you and do the work of the housewife!"

Her little mitten came up and hit him on the end of the nose. She struggled.

"This time my uncle and my cousins will make an end of you!"

"They will not," he contradicted, "for I am going to take you to Ste. Anne des Monts with me tonight and in the morning we shall be married!

What, I ask you, can they do about that?"

"Marry me?" she choked. "After the way you have treated me? Marry *you?* Monster! I would as soon marry myself to a wolverine!"

For reply Fontaine threw her over his shoulder, picked up her snowshoes, and set off briskly. Of course he could not carry her all the way to Ste. Anne des Monts, but after a little she would resign herself and march beside him.

She became strangely quiet. Jean was about to put her down and ask her if she did not want the snowshoes again when his ears were pierced by a blast from a whistle that must have carried at least half a mile through that still air.

"There!" she gasped. "That is the whistle I carry when I go into the bush, in case I need help! Stealer of women! You will now learn whether you can marry Suzon Larocque without finding out first whether she wants to be married!"

ACLAMOR broke out from behind them. Bloodthirsty animal sounds mingled with the shouts of men. The Larocque dogs! Jean Fontaine knew that he might as well stand still. He set Suzon on her feet and dropped her snowshoes.

"This time," he said, "I have a feeling that they will leave nothing to chance!"

The girl laughed at him excitedly.

"I can stop them!" she told him. "I can stop them from killing you! Do you think I am going to let you carry me away like the carcass of a deer?"

"If I have the good fortune to live," Jean growled at her, "I shall carry you away, and keep you!"

A half dozen dark shapes came bounding through the night, making great leaps to clear the snow. The Larocques loomed in the moonlight. The dogs closed on Fontaine and he backed against a tree. Old Vulcain drove them off with a club, and it took a vigorous arm to hold that pack at bay. Green eyes glared in the night. A bedlam of noise ringed Jean Fontaine.

"Bring him back!" shouted Vulcain Larocque, above the uproar. "While I put up the dogs! We'll get to the bottom of this!"

With Rodrigue on one side and Grégoire on the other, and their rifle barrels prodding his ribs, Jean marched to the cabin and whatever fate the family Larocque might have in store for him.

The air of the cabin seemed to be penetrated with menace. It struck Jean Fontaine like little points of stinging sleet as he stood backed against a wall facing the rifles of the Larocques. They had sat down to consider him. But Suzon Larocque stood, and it seemed to the prisoner that as she looked at her uncle and his sons her face lost something of its rare color.

"My uncle," she said, "I went out to take a little food to this stranger so that he could go back to his village. I did not want you and Grégoire and Rodrigue to have murder on your souls!" The men exchanged glances and grunts.

"How were you rewarded?" asked Vulcain, with a hint of sternness in his voice. "He captured you!"

"We must protect her," announced Grégoire, firmly.

"She has been bemuddled by this pale-haired villain," added Rodrigue. "As for me, I am sure we can save our Suzon only by making a complete end of him. We left him in the snow, with scarcely a chance to live, and see what happened?"

"The idea of the panther trap was excellent," asserted Grégoire.

"No!" boomed Vulcain. "He would cajole the panther and come back here riding him! He has cast a spell over our Suzon. Look at her sunken eyes as she gazes at him! Bah! The devil aids this fellow! We must make an end of him so that he does not have even Christian burial!"

"How can we do that, my father?" asked Rodrigue.

"The dogs . . . are hungry," replied the old man.

Suzon screamed. Grégoire sprang to his feet, thrust her into her room and braced a bench against the door.

"This is not work for women," he said, with a glance at his father for approval.

The hands and feet of Jean were cold. With his eye he measured the distance to the door and knew that a bullet would travel faster than his legs. He looked right and left for a weapon. There was no hope, but he would rather die striking a blow, with two or three bullets in him, than to be dragged out to the horrible slaughter which the words of Vulcain Larocque had promised.

BEFORE Jean could take a step or lift a hand the men of the Larocque family made a concerted movement, as though at some signal which he had not seen. They threw themselves at him as one, rifles left behind. Fontaine went down under the weight of more than a quarter ton of bone and muscle.

Even with the impossible handicap of three to one, Jean gave them work to do. His teeth met through one of the ears of Vulcain Larocque; his fist sank more than once into a tough body. Blood that was not his own was on his face when at last they had him tied hand and foot, as helpless as a pig that is being taken to market.

Apparently Vulcain, the leader, had already worked out in his mind the final disposal of this young stranger who threatened to take away the idol of the household. He gave brief orders to his admiring sons. Jean was carried out into the pale night and around to the rear of the cabin.

Here were the sheds and outbuildings incident to established life in the bush. Fontaine saw them at a distorted angle, for he was left flat on his back in the snow, but his position was such that he could see every move the three Larocques made. He saw them climb to the top of a stout pen, with walls higher than a man's head.

They ran a timber up from the ground so that it hung over the pen like a fish pole; and then they came and stood around him, looking down. One of them had a coil of rope in his hand. The light was not enough so that Jean could see their faces clearly, but from their deep breathing he knew that they labored somewhat under the excitement of what was about to take place.

"I," said Vulcain Larocque, "am not so hotheaded as my sons. They would have made an end of you at once, but I believe it is only just to allow you time to repent of your sins. There will be an hour or two in which you can make your peace with heaven. Instead of throwing you to the dogs at once I am going to hang you over the pen. They will get you down before morning!

"You may be just as sure of that as we are. For if you had a chance to escape one of us would stay here with a rifle to see what you did not. If the rope breaks you will fall. If not the dogs may take you down a piece at a time.

But Boule, the leader, is a good jumper, and I think he will have you by the throat before very long. He is of an intelligence to stand on your shoulders and gnaw the rope through!"

Jean Fontaine said nothing; partly because he had nothing to say, and partly because there was no heart in him for words. If only he could have had his hands and feet free he would have been willing to fight the dogs or anything else for freedom. This way he had no more chance than a chicken destined for the pot.

Fontaine was jerked to his feet, a rope was passed across his chest and under his arms. In a minute more or less he was dangling from the end of the pole, turning in air, while the three Larocques stood on the ground and argued as to whether he hung near enough to the ground to give the dogs a fair chance.

Jean looked down upon a rectangular space where the snow had been trampled hard by the feet of the animals. In a low shed at one end of the stockade there were dark openings, obviously the doorways of the kennels. While he lay on the snow he heard certain snufflings and yelps within the runway, but now it appeared that the dogs had gone back to bed.

"THEY'LL come out when they get his scent," said Grégoire. "As for me, I'm going in and rest. We've lost sleep already."

"He will freeze if the dogs don't get him before morning," remarked Rodrigue. "A man tied like that can't stand the cold long."

"If I thought the devil had any idea of getting him clear again," growled Vulcain Larocque, "I'd stay up all night. But I believe that the situation is impossible even for the devil to solve."

They disappeared around the corner of the house and Jean looked down again into the white space beneath him. Already his fingers and toes were beginning to tingle from lack of circulation. It would better if he did freeze. He thought of the blue eyes of Suzon. No, he could not regret having tried to carry her off. She was worth even this; and she had thought that she could save him when she called for help. He could not believe that she would have done anything to bring him to this end.

A low growl came from one of the kennels. There was movement in the darkness of the opening. Then a head was thrust forth, and out into the moonlight came the biggest sled dog that Fontaine had ever seen. He braced his legs behind him, pointed his nose at the slightly swaying figure in the air, and uttered his call to the pack.

In an instant, it seemed, the runway was filled with frantic dogs. They ran in frenzied circles, they leaped, snarling, and got in each other's way. Nothing like this had ever happened to them before. For the first few minutes they did not know what to do. But Boule, the big leader, was studying the affair.

His voice boomed. He sprang into the air. He left the ground in what looked like a test jump and reached a height level with Fontaine's chest. Man and beast were convinced the kill could be made. Meanwhile a smaller dog tried for the swinging feet. Fontaine drew up his knees and kicked. The dog received a solid crack on the side of the head, but that did not discourage the others.

The leader came forward, snapping right and left to clear his way. He braced himself and sprang into the air. Jean flung his head to one side and turned his shoulder. The dog's

mighty jaws set into his jacket, and the animal hung there for a moment before his weight carried away a piece of the cloth.

"The end is at hand," thought Jean, and then suddenly a change took place in the animals below him. Boule paused and held himself in the very act of springing into the air for another try at the throat. The others gradually reduced their savage clamor. And Fontaine realized that they were looking upward intently.

At him? No, they were staring at something above him, and so he threw his head backward and looked up. Suzon Larocque was climbing, with legs and arms wrapped around the young tree trunk, up toward the end where the rope was fastened. A knife between her teeth glittered in the moonlight.

For a moment Fontaine became as limp as a rag and sweat broke out from his forehead to his heels. Then his relief was shot through with the fear of a new danger. He pitched his voice so that it would carry only a few feet and called desperately to the girl:

"Don't cut me down!"

Her head wagged vigorously from side to side. But how was she going to help him if she did not cut him down? A moment more and he saw. She reached the end of the pole and swung like a monkey. Her feet rested on his shoulders. Then her arms were around his neck as she clung to him and reached behind him to fumble for the ropes which bound his wrists.

HIS wrists were free! He strove with all the force of his will to wriggle life into numbed fingers. If the rope that held him and Suzon suspended did not break! Below the dogs were watching, puzzled, whining at the presence of the girl, which they could not understand.

Suzon panted in Jean's ear. She was tiring.

"You'll have to take the knife!" she gasped. "Your feet—I've got to go back!"

At last his fingers would hold the haft of the knife. Suzon stood on his shoulders again and rested for a brief moment. Then the rope trembled as she climbed. Fontaine bent his knees, brought his ankles up within reach of the knife. He slashed desperately, a half dozen times, felt the edge cut through the leather of a shoepac. Then his ankles swung free. Boule leaped again, and this time the knife drove into his throat. He fell and lay kicking, and again the dogs made the night hideous.

Jean went up the rope hand over hand. Suzon was already on her way down the tree trunk. When Fontaine's hand and wrist curled around wood then his breath came again from the bottom of his lungs and he knew that he had a chance for life. He slid down the pole and dropped beside Suzon.

"Hurry!" she exclaimed in a choked voice.

They ran around the end of the cabin, to the door where the snowshoes were. Fontaine chose two pairs for Suzon and himself and flung the others over his shoulder. But when he turned to the girl she was standing still and making no attempt to put her feet into the harness.

"Put on those snowshoes!" commanded Jean, in a fierce whisper. "Obey me!"

She flung her head up.

"Is there any reason why I should obey you, *monsieur?* I am in no danger here!"

"There is every reason!" Fontaine

told her desperately, as his hand closed on her arm. "I am going to marry you in Ste. Anne des Monts in the morning. And if you don't come peaceably I shall go in there and fight it out with your remarkable relatives! I have a knife, and perhaps I can get a rifle before they stop me!"

"They will kill you!" she sobbed. "I beg you to leave!"

"Of course they will kill me in the end. But I choose not to live without you! The only way you can save my life, spoiled brat, is to come with me!"

"Very well!" she flung at him, as she set her little moccasins into the harness. "Remember that I marry you only to save your life!"

They were half a mile in the bush when Fontaine halted to fling over a cliff the snowshoes which were the only means of pursuit that the Larocque ogres had. He yielded to his heart, which had been melting like wax before a fire.

"Suzon," he said, "I am sorry I quarreled with you—"

"Oh, no!" she cried, standing as close to him as snowshoes would allow. "Let's always quarrel together, my Jean! It is such fun to quarrel with you!"

THE END

Defects of Inbreeding Erased by Outbreeding

IMPROVEMENT of farm livestock by fixing or eliminating inherited characters logically includes inbreeding and outbreeding. Both are well known to breeders and have been used spasmodically for years, but the genetic principles on which they are based have never been well understood, say livestock specialists in the United States Department of Agriculture. These principles are discussed in the forthcoming issue of the Department yearbook.

Inbreeding is the mating of closely related individuals, such as brother and sister, father and daughter. It is a two-edged sword which many breeders fear. While it is a way of rapidly intensifying and fixing desirable characters, it is just as likely to emphasize undesirable characters.

"Pure families" within a breed may produce a much sought after strain such as Anxiety 4th Herefords or Bates "Pure Duchess" Shorthorns or Earl Marshall Aberdeen-Angus—or they may result in failure. This is why practical breeders dislike going very far with inbreeding and why any worthwhile experimental program, which must run many years, should be carried out by the Government, other institutions, or by foundations established by men of wealth.

Inbreeding brings out defects rapidly in whole families, which may then be discarded. It is a sort of truth detector or sounding apparatus to discover what lies beneath the surface. When intensive inbreeding produces defectives faster than they can be discarded, the breeder resorts to occasional outbreeding.

Outbreeding—crosses of unrelated inbred families—may result in offspring with desirable traits such as vigor and productiveness not only above that of the parents, but even above that of other animals of the breed.

—*Raymond Lee.*

Donnybrook Shoots the Works

"Stay right where you are!"

By FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE

It was an old-style logger against a newcomer in that historical struggle of the Leschi Forest—and neither man was a weakling

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

DONNYBROOK McDUFF of the Klootch Bay Civilian Conservation Corps unit decided to go into the logging business with the help of the CCC boys. Forming a shoe-string corporation with Solomon Goldfish, originally from New York's East Side, the newly formed outfit begins to log government reserve timber in the Leschi National Forest. But this activity is not without its troubles and annoyances, for all does not move smoothly for Donnybrook.

Donnybrook has a formidable enemy in his competitor, the experienced logging boss, old Horse-Collar Terry Gahegan, who does everything in his power to thwart the "upstart" McDuff. But Donnybrook is resourceful and not exactly lacking in brains. He soon has a customer for his timber in M. Kawachi, an agent of the Japanese Government. Trouble definitely brews as the young man and the old are pitted against each other in a battle of wits and business maneuvers.

CHAPTER VI.

AMBASSADOR-PLENIPOTENTIARY.

DONNYBROOK went to Mill City and deposited the check in the cheap safe Solomon had installed in the office, then he crossed the street to the Gem Café and said, "Measure me for a steak. And don't forget everything that goes with

This story began in the Argosy for May 23

it. I want the best cigar in the house, too." He leaned back in his chair and read the Mill City *Times*. " For about an hour, I'm going to be a big shot lumberman, living on the fat of the land."

The mood lasted all of two minutes, then he hurried to the telephone booth and called the *Times* editor.

" Say, you might get a story," he said. " I understand all of Gahegan's spurs and the *Kilcare* have been sold to the Japanese Government. In fact, the *Kilcare* is flying the Japanese flag right now."

" Are you sure?" the editor asked.

" The *Kilcare,* flying the Japanese flag, is tied up at the Gahegan dock over at Half Moon Cove, loading rails," Donnybrook said.

" Thanks, that *is* a story," the editor said.

" If you can bow from the waist, drink sake, and understand him, Mr. Kawachi might help you out," Donnybrook informed him. " Horse-Collar Terry knows the details, too."

Donnybrook returned and launched a furious attack on the steak. He finished with two pieces of apple pie, washed that down with his second cup of coffee, lighted his cigar and sauntered over to the Commercial Hotel where he rented a room for the night.

He was awakened by the violent ringing of the telephone. " What now?" he growled.

" There's a man named Solomon Goldfish who claims he must see you immediately," the clerk said.

" Send him up," Donnybrook answered.

He sluiced his face in cold water, went back and propped himself up in bed. The door opened and Solomon came in. He looked red-eyed and haggard. He tossed a brief case into a chair and began pacing the room, his hands clasped behind his back. " Phooie!" he exclaimed. " I don't know which way to toin."

" Turn around and start all over again," Donnybrook advised.

" The low-life! The cutthroat! The knifer-in-the-beck! The robber!" muttered Solomon.

" By any chance, are you referring to brother Gahegan, Solly?" Donnybrook asked.

" Everywhere it was the same," Solomon explained with increasing anger. " The Gahegans had the reliable lumber dealers sewed up. They wouldn't even take it a shaving, much less a shipload. And those that weren't tied up, was busted. I esk, is there a percentage dealin' with a busted guy?"

" And so you came back licked?" Donnybrook queried. " Solly, you're a hell of a ambassador-plenipotentiary."

" Come again!" Solomon stared, as though he detected an insult.

" It means a drummer with power to act," Donnybrook explained. " So you wake me up in the middle of the night to tell me you didn't drum up any business."

" Phooie!" Solomon exclaimed. " A Goldfish may be down, but he ain't ever out. I went beck ten t'ousand years and snepped my fingers at money. What'll you give us for lumber, if you ain't got it the money I esk?"

" I get it!" Donnybrook said. " You've traded lumber to manufacturers who didn't have the loose cash, but did have goods. And now you'll have to sell the goods to get cash."

" It's woise even than the automobile business where you have to sell it a new car, then sell the car the buyer turns in to get your profit," Solomon complained. He slammed down an order book. " Full of orders," he said, " cash money, only we have to put up bonds to insure delivery f.o.b. by the cars. And I esk where'll we get bond premium money?"

" And I answer," Donnybrook said, " by telling you there's a certified check for fifteen thousand down in the safe. Now go way and let me sleep."

" Can I believe my ears?" Solomon said almost brokenly. " Now we'll both sleep."

DONNYBROOK met Gahegan the following morning as each was depositing a certified check in the bank. He grinned and gave a careless salute. The

logger grinned back again. It was a wolfish grin. "Son, you've got the world by the tail and a down hill pull now," he observed.

"Don't be so sure," Donnybrook answered.

"And I've got a hunch," Gahegan continued, "you told the *Times* editor to get a story out of me."

"I mentioned Mr. Kawachi first, then you," Donnybrook admitted. "I see he's given the story a front page spread. Everybody should be happy, the Japs have several thousand tons of steel; you're rid of a white elephant and I've got a few honest dollars to work with." He looked the logger squarely in the eyes. "But the last hand hasn't been played yet, and we're both holding good cards."

Two days were spent in organizing the Mill City office, wiring confirmations of Solomon's various deals and arranging contract bonds for the customers who were none too confident of the McDuff-Goldfish Company's ultimate success.

"Come on, Solly," Donnybrook invited when their respective desks were cleaned up. "We're going up to camp. Bring your check book along."

"Phooie!" Solomon wiped his forehead. "I hope we don't check out too much. I never seen money go so fast. Foist bone premiums. Then this and that."

"I doubt if we'll check out a dime," Donnybrook replied.

A battered gasoline speeder with a floor chewed to shreds by loggers' calks carried them to the bridge after much coughing and wheezing on grades. "The McDuff-Goldfish Logging Company's rolling stock," Donnybrook observed with a sad shake of the head.

"We should name it, like a Pullman car," Solomon suggested.

"Hell, that's easy. Call it Asthma!" Donnybrook answered.

Asthma was left on the fifty feet of rails that marked the remains of the spur. They struck off over the old roadbed and in due time reached the scene of operations. The plan was simple but effective. Cables were dragged ahead by man power, secured to a tree, then the donkey engine pulled themselves up to the tree. The cable was taken back, attached to huge skids loaded with wire rope, blocks, provisions, and the skids hauled up to the donkey. Bark and pitch wood supplied the fuel. Convenient pools supplied water for the boilers.

From the moment Donnybrook appeared it was evident a different spirit prevailed in camp. One man actually whistled. He looked around for Jack Bradley and his brothers of unrest. "Phooie!" Solomon exclaimed. "Such coising!"

"Sounds like Bradley," Donnybrook said. "And he's sure turning the air blue."

They broke through a thicket of devils clubs and looked down on a swampy stretch. Bradley stood knee deep in the mire, cursing his restless brothers who were hip deep, struggling with an eight inch cedar log. "Show some life, you mugs," Bradley roared. "We've got to have a skid road built before the first donkey gets here. Can't hold up the whole show."

He looked up and saw Donnybrook. "This is the dumbest bunch of punks I ever met," he yelled. He waded out of the mire and joined the pair. "Give me some real men—lads who can take it," he said, "and that skid road will be built. They don't seem to realize they're working for themselves and the sooner the job's done the more they'll clean up on the deal."

"They're doing all right," Donnybrook said, "that's tough going. I'm glad you're putting in cedar—cedar doesn't rot."

"I figured we might be using the road for years. If there's any bottom the cedars will find it. We can use them for sleepers when the truck road is built," Bradley explained.

Donnybrook nodded. "That's right," he agreed. "By the way, I'm here to make good my offer. The company will buy back every share of stock presented at a dollar ten a share."

"Just try and get it," Bradley answered. "When the story of the rail deal got out, the smart boys figured the company was out of the hole. A forest ranger passed through an hour ago. He's got a radio in

his cabin. McDuff-Goldfish is quoted at a dollar and a quarter and none available."

"So what?" Donnybrook asked, with a trace of a grin.

Bradley wiped his hands carefully, reached into his pocket and took out his stock certificate. "That's evidence," he said quietly, "that I own a piece of all this—the timber, the machinery, the working organization. It's mine! I earned it! It's free and clear. I didn't take it away from anybody by force. It is wealth I helped create. And nobody's going to take it away from me. It's . . ." His voice took on an odd quality that touched Donnybrook's sympathetic heart. "It's . . . the first thing I, or any of my family, ever owned except clothes and household things."

"So, that's that!" Donnybrook banged his fist into Bradley's stomach.

"That's that!" Bradley answered with a grin, and banging Donnybrook right back.

Donnybrook looked sharply at Solomon. "I guess there isn't any work here for the ambassador-plenipotentiary," he said. "You might as well take your check book and go back to the office. There's one little job you can do. Arrange with the post office for me to carry mail from Mill City to the camp we're building. I suppose we might as well call the post office Leschi.

"The company will establish some kind of a store at the camp. I'd like the option of carrying the mail by back-pack, horse, canoe, steamer or airplane. Let the post office department set the time of delivery, but leave the method up to me."

"What else?"

"Buy a good radio. Pick up a water wheel and generator second hand," Donnybrook ordered. "There's a waterfall up the river. And we may as well generate some juice and light for the camp. That's all for now." And with that, Donnybrook waded into the mire and laid hold of the cedar. He had an idea the M-G Logging Company would have clear sailing for awhile. The final battle with the Gahegan crowd would undoubtedly take place when he attempted to drive logs under their bridge. Well, that was a bridge he would cross when he got to it. And there was no attempt at punning when he reached that conclusion.

CHAPTER VII.

GRIM VISITORS.

DONNYBROOK and Jack Bradley heard a familiar bellow. "'Ten-shun!" They looked up, saw Sergeant Finnegan bearing down on them. "Stockholder Finnegan coming to pay his business a visit," he announced. He shook hands warmly with Donnybrook and regarded Bradley dubiously. "How's the yeast cake in the dough of unrest?" he asked.

"Aw lay off," Bradley pleaded. "What punk, making his way alone, knows what it's all about. I just figured the cards were stacked against all of us unless we had a drag and I showed it in my own way. Donnybrook proved to the satisfaction of all hands that we were wrong."

"And what enemy stands between you lads and success?" Finnegan inquired.

"Lack of effort on our part," Donnybrook replied. "And Horse-Collar Terry Gahegan. He is a wolf and fox rolled into one and he may stop us cold, though I'm doing everything to guard against it."

"Hmmmm!" Finnegan mused. His face was so serious Donnybrook guessed there was something important on his mind. "Bradley you talked a lot about the end justifying the means; that if a man stood in your path and you couldn't get him one way, it was okay to try another."

"Yeah, I sounded off along those lines many times," Bradley admitted. "But that's all over. There's another way of fighting and I like that way better. You'll hear no more such talk from me. If I can't lick a man according to the rules, then I take my beating."

"You're talking about yourself," Finnegan said. "I'm thinking about some of your old pals. There were some tough

mugs amongst them. Your talk fired 'em up. They hated Gahegan because he was making money running a camp. Now they hate him because they have stock in the M-G Logging Company and are afraid he may win this fight and make that stock worthless."

"Just a minute, Finnegan," Donnybrook ordered in a strained voice, "what are you driving at?"

"Three men jumped Gahegan last night," Finnegan answered, "and beat him up. He's in the hospital at Mill City and they don't know whether he'll pull through or not. When his clenched fist was forced open a piece of CCC uniform was found—cloth he had ripped off in the fight. The sheriff telephoned the various camps to check up. I cleared all the boys at Klootch Bay, then I thought of this outfit."

Bradley gazed thoughtfully at the gang working directly under him. There was no doubt of it, the group represented all types. It included men who would stop at nothing to hold what they had gained. There were men, he thought, who might have had a police record. "You're wrong, Finnegan," he said finally, "none of my men are involved."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Because right now, every man in camp is confident Donnybrook will beat Gahegan," Bradley reasoned with a logic that amazed the other two. "They want the fun of seeing him licked. Later, if it appeared he had us trapped, they might do most anything."

"But there's always the hothead who acts on impulse—the lad who'll reason, 'let's get that mug right now before he does us any damage,'" Finnegan argued. "Remember, I've been in the Army since I was eighteen. I'm almost ready to retire. I *know* men."

"There's somebody in that thicket," Donnybrook whispered, "we'll split, circle to cut off retreat and . . ."

"Stay right where you are!" A girl's voice spoke with a crisp, commanding note. Donnybrook described it as a musical echo to old Horse-Collar Terry's roar.

Sheelagh, followed by two of her sisters, stepped from the thicket. Sheelagh carried a sawed off shotgun. The others had regulation twelve gauge automatic shotguns. Her face was pale with worry and grief, but her eyes were filled with cold fury.

"Miss Gahegan," Donnybrook began.

"Silence!" she ordered. "I thought you would at least fight in the open, but you turned out to be a pack of rats. And there's only one way to deal with a rat. Line up your men. You, Sergeant, aren't in this and can be trusted. You get the pay roll list from the office."

"Yes, Miss," Finnegan answered as he hurried off to obey.

The three girls waited while Donnybrook beat on a rusty circular saw—the time-honored method of calling loggers to their meals. The different gangs came in and lined up, eying the girls with lively interest and meeting only with cold contempt.

Sheelagh handed the list of employees to one of her sisters. "Call the roll!" she ordered.

As each man's name was called he stepped a pace ahead. "All here!" Sheelagh said crisply. "No man or group of men could beat up my father and not get some marks in return. He was a body puncher, as Mr. McDuff well knows."

Donnybrook nodded rather grimly.

THE girl's eyes roved the ranks. "Strip off your shirts!" she ordered.

There was a moment's hesitation. She waved the shotgun impartially. The shirts came off. A freckled-faced, rusty-headed youngster's ribs revealed a black and blue spot. "What's your name?" Sheelagh asked.

"Rod Jessup!"

"Step forward," Sheelagh ordered. She turned to Bradley and Donnybrook. "Shirts off," she directed.

"You don't think . . ." Donnybrook grumbled, "that I . . ."

"Shirts off!" she repeated.

Jack Bradley hesitated, then yanked off

his shirt. His ribs also revealed a black and blue patch. "I got that fighting Jessup," he said. "He got tough. We're body punchers . . ."

"And liars!" Sheelagh interrupted.

"It's a good thing you're a lady," Bradley retorted, flushing. "We had no part in beating up your father. Look, our knuckles aren't even skinned. If we fought him, we'd have cut our hands."

"You just said you are body punchers," she interrupted. "Besides, Dad was hit with a club. No knuckles were skinned, except his. Come on, you are going to jail. And the first man who attempts to stop me will get both barrels."

"Go to work, boys," Donnybrook ordered. "I'm going along and see what can be done for Bradley and Jessup. I string with Jack . . . it's too soon for any of our gang to beat up the old man. Some of you run a wire from the Forest Service line to camp. We're going to need it."

The three men stalked down the right of way, saying little and thinking a lot. The girls followed them, Sheelagh carrying her shotgun lightly, like a hunter, her sisters carrying their weapons over their shoulders.

"I've always gone it alone," Jack Bradley said. "Father and mother died, and us kids were put in a home. Some of us were adopted, the others pulled out as soon as old enough. I haven't had any experience of a family pulling together. Girls going out to square an account because there weren't any men in the family. It's pretty damned fine, what I mean."

"Some kids miss a lot," Rod Jessup observed. "I suppose it's all right as long as they don't know they've missed it. But sometimes they find out. The CCC has plenty of mugs in it with families that haven't been much use—except they supplied the needed dependents to . . . to . . . qualify them for enrollment."

Rod had been taking an English course since his enrollment and ambition in diction sometimes led him into deep waters. As they neared the speeder Donnybrook dropped back and joined the girls. "I suppose we'll ride Asthma down to your camp one," he suggested. "You came across country afoot, didn't you?"

"Yes," Sheelagh answered. "We didn't want some wood tick signaling our approach and giving the guilty parties a chance to get away. We have two men. There's still a third."

While Donnybrook struggled with the cold motor, a Gahegan locomotive puffed across the bridge. Burly loggers jumped down from the tender and advanced with clenched fists. They were typical of a section of the woods that believed the fist and the boot were mightier than either the pen or the sword.

Moose Sverdrup towered among them, his face as black as a thunder cloud, his fists moving slowly, his shoulders swinging like a fighter striving to feint an enemy off balance. He hadn't forgotten his previous encounter with Donnybrook.

"Moose!" Sheelagh sharply ordered. "You and your men get back aboard that train. When Dad's under the weather, I'm running the Gahegan camp."

He came up to the determined girl. "The whole camp's been hunting for you girls. Finally somebody figured you had come up here. The shotguns were missing. Why don't you let me handle this?"

"Listen, Moose. Dad's been trying to teach you to handle problems in your own way," she answered in a low voice. "And so far you're still in the first grade. You have no cool judgment."

"Did you hear that, Donnybrook?" Rod Jessup whispered. "May be Sverdrup isn't the big shot we figgered he was."

Jessup, like many in the area, had heard Moose Sverdrup was a Gahegan pet who would end up marrying one of the Gahegan girls and taking charge when old Horse-Collar Terry relinquished control. The three CCC men watched the little drama between the two with lively interest. It ended when Sheelagh tossed her head and said, "Back onto the train, boys. And hands off the prisoners. They're mine."

"Thanks for that," Bradley said. "I'd hate to be beaten up on circumstantial evidence."

The sheriff was waiting when the locomotive pulled into Camp One. "What have you got on them?" he asked.

"Circumstantial evidence," the girl replied. "I want them held until I can build up my case. How's Dad?"

"He sent word you were to come to the hospital right away," the sheriff answered.

"We may as well start," she decided. "Bring the prisoners with you. You can lock them up in the Mill City jail."

The sheriff drove them over in his car and escorted the prisoners to the hospital office. Sheelagh and her sisters ran upstairs.

JACK BRADLEY dropped into the nearest chair and sighed heavily. "Something like this would happen. Who do you suppose beat the old man up? I'm not saying this for your benefit, sheriff. I'd really like to know." He lit a cigarette and smoked it half through. "That girl, Patsy, knocks my eye out," he said. "She's had me considering life seriously ever since she leveled that shotgun at my bosom."

"Shotgun marriage, eh?" Donnybrook observed. "She'd make a man out of you —full of snap, quick mind and pretty face."

"Personally I could go in a big way for Grace," the freckle-faced Rod Jessup ventured. "I'll prob'ly never marry. Unless I could marry a girl like her, I won't marry anybody. And can you imagine such a kid saying *yes* to a mug like me?"

Donnybrook swallowed the wisecrack that came to his lips. There was a hunger in the homely kid's voice that got under his skin.

A nurse appeared and motioned them upstairs. Gravely the trio filed into Gahegan's room. He lay, propped up in bed, his head covered with bandages and one fist also wrapped up and smelling of medicine.

He glared at the three. "Cream puff loggers," he said contemptuously. "Jumping a man from behind. Well, they claim old Terry mayn't get up from his bed. But I claim he'll get up and lick you wood ticks to a frazzle. My skull's too thick to fracture. And while I'm flat on me back, I've got girls that're better men than you boys. They don't make men . . . any more."

"But, Mr. Gahegan," the sheriff pleaded, "do you identify them?"

"If they've got black and blue stomachs, that's two of 'em. I always punch 'em in the guts. They get sick quicker and quit sooner. Ask McDuff." He waved them away with his hand. "Hold 'em for trial," he ordered, then collapsed.

"He'll be all right in a few minutes," the doctor said in a low voice. "Please leave, all of you."

Some of the buoyancy had left Sheelagh. She was beginning to feel the responsibility of charging men with a serious crime; of keeping the Gahegan camp going while her father was in the hospital. And above all, contriving ways of stopping the M-G crowd from getting its timber out.

It was Patsy who turned on Jack Bradley and Rod Jessup. "You spineless rats," she panted, "you didn't even have the courage to defend yourselves."

"Listen," Bradley said, conscious of an impulse to take the girl in his arms and console her. "I've blundered plenty in my time. But I've never had the impulse to fight an injured old man. Come on, Sheriff, where's the jail? I suppose we can get out on bail in a few days."

"You'll be held pending the outcome of Mr. Gahegan's injuries," the sheriff answered.

"Tough luck, Donnybrook," Bradley said. "You lose your woods boss and Jessup who has the makings of a straw boss, also. It looks as if you'll have to run the show alone for awhile."

"Keep your shirt on," Donnybrook admonished. "I'm going to find out where the piece of CCC shirt came from that was found clutched in Gahegan's hand. I'm offering a five hundred dollar reward for information. I'll bet the rest of that shirt is turned in. And that's all I want—that shirt."

Sverdrup came up the stairs as Donnybrook descended. The sheriff, sensing hostilities, edged in between them. The woods

boss joined the girls. "How is he?" he anxiously inquired.

"We don't know," Sheelagh answered. "Dad *thinks* he'll be on his feet soon. But the doctor has a different idea."

"Did he identify those men?" he asked anxiously. "I hope one of them was McDuff."

"He ordered them locked up," Patsy said. "But he didn't exactly identify them. I can't believe that Jack Bradley would do such a thing. It wasn't so much what he said, as the way he looked at me when he said he wouldn't fight an injured man. And I think we have the reason he didn't deny Dad's charges. He was afraid it would make him worse."

"Can I be of any help, Sheelagh?" Sverdrup asked.

"I'm afraid not," the girl answered wearily. "Just keep the camp going." She pushed him toward the stairs. "And don't ask for orders unless you're caught in a jam."

CHAPTER VIII.

A CCC SHIRT.

DONNYBROOK McDUFF went directly to the *Times* office and inserted a notice of reward. "And if you can run a story in connection with the advertisement so much the better," he said. "CCC shirts don't grow on bushes and if someone, wearing one, discarded it after Gahegan grabbed a piece of it, somebody is likely to report something of interest."

From the office he hurried to his own headquarters. "Solly," he said, "maybe you've got some good news. So far today, it's been nothing but bad."

"All contract bonds sent out were approved," Solomon informed him. "And already they're shipping it goods in trade for lumber what even ain't out of the tree."

"I know! I know! But I'll get it out of the trees," Donnybrook answered wearily. "And did you lease that old saw mill at the mouth of the Leschi River? If the old wharf adjoining will just hold up our shipping problems will be settled alright."

"Shoot some piling down the river," Solomon urged, "and we'll brace the wharf so she'll hold. She's got to hold. We need the warehouse for things customers are shipping."

"Do you mean to say we've got a warehouse full of stuff coming?" Donnybrook asked.

Solomon shrugged his shoulders and gestured with his hands. "Sometimes I don't sleep nights when I think what's coming," he answered. "And every deal a bargain."

"We'll hope so," Donnybrook said. "Any shirts among the stuff coming? There'd better be. I'll need one to replace the shirt I'll lose if things go haywire. I'm going up to camp. Don't call me on the telephone unless it is urgent."

The telephone rang, interrupting their conversation. "If it's for me, I'm out," Donnybrook warned.

Solomon answered the call. "No, he's out. I'm sorry, Mr. Logan, but he's . . ."

Donnybrook almost fell over the desk to grab the instrument. "Is this Kentucky Logan?" he shouted. "It is. Come right over. And I hope you have something on your hip."

Their friendship began when Donnybrook worked with Tim Donovan logging timber after a silver thaw. Kentucky, tall, lanky, had moved from the Kentucky mountains to Puget Sound when he was a small boy. Though educated in lumber town public schools, he had retained most of his mountan heritage save in vocabulary. He believed in the right of the individual to operate a still for his personal needs; believed in God and the United States of America.

On occasion Kentucky could occupy a pulpit with credit as he was a devout student of the Bible. With the independence common to mountain folk he was slow to make friendships. But once a man was included in his circle of friends he was there to stay.

He barged into the office and clapped a mighty hand on Donnybrook's shoulder. Then the same hand darted under his coat,

with the gesture of drawing a gun from a shoulder holster. Out came a clear glass bottle containing an equally clear liquid which made a tantalizing gurgle. " Have a snort!" he invited.

Donnybrook snorted, and passed the bottle to Solomon. The latter touched the tip of his tongue to the liquid and shuddered. " One drink and I'd be proposing it a toast to Hitler," he said. " So I'll take a half a drink." He sat the bottle down and wiped the tears from his eyes. "Phooie! What is it?"

" Elk's milk!" Kentucky answered. He turned to Donnybrook. " Son, a ranger told me some CCC boys are supposed to have put Gahegan in the hospital, so I came right over. Anything I can do?"

" You're the best tracker in the Northwest, Kentucky," Donnybrook replied. " Circulate through the woods and see if you can pick up any trails. The attack took place on the Forest Service trail near Grouse Spring." He gave a complete account of what had happened. From time to time Kentucky shook his head. There was a serious expression on his face when Donnybrook finished.

" This suggests a third party mixing into the fight," he said, " that is, if you're positive no CCC boys did it."

" I'm as positive as I can be." He got up. "I'd like to stay here and talk the rest of the afternoon and tonight, but I've got to get back on the job. I can drop you off up the line if you're ready." He looked Kentucky up and down. " You'll need some grub, of course."

" I've got my supplies," Kentucky assured him. "A quart of mountain dew and a pocket full of jerky." He displayed several strips of dried venison. "A man can last a long time with that combination."

" Practically live on the fat of the land," Donnybrook agreed.

He stopped at the post office and picked up his first consignment of mail as official carrier between Mill City and Leschi. They rode over to the Gahegan camp one and boarded Asthma.

The wheezy old speeder limped along, giving them time to discuss angles of the logging situation that worried the younger man. " So far as I can see, and barring the trouble a third party might stir up," Kentucky said, " you're handling this proper. There's one spot he can lick you—if he stops your logs at the bridge."

He unloaded and disappeared into the gloom where the Forest Service trail crossed the main line. Donnybrook left Asthma on the short spur and went on to camp. Things were almost at a standstill, for lack of a high rigger to top gin poles, set rings and run cables through the blocks.

He scrawled a notice on the bulletin board directing all but a small crew to get out piling, left the mail where it could be found, and then turned in.

THE banging of the cook's hammer on the saw awakened him. The air was moist and heavy with the bracing odor of the forest. Through the bunkhouse window he saw a snowy peak drenched in sunlight and a silver thread of falls spilling from a snowfield over a sheer granite cliff. Small, hanging glaciers flashed delicate tints of green and blue.

" What're you thinkin' about, McDuff?" one of the men asked as he laced up a boot. " Whenever you've had that look before you've started something."

" I was thinking what a damned fool a man is—any man—to let himself get jockeyed into a position where he can't get three square meals a day out of a piece of land," Donnybrook answered. " Every one of you has folks who've worried plenty about the next meal. I'm going to do something about it."

" What?"

" See the mud you mugs tracked in last night?" he asked. " Well, it's rich, black loam. It'll grow anything. We'll clear land as we go and next year some of you can have small farms and bring your folks out. That is, providing I snap out of it right now and do something."

He dressed, gulped down a cup of coffee, donned his climbing irons and approached a two hundred foot fir. He tossed a steel

cored rope around the trunk, flipped it upward and when it caught on the rough bark he dug in his spikes and began climbing. Alternately flipping the rope upward and climbing, he reached the first limb. Donnybrook made himself secure, drew up an axe swinging from his belt and began chopping off the limb.

"That always gives me the willies," a boy from the Middle West observed. "The rope is right under that limb. The axe is razor sharp. If he misses the limb and hits the rope . . ."

"That's why all living high riggers are good high riggers," one of the Washington State boys answered. "The bum ones cut the rope or make some other mistake."

The limb fluttered to the ground with a swish of its spread of needles. Donnybrook went on up. A half hour later the tree stood stripped of limbs over a hundred and fifty feet from the ground. Donnybrook then settled down for serious work.

Topping a tree is the most spectacular act in the logging industry and there are few more thrilling feats in any line of work. It amounts to pitching several tons weights from a platform twelve or fifteen inches wide a hundred and fifty feet in the air. And the man who does the pitching must of necessity remain on the spot. He can't run for cover.

Donnybrook made a small undercut on the tree, then began sawing from the opposite side. He sawed steadily until the snapping wood fibers warned him the top was beginning to tilt. He stopped and sized up the situation.

"Look at the grin on his Irish mug," one of them said, "he gets a wallop out of that. If he doesn't get killed in the woods he'll probably end up riding wild horses in rodeos."

Donnybrook gave several more vigorous slashes with the saw then let it go. The saw landed in the brush and bounced onto the sod, unharmed by the rough treatment. The axe whistled into the same thicket and at the same instant Donnybrook kicked loose, shot downward, dug in his spikes and then hung on.

The top fell, kicked back then rushed downward. The spar vibrated back and forth, threatening to throw the grim high rigger into space. Presently Donnybrook climbed up and sent down a light line. He hauled up the needed tools and set to work cutting away the wood to fit the ring to which blocks and supporting cables would be attached.

Except for the men required to aid Donnybrook the crew scattered. From his lofty position he could see their various activities. Several crews of fallers of two men each were dropping the biggest firs—dropping them expertly so that in falling the trunks wouldn't hit obstructions and shatter. They avoided smashing smaller trees that would at some future date be of sufficient size to market.

Far down the river on a small bench another group was getting out piling and carrying it by sheer man power to a cold deck on the bank. Later this would be floated to tidewater.

Aided by donkey engines the cables supporting the gin pole were drawn tight. The high lead blocks and cables followed and at the end of several days the job was done. Light lines, running through blocks, hauled the heavy wire ropes deep into the woods, then things came to a stop.

"I guess we're all set, McDuff," one of them said. "This is kind of an event—the first log."

"Damned tootin'!" Donnybrook agreed. He was dog tired. It had been something of a race getting the equipment in running order. Getting the logs out wasn't victory. Victory lay in getting them out on time to make good on the contracts. At first it seemed as if he had allowed ample time. But the days had a habit of vanishing right before a man's eyes.

HE felt his heart pounding with excitement. He had helped other outfits get their logs out. But this was the first in which he held an interest. This was the only one he knew of where the stockholders themselves did the work. "And less than two months ago," he mused, "we

were a bunch of busted wood ticks wondering what was going to happen when Uncle Sam graduated us from the CCC."

Donnybrook climbed onto a stump and yelled at the signal man standing on a ridge beyond which lay that first log. "Ready, whistle, punk?" he bellowed.

The other nodded. He pressed an electric button running from his hand to the donkey engine whistle. The whistle blasted and the donkey began turning over, plumes of white steam spurting from the exhaust and drifting through the dense green fir foliage above.

Cables whipped up the earth and cut off brush as they straightened out under the load. Every inch of slack was taken up on the rolling drum. The exhaust slowed down and became more explosive. The boom of timber against timber filled the forest. The whistle blasted its signals. Now slow, now fast. Then stop. Then slow again and finally full speed. The log came over the ridge, one end high in the air, the other skidding over the ground gouging holes in the deep sod and reminding Donnybrook men could farm in such soil for years without exhausting it.

The log thudded down on a sloping bank where a row of posts kept it from rolling into the stream. The hook tenders knocked the great hooks free and the donkey hummed as it wound in the light cable which hauled the main line back to the next log.

"Well, Donnybrook," the donkey engineer said, "you can take a breathing spell now. You've been hitting the ball night and day for weeks. If we can't run the camp, then we're a hell of a crew."

"Hop to it," Donnybrook answered. He wished Jack Bradley and Rod Jessup were out of jail. They had a way of getting the most out of men. The element in Bradley in particular which enabled him to move men to discontent and to follow him blindly also led them into productive channels. "I think I will ease up," he said. "I'll take a fishing rod and hike up Steelhead Creek. There's a stand of cedar we might turn into shingle bolts. We might as well supply the roofs as well as the rest of the timber we sell to building contractors."

"Yeah, you're taking a holiday—a postman's holiday. You're going for a walk," the engineer jeered. Then the whistle sent him into action again.

He went to his bunk and stretched out for an hour's sleep. The hum of industry, he decided, should be soothing. The whistle became vague, something a man heard in a dream. He yawned and completely relaxed, then somebody opened the door. "The cave-man bookkeeper," Donnybrook muttered. "Well, what do you want?"

"Solomon Goldfish is on the telephone," the bookkeeper said.

"I told that mug to leave me alone," Donnybrook growled.

He went over to the office and picked up the receiver. "Hello, Solly!" he said.

"I don't know which way to toin?" Solomon moaned. "Tonight a steamer lands by the dock with goods traded for lumber. And not a new pile under the dock. I esk an insurance company how much to insure the gooas. They say fix it the dock, then come around and talk business. We should insure things and may be have 'em floatin' all over the bay."

"All right," Donnybrook answered, "I'll be down and bring some piling with me."

Donnybrook pulled on a pair of tin pants, and then a pair of well-greased calked boots. He was reaching for his hat when the telephone rang. The bookkeeper's voice boomed through the camp. "Donnybrook! Will you talk to a mug named Kentucky Logan?"

"Hell, yes! I'd get up out of the grave to talk to him," he answered. He raced to the instrument. "Hello, you long drink of water!"

"I've found that CCC shirt," Kentucky said. "I've got an idea who jumped Gahegan. And it wasn't any CCC bunch. I'm not sure of everything, but I'm checking up on some calk prints."

"Calk prints to you are as good as finger prints to a dick," Donnybrook said. "What do you want me to do?"

" Nothing. I'm bringing in the shirt. I'll meet you at Mill City tomorrow noon. By night Jack Bradley and Rod Jessup should be back on the job. Listen, Kentucky don't say anything more. Somebody's on the line. I just heard something metallic drop—it sounded like the cover of a snoose box."

" I heard it, too. But that don't mean much—the woods are full of snoose eaters. S'long." He hung up.

Donnybrook hurried over to the gang getting out piling. " Go over to the cook shack," he ordered, " and get some lunches. Put on your boots with the best calks and grab a few pike poles we're floating piles down Leschi River."

" We've sent a hundred down already," one of them informed him. " They should have floated into the bay three days ago. We telephoned down for someone to throw a string of boom sticks across the river mouth to stop them."

CHAPTER IX.

" ONE BRIDGE AT A TIME!"

DONNYBROOK began by shoving every available pile into the river. They jumped onto the floating timbers and with the aid of the pike poles pushed them into the stream. The surface of Leschi River was dotted with timbers and men struggling to ride them. Drenched from head to foot the CCC men stayed with it until they got the hang of the thing.

As they rounded the bend and headed for the bridge, Donnybrook saw that a long pile had swung across the bridge piers and stopped some fifty others. They jumped onto the jam and broke it up. A Gahegan man watched them briefly then sauntered over to a telephone screwed to a tree.

" Gimme the office," he said, then waited. " Hello, Miss Sheelagh? This is Mike, the old bull cook you sent up to the bridge. McDuff is breakin' up the little jam I started."

Voices over Forest Service lines are amplified heavily to compensate for stretches of wire that may be grounded. Donnybrook stepped up behind Mike and had no difficulty hearing Sheelagh's answer. " That's not important," the girl answered, " I only hoped to delay things a little. We'll wait for the big logs."

" Let me talk to her." He picked up the receiver. " This is that damned McDuff. Kentucky Logan telephoned he found the CCC shirt and is of the belief it wasn't worn by CCC men when your father was attacked. How about arranging to release my two men?"

" Wait until I see the shirt," the girl answered. " Father is still in the hospital. They want a clot or something to dissolve. There has been talk of an operation."

" Golly I hope it won't come to that," Donnybrook said. " We, that is Bradley, Jessup and I, rather like the old war horse even if he is making it tough for us."

Donnybrook returned to his crew. The last of the piling was just going under the bridge. He ran down to a bar, dug his pike pole in and vaulted to the largest pile. " Don't think you're going to ride far," one of his crew yelled. " I've never seen such a crazy current—it washes everything onto bars." He jumped into knee deep water and pushed a stranded pile into the stream and climbed on.

Almost at the same instant Donnybrook's own pile grounded. Downstream others were wrestling with the same problem. Shortly before dark they held a conference. It was a dubious group. " If it's goin' to be like this with the piles," one complained, " what'll it be like with the big six foot stuff you're gettin' out for Japanese squares?"

" One bridge at a time," Donnybrook pleaded. " One bridge at a time."

The following noon he cut across country to a Forest Service trail and hunted up a telephone. He called the sheriff and explained Kentucky Logan had found the shirt and should appear with it almost any moment. " Tell him I'm tied up in a fight with this damned river," he concluded, " I'll be over as soon as I can."

At seven o'clock Saturday morning Donnybrook led a weary crew into Half Moon Bay. A small steamer was discharging freight onto a wharf that was sagging in the middle. Solomon Goldfish was pacing along the wharf's edge, ready to leap to safety should the structure collapse.

He tossed his hand to high Heaven. "Give a look, Donny. Every ton that's landed, brings new groans. I can hear spikes pull out every time I take a breath."

"This wharf will stand up until a storm comes along," Donnybrook predicted. "But it's certainly nothing to risk a future on and that's what we're doing." A puzzled expression filled his eyes. "Just what *is* all this stuff?"

"Goods exchanged for lumber," Solomon answered.

"From the speed the shippers showed in getting it here they must have been afraid we might back out," he suggested. "Yez wept as some of our Swedes would say. There's a variety. Automobile tires! Furniture! You even got baby carriages . . ."

Solomon tossed his hands expressively into the air. "Vell," he argued, "it's a new country we're opening up."

"Thousands of yards of cotton cloth, Solly . . ."

"Trade 'em to Mr. Kawachi for silk and sell the silk," Solomon said promptly.

DONNYBROOK moved about in bewilderment, sometimes inspecting the freight, again studying bills of lading. Suddenly he roared like a bull. "What're you thinking of? Bringing roofing substitutes into a shingle country."

"We're shippin' shingles into a country makin' roof substitutes, ain't we?" Solomon argued. "And the M-G Logging Company took it a profit in the transaction."

"What's all this junk?" Donnybrook asked. "Something to sell to the Japs for scrap?"

"It's a furniture factory machinery," Solomon explained. "In the Middle West it went busted."

"Furniture factory machinery," Donnybrook answered weakly.

"Everywhere I stumble over maple . . ." Solomon replied.

"Don't finish it," Donnybrook interrupted. "We'll log the maple and put the CCC graduates to work making furniture. And I suppose we'll raise birds to fill the bird cages you've picked up."

"There's an idear," said Solly.

"And beads. What'll we do with cases of beads—disguise wood ticks as Siwashes and put them at depots selling strings to tourists?"

"I can answer that one," Solomon blandly informed him. "The Eskimos and Siwashes up North buy their beads in Seattle."

"You win! You win!" Donnybrook shrieked. "Every time I look at this assortment of freight black and green spots float before my eyes. I'm licked. I'll get the timber out and you handle the business end."

"That was the agreement," Solomon chuckled. "But you should know I had to give the bank a sixty day note to pay freight bills. For security the robbers esked for the timber contract we hold with the Gov'ment; all the freight and a lien on the Japanese squares."

"That's eloquent. It proves how shaky we really are," Donnybrook said. "We've worked like horses two months or so and have built a swell house of cards. I may lose my shirt yet. You don't happen to have a shipment of shirts in all this freight." Solomon shook his head. "You wouldn't," Donnybrook grumbled as he walked away.

He gathered his gang together and explained how they were to brace the structure at low tide. "That's up to you," he informed them. "I've got a date with Kentucky Logan that may get Jessup and Bradley out of the skookum house."

As Donnybrook emerged from under the wharf the sheriff's car bumped over the loose planks to an abrupt stop. "You're looking for me," the tired CCC man yelled up. "Everybody is."

"Please come up, Mr. McDuff," Sheelagh Gahegan said. "And hurry!"

Donnybrook climbed up a rotting ladder. The girl's agitation was apparent. "You tell him, Sheriff," she said.

"Your father?" Donnybrook asked.

"He's worse," the girl said.

"Kentucky Logan was supposed to be in Wednesday or Thursday," the sheriff explained. "He didn't show. I sent men over the different trails to look for him. It struck me the man who jumped Gahegan might have heard Kentucky telephoning he had found the shirt and had ambushed the mountaineer."

"That'd be hard," Donnybrook said, "but it's possible."

"We haven't found a trace of him. We did find Moose Sverdrup on the trail. Somebody had creased him with a bullet. He'd bled like the devil, even though he'd tried to bandage himself."

"What did the tracks show?"

"The tracks indicated Sverdrup had come from Little Leschi River," the sheriff answered. "As a guess I'd say he had been thrown into the stream, the shock revived him and he had crawled out."

"That proves the men in jail aren't the ones who jumped your father," Donnybrook said to Sheelagh. "Let's release them, agree on a temporary truce, and work together until the third angle to this triangle is revealed."

"I think that is best," the girl answered.

CHAPTER X.

TRUCE.

DONNYBROOK relaxed by Sheelagh's side while the sheriff drove his car at a sixty-mile clip over a moist gravel road.

"It is understood," the girl said, "this search for Kentucky Logan is only a temporary truce. The Gahegans want that Government timber and if we can get it by breaking you we're going to do it. When you sold the *Kilcare* and spur rails to the Japanese government, well . . . Dad isn't the sort to take a licking like that lying down."

Donnybrook looked into Sheelagh's disturbing eyes and grinned impudently. "The mugs that make up the McDuff-Goldfish Logging Company wouldn't agree to a permanent truce on a bet. We want to find out if we're any good or not. And the only way is to meet old Horse-Collar Terry and his daughters in a finish fight."

The sheriff stopped at the Gahegan home and picked up Grace and Patsy, then roared on to Mill City. He turned in to the hospital. A nurse came out of Gahegan's room and whispered "He's sleeping now. We think he has taken a distinct turn for the better."

"I hope so for several reasons," Donnybrook said. "Where's Sverdrup? We want to talk to him, if possible."

They found Sverdrup sitting up in bed. His head was bandaged but otherwise he seemed in good condition. "I'm telling you I've got to get out of here," he said as they entered the room. "I've got an idea where the man went who took a shot at me."

"There's no love lost between us, Sverdrup," Donnybrook bluntly informed him, "but we're pulling together for the present. Some of my outfit will comb the country on their side of the Leschi River. Your loggers can search your side."

"Get me out of here," Sverdrup insisted. "I'm no cream puff. Putting a man to bed because of a scratch."

"What happened?"

"I was cruising cedar over on Long's Flat," the woods boss explained, "and I telephoned in that I'd be delayed another day . . ."

"When was that, Wednesday?" Donnybrook asked.

"Wednesday or Thursday. I'm still in a fog."

"It was Thursday night," Patsy Gahegan said. "I took the call. And I asked him if he'd seen anything of Kentucky Logan. He said he'd keep an eye open."

"Yes, that was it. I remember that," Sverdrup said. "I took a swing through the country to see if I could pick up his trail and maybe get some company back

to camp. I remember hearing a roaring in my ears and the next thing I knew I was swimming in the river. I just managed to crawl on a bar before I passed out. That don't help much, does it?"

"Some," Donnybrook answered. "Now you stay in bed and rest up. We'll search the country."

"May be that's best," Swerdrup muttered, relaxing and closing his eyes. Donnybrook stared thoughtfully at the big logger, then led the others from the room.

Sheelagh, Patsy and Grace Gahegan formed an anxious knot outside their father's door. Sheelagh, the eldest, did the talking, and they confirmed whatever she said. Patsy and Grace joined Donnybrook and the latter said, "We both know Kentucky's boot print and the way he touches the ground, sort of lightly. He taught us to hunt and fish when we were little girls. And we love him even if he and Dad did quarrel a lot. We're going with you on the hunt."

"That'll be fine," Donnybrook said. "Come on, Sheriff, let's release Rod and Jack."

An hour later a Gahegan locomotive backed up to a flat car which contained two long benches running lengthwise. The benches were filled with Gahegan loggers and there was an overflow of men sitting along the edge of the car with their legs dangling. To a man they were a hard, two-fisted lot. And in spite of the truce they scowled at the three CCC men and indulged in wisecracks of a nature that aroused Donnybrook to the fighting pitch.

The freckled Rod Jessup had screwed up sufficient courage to sit beside Grace, while Jack Bradley was paying strict attention as Patsy explained her theory of Kentucky's disappearance.

Donnybrook noticed the girls glanced at the Leschi River whenever the stream was visible from the train. Invariably their eyes narrowed with horror, as if they half expected to see the mountaineer's lanky body floating down the hurrying river.

The train stopped a half mile from Long's Flat and the men spilled from the train, with orders to search every thicket and to report immediately any recent boot prints they could not readily identify. The two girls divided up the territory and then separated, followed by a tremendously interested CCC boy.

"Mugs!" Donnybrook grunted. "Rod and Jack will be eating out of their fair hands before the week's out. Leave it to a pretty face to weaken a man's sword arm. So far as they are concerned this truce is permanent."

Less than a hundred yards from the train the girls stopped and looked back. "There's a speeder coming," Grace called.

The exhaust echoed through the lower country timber and it stopped every searcher. A small speeder, half the size of Asthma, lurched into view and rolled to a jerky stop. Moose Sverdrup, pale, but dressed in his logger's clothing crawled from the speeder.

"I'm going to run down this killer if it's the last thing I do," he informed them. "I sneaked out of the hospital. I'm weak, but I'm getting stronger every minute." There was determination on his cold, hard face.

"Moose, you're all right," Patsy said impulsively. "Once, after a forest fire, I told you you were yellow. I take it back. It takes something to leave a hospital and join in this kind of a hunt and you've got it. But take two of the boys along, just in case the body isn't as strong as the spirit."

FOR the second time the party scattered. Sverdrup, obeying Grace, and taking two loggers with him. Donnybrook located a Forest Service telephone and called Leschi. The cave-man bookkeeper answered. "Pull everybody off the job and tell 'em to search that side of the river for Kentucky Logan," he ordered. "Then you high tail it for Mill City and pick up the mail. I don't want Uncle Sam on my neck for non-delivery. He takes those things seriously, so don't fail me. That's all."

Donnybrook headed for the stream, some

two miles, as the crow flies, from the locomotive. His camp, Leschi, was several miles below. The Gahegan road had penetrated far on this side of the river, and only a granite barrier, nearly a quarter mile in width prevented it from turning, crossing the stream and striking into the heart of the Leschi River.

It was a country rich in timber, but expensive to log with standard gauge railroads. It was a wild country where a dead or injured man might never be found. Donnybrook moved slowly from the moment he reached the fork known as Little Leschi. The stream ran fast and there were numerous log jams, many of them formed during Spring freshets and left suspended above the present water level. Logs jammed tightly against opposing granite walls kept the debris in place.

The material came entirely from trees that had fallen into the river, as logging operations had not advanced to this point.

Donnybrook searched the bank and gave particular attention to the jams at the water level and deep pools with boulders under which a body might lodge. A camp fire's glow drew him from the cañon late that night. He climbed up and found Sverdrup, Rod Jessup and Jack Bradley crouched around the fire. The two girls were curled up against the trunk of a huge cedar. The needles that had gathered for years served as a perfect mattress.

The party had covered considerable ground without incident. Jack and Patsy had arrived first. Sverdrup appeared an hour later and the other pair had arrived shortly afterwards. The woods boss had located the bar onto which he had crawled, or been washed after his wounding, but had located no tracks in the vicinity other than those left by the men who had found him. "Kentucky's probably drowned," he said. "I don't expect to find him. The Leschi is a bad stream and bodies are seldom found. They get caught under boulders. But I'd like to pick up the killer's trail. No telling who'll be next."

"I'll have a look down that way in the morning," Donnybrook said. "We should know something or other tomorrow night. If no trace is found by that time there isn't much hope.

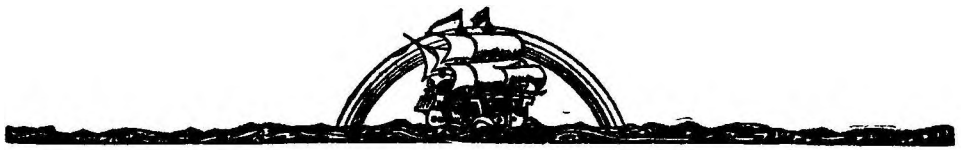
THE group ate breakfast from food carried in small packs and made plans for the day's search. Sverdrup's iron constitution which had sustained him thus far showed no signs of faltering. He expressed a belief Kentucky might have gone to a spring that few knew existed. "I'll look there," he said.

Donnybrook continued his search along the water's edge and found little to encourage him. At ten o'clock he heard a rifle shot echo own the cañon. It was followed immediately by a second—the signal agreed on in case something of importance was discovered. "They've found him!" he exclaimed. "But is he dead or alive?"

Donnybrook headed for the sound, swimming creeks and ripping through thickets that blocked the way. A small column of smoke from a fire burning green brush marked the source of the shots. Two loggers had already arrived. Grace stood with a thirty-thirty rifle in her hands, while Rod poked about a neighboring thicket.

"I found Kentucky's tracks—several days old—a quarter mile up the ridge," Grace said. "Somebody, wearing grain sacks over his boots, ambushed Kentucky. He fell here." She pointed to the blood-stained sod. "The bullet went through a branch, cutting it off, before it struck him. His attacker then carried him down to the river. We can guess the rest."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



The manager grabbed twin handfuls of ozone

To the Cleaners

By C. C. RICE

They're at the post in the third at Hialeah, and Long-Shot Louie is riding a brewery-horse hunch

AS Long-Shot Louie stepped out of Hogan's Social Club, the stern Arm of the Law reached out and grasped him by the shoulder. Louie jumped nervously.

"Whassa matter?" he gasped.

"How about shelling out for a ticket to the ball, Louie?"

"Hell's bells!" Louie sighed in relief. "I thought I must of cracked a safe!" He grinned up in Officer Brick McCrehan's expectant face. "Gee, Brick, will you see me tomorrow or next day? On the level, I got exactly sixty cents in the old kickeroo."

Brick laughed. "Long-shots ain't been coming in lately, huh, Louie? Well, I know how it is. Forget it, guy."

"But I won't forget, Brick," Louie said earnestly. "Catch me in a day or so and I'll be in the oughday. I got the surest thing you ever heard of in the third at Hialeah this afternoon. Wanna sink a few bucks on it?"

Brick chuckled. "Sorry, Louie—busy morning for me." McCrehan moved on.

Louie shrugged and ankled along. Not very briskly, though, for he was headed for a place he didn't wish to go. But it was the last resort. Here he was with the most beautiful hunch of his life, and not a single simoleon to bet on it. Laddybuck in the third at Hialeah! Laddybuck, a winning colt if ever there was one! And after what had happened this morning he couldn't help running on top even if they hitched him to a snow-plow.

Louie's hunch had come to him as he was dressing in his two-by-four room a couple of hours before. He'd heard the heavy clap of horseshoes on the street below his window. Gazing out casually he saw a gentleman astride a huge sleek percheron, the kind that used to haul brewery carts in the old days. And on each side of the splendid beast hung a colorful sign: *Ladd's Bock Beer! Try It Today—A Sure Winner!*

At first the trenchant import of the spectacle did not penetrate into Louie's early-morning brain. About fifteen minutes later it flashed on him. He was stunned. He dashed out of the lunch cart where he was having breakfast and made for the nearest newsstand. There he bought a racing form and scanned the day's entries excitedly. Sure enough, Laddybuck was running in the third at Hialeah. *Ladd's Bock Beer! Try It Today—a Sure Winner!*

"Boy!" breathed Louie as he recalled the morning's phenomenal happening. "Whatta hunch! And me with only sixty cents left after I bought the form-sheet!"

He trudged along, regretting his disagreeable errand. He had not been able to beg a bet at Hogan's handbooking office or Paul the Parson's place. There was only one office left for him. He hated the joint. He'd always had discourteous treatment there. He was sacrificing his self-respect to ask credit there. But with such a gold mine of a hunch in his possession he could not afford to coddle his dignity. Whether he liked it or not, he absolutely had to try to tap that last hope—Joe Spain's.

"Into the Valley of Death," he whispered to himself, "rode the brave six hundred."

IF Long-Shot Louie could have had a glimpse of Joe Spain's handbooking office that morning, he would have hesitated even more.

Joe Spain's corpulent body was crammed into a small swivel chair, so small that it puffed his blue jowls and made his forehead wrinkle. Joe Spain was in no happy mood. He was suffering the usual pangs of his morning dyspepsia, and he had to check over yesterday's sheets, dyspepsia or no dyspepsia. And checking over yesterday's sheets was no simple task for Joe, since he had left grammar school at an early age.

He was chawing his pencil like a wolf with a bone and glaring at the row of figures in front of him. The pencil had been fresh when he'd started, but now it looked like a miniature cactus plant. A perfect cast of Joe Spain's bicuspids.

A thin and sallow gent slipped into the office. He held a small envelope in twitching fingers.

"From the syndicate," he murmured politely.

"Mmph!" grunted Joe Spain without looking up from his work.

The sallow gent, after a moment's indecision, placed the envelope on the edge of the desk and slipped out again like a wraith.

This was the merry atmosphere that Louie stepped into three minutes later. Louie straightened his polka-dot cravat, brushed off his pearl-gray suit, gave his cane a jaunty swing. He pushed open the door.

"Hello, Joe," he piped, brisk and jovial.

Joe glanced up from his sheets.

"Nuts!" he growled, and returned to his figures.

Louie, do or die, settled in the chair on the other side of the desk. "How's the world been treating you?" he asked, in another effort to break the ice.

Joe grunted. "Do you *have* to talk?"

"Same old Joe." Louie laughed merrily, making a wry face to himself.

"Whaddaya want?" Joe demanded impatiently.

"Well, lissen, pal, it's this way. You may not have heard, but I'm coming into quite a load of dough tomorrow. A fellow named Truck Walsh is paying me off some dinero he's owed me for months. How's that for luck?"

Joe Spain didn't answer. Just looked disgusted.

"So," Louie continued, making a valiant attempt at casualness, "I thought perhaps you'd put a small bet on the cuff for me—"

"No!" hollered Joe Spain, still chawing at his pencil. "Anyways, I never heard of Truck Walsh."

"Well, you know Snow Martin, don't you?" said Louie in a final attempt.

"So what?" Joe challenged.

"Well, Snow's got the good hoss at Fair Grounds today, and he's promised to pay me a debt as soon as he collects."

Joe Spain snorted dyspeptically. "Snow Martin couldn't pick the winner on a merry-go-round."

Louie sat waiting for Joe to say something more. After all, the bookie hadn't absolutely refused him yet. Maybe he was thinking it over. So Louie sat on an imaginary pin cushion, watching Joe Spain's face. Presently he got to the fidgeting stage. He pulled out a pencil and began making scribbles on an innocent-looking envelope at hand:

Laddybuck . . . ** 10-1
$22.00 straight Laddybuck
3rd Hialeah
Laddybuck!!!! $$

Suddenly Joe Spain looked up, his face lined with ugly wrinkles. "Will you get outa here!" he roared impatiently. "Or maybe you wanta get flung out!"

This explosion seemed definitely unpromising. Hastily Louie gathered up pencil and envelope and made for the door without a word. After all, he consoled himself, it only lowers a man to associate with two-bit muggs like Joe Spain. He ought not to have gone there in the first place. As anxious as he was to place that bet, he certainly did not care to sacrifice his last shred of personal dignity in the process.

So Louie walked proudly away from Joe Spain's, swinging his ivory-headed cane gracefully, and promising himself that some day Joe Spain would rue this incident.

JOE SPAIN did. Violently. About ten minutes after Louie had left, Joe finished up his sheets to his satisfaction. He gave a thankful groan and turned his mind to the new day's business. Ah! This was the day that the syndicate in Florida had promised him that hoss. This was the day he was going to drag in fifty grand or more on a guaranteed, made to order "boat-race." For twenty-five C's he was getting a tip worth fifty grand! He rubbed his hairy hands in delight. So! Now where was that envelope?

He glanced over the top of his desk expectantly. Well, where the devil did that pasty-faced messenger put it? He stood up and rummaged anxiously through the piles of paper. He grew frantic. He flung papers in all directions. He began to curse at the top of his lungs. Where, where—! Suddenly he collapsed into his swivel chair and ran his hands over his face like a dying man.

"That's it!" he choked. "I remember now! That halfwitted Louie's got it! I seen him scribblin' yonder. He must of picked it up—"

His mumbling voice was rising to a roar. His face grew crimson and his dyspepsia violent. He rocketed out of his swivel chair and yelped. He grabbed the telephone and hurled it against the wall.

"He's got it!" he howled.

From all parts of the building Joe Spain's henchmen came running.

"Don't stand there like jackasses!" he bellowed. "Do somethin'! The guy's got it! The stupid mugg picked it up and shoved it in his pants. Fifty grand in his pocket! And I ain't got no way of gettin' in touch with the gang in Florida!"

Joe Spain grabbed up his swivel chair and hurled it after the telephone. "Do somethin', you idiot! Who knows him? Where does he live? Where is he now—"

One of his aides gathered enough courage to ask, "What's his name?"

"Louie, you fool, Louie! Long-Shot Louie! Now scram and get the car here! We're gonna find that dope if it's the last thing we do." He clasped his head in his fat hands miserably. "Fifty grand! And I don't know the name of the hoss, or even the race he's in!"

TEN minutes later a huge limousine skitted around a corner and stopped dead. A head poked out the window and yelled at a harmless looking gent loitering near a news-stand.

"Hey, brother! You know a bird called Long-Shot Louie?"

The corner gent looked blank. "Nope," he said. "Never heard of him."

The limousine roared away.

"Go over to the East Side," Joe Spain commanded the driver. "I think I heard of him kickin' around over there."

They plunged across town as fast as the lights would allow. Soon they pulled up at another corner. There were half a dozen gentlemen of leisure leaning against a cigar-store window.

Joe Spain leaned out and barked, "Any of you boys know Long-Shot Louie?"

"Unh-unh," said one. "But I know a guy called Mickey the Rat." His companions all laughed, and Joe Spain snarled, "Wise guys, eh?"

The limousine cruised for nearly two hours. Finally it pulled up at the lucky corner. Joe Spain stuck his jaw out the window at a mousy little party.

"Do you know a gee named Long-Shot Louie?" he asked for the fiftieth time.

"Why—yes. Sure." The mousy party was plainly alarmed.

"Where can we get in touch with him?" demanded Joe Spain.

"Why, you might find him at—well, at Hogan's Social Club. That is, I don't know—"

"Thanks!" snapped Joe Spain, and the limousine shot off. "Get to Hogan's," he yelled. "About ten blocks uptown! And this trick has got to be smooth, understand? If Louie should find out what he's got in that pocket, it might be sort of tough to deal with him without gettin' strong-arm. And we don't want to pull nothin' raw, see?"

While the limousine was roaring away to Hogan's Social Club, a mousy little gent was telling it to a cop.

"Brick," he said excitedly, "they was lookin' for Louie. It was a wrong car, you could tell. Musta been six or seven gorillas in all. I shouldn't of told them nothing, but I got so mixed up—"

"That's okay," said Brick McCrehan. "Don't worry about it. As long as you got the number plate it'll be easy to check on them. Come on."

He took the mousy gent's arm and they walked down to the next corner. Brick opened the police box there and intimated over the phone that one of the prowl cars should pick up the limousine in question. He meant to say, it didn't look like the best class of limousine and it might be profitable to discover what the occupants had in mind.

MEANWHILE Joe Spain and his gang arrived at Hogan's Social Club. "You guys wait outside," Joe ordered. "I'll try him alone first."

He whisked open the street door and spotted Louie immediately. Louie was having a drink of Old Crutch Bourbon on his last sixty cents. He was trying to forget the world and its uncharitable ways.

"Louie!" shouted Joe, all palsy-walsy. "I been looking all over Hell's Kitchen for you!"

Louie tried to keep the astonishment from his eyes. He said cynically, "Well, you found me."

"Sure, Louie." Joe Spain laughed. "And why I wanted to see you—well, I wanted to beg your pardon for the way I acted this mornin'. But I guess you savvy—that old indigestion, eh, kid?"

Louie nodded gloomily. He wouldn't forgive Joe Spain for that morning if the bum should plead a broken leg.

"Well, Louie, if you still want to place that bet I'll be glad to accommodate you."

Louie's ears pricked up. "So!" he said with a little more enthusiasm. However, his manner was still suspicious. Who ever heard of a handbooker chasing all around town to take a marker? Something screwy about it!

"Cer'nly," Joe assured him. "And I'll tell you what I'll do. Give me the figure on what you want to bet, and I'll write you the ticket. All I want is some small piece of security. Just a formality, y'understand."

"Sure, sure," Louie agreed. "Whadda you want?"

"Oh, anything at all," said Joe Spain casually. "How about your suit-coat?"

"My suit-coat? What do you figure I'm going to wear the rest of the day?"

"You got an overcoat, ain't you? Besides, it ain't so cold."

"Kayo by me." Louie shrugged, as though the vagaries of bookmakers were too much for his brain to grasp. "Write me twent—ah—fifty dollars on Laddybuck in the third at Hialeah."

As he watched Joe Spain scribble off the ticket without a murmur of protest, he wished he'd made the fifty an even hundred.

"There," grunted Joe Spain cheerfully, handing over the ticket.

"Thanks," Louie said, and drew his coat off. "I'll just empty the pockets—"

"No you don't," Joe Spain snapped. "I mean," he added laughingly, "I'd rather take it as is. A bargain's a bargain, pal."

"All right, Joe, you're the doctor."

Joe grabbed the coat and started for the door. "See you later, Long-Shot."

Louie nodded perplexedly.

TWO minutes after Joe Spain had gone out the door so cheerily he entered again with two of his gentlemen friends in tow. His cheeriness was entirely gone. He had blood in his eye.

"Hey, you!" he roared.

Louie stared, more mystified than ever.

Joe Spain stalked over to him threateningly, waving the coat. "You trying to double-cross me?" Joe was no longer in the mood to play out any subtle farce. "Did you know what was in this coat?"

Louie's face registered genuine bewilderment. "I don't getcha, Joe," he muttered.

"Did you or didn't you grab a envelope off my desk this morning?" the bookie demanded. "Don't lie to me, you dumb cluck!"

Louie could not gather his wits for the moment. He glanced nervously at the two husky gentlemen in the background. "I—I—no kidding—"

"Speak up—and quick, too!" Joe Spain's angry eyes suddenly narrowed thoughtfully. "Sa-ay, would this coat happen to be a different one from the one you was wearin' this morning?"

"Why—as a matter of fact, yes. I just sent my good suit to the cleaners a couple of hours ago. I mean, that was the suit I was wearing—"

"Cleaners!" Joe groaned. "Cleaners! What cleaners?"

"Why, Max My Tailor came around to my room and called for it."

"He did! Well, you're comin' along with us to Max Your Watchamacallit! Come on, drag!"

Louie climbed into his overcoat dazedly and marched out to the car with his insistent hosts.

"About four blocks down on the right," he directed.

"Get going!" bawled Joe Spain. "It's already past post-time at Florida! That boat race may be early on the program!"

The car scudded off furiously, plunged through two traffic lights and screeched to a stop in front of Max My Tailor's modest establishment. They piled out headlong and stormed into the little shop.

Poor Max was petrified at their rush of questions.

"The—the suit, gentlemen?" stammered Max. "What suit, please?"

"You know, Max," Louie explained. "I gave it to you today to clean."

"Oh, that suit. Why, already they've collected it."

"Whaddya mean, collected it?" Joe Spain demanded.

"The cleaning company, mister. Cleaning I don't do here. I send it out. The Magnificent Cleansing and Dyeing. They do very high-class—"

"Who cares!" Joe Spain roared. "What's their address?"

Max My Tailor fished under his counter with trembling fingers and found a business card. Joe Spain snatched it.

"Fifteen blocks off!" he snorted. "Come on, you guys, let's go!"

Max My Tailor's shop was empty as suddenly as it had become full a minute before. A motor roared outside. Max wiped his brow with his handkerchief. "*Mutter Gottes im Himmel!*" he sighed.

LOUIE bit his lips as the limousine lurched around corners and shot through red lights. "Step on it!" Joe Spain kept urging. "They'll be at the post in the second any minute now!"

Finally the limousine skidded to a stop again.

"Here's the dump, boss," announced the driver.

"Well, then, what you waitin' for? Pile out!"

Joe Spain plunged up the steps, dragging Louie by the arm. His storm-troopers followed on his heels. They descended upon the small delivery-room of the Magnificent Cleansing and Dyeing Company, shoving customers left and right.

"You collected a suit from Max My Tailor by mistake," Joe Spain shouted at a frail girl clerk. "We want it, sudden!"

The girl went pale and weak in the knees. She gaped helplessly. A burly manager hurried to the firing-line.

"What's the trouble here?" he asked, surveying Joe Spain's mob suspiciously.

Joe repeated his demand with vigor.

"We'll try to check up on it for you, sir," the manager promised, firmly polite.

"Check up, hell! We want the suit. We can go in and identify it."

"Sorry, sir; no one is allowed back in the shop."

"That's your guess!" Joe Spain snarled. "Stand back now. We won't do no damage."

But the manager was disinclined to stand back. Instead he stepped directly in front of Joe Spain and glared.

"Oh, tough guy, eh?" said Joe. He glanced back at his henchmen and winked. "Leave him have it, Gus."

Gus shoved his hand in his coat pocket significantly. "One side, brother," he advised the manager.

The manager's eyes popped wide with alarm as he saw the angular bulge in Gus's pocket. He reached for twin handfuls of sky.

Joe Spain rushed past him through the door to the shop, still dragging Louie, who was nearly prostrate by now. Joe knocked half a dozen startled workers aside and glared around. He spied a huge tangled pile of suits on one of the tables. He shoved Louie to the pile.

"Pick it out, numskull! And make it fast or I'll rip you apart!"

Louie pawed through the pile frantically. Joe Spain stood at his side, harassing him. A small gent, who seemed to be in authority on the floor, approached to question their actions. All he received for his trouble was one of Joe Spain's beefy fists on his chin.

"Snap to it!" Joe Spain howled at the perspiring Louie.

Louie clawed away at the pile of garments, but it was like looking for an oyster in a stew.

Suddenly there were sounds of violent commotion from the delivery-room. Joe Spain cursed wildly and tapped Louie in the back. "Find that suit quick, you punk! Something's gone wrong!"

Louie clawed away faster and the next second uttered a gasp of relief. He pulled out a gray pencil-striped coat. "I got it! This is it!"

Joe Spain grabbed the coat and shoved

his hand in the breast pocket. His angry face lit up as he brought out a crisp, white envelope.

"That's it!" he yelled.

IT wasn't a moment too soon. There was a hasty scraping of feet behind them. they whirled to face two murderous automatics, manned by two of the city's sternest. Louie went so rigid he could scarcely lift his arms. Joe Spain cursed again, crumpled the envelope in his fist, and raised his hands.

"Okay, boys," barked one of the coppers. "Come along nice and take a ride."

"Listen, copper," Joe Spain pleaded. "It's a mistake, no kidding! On my Scout's honor, pal! We was just claimin' a suit."

"Sure, I know; but you won't need it after all. The state supplies 'em where you're goin'. Now step along like little soldiers."

Louie and Joe marched out of the building obediently. Out on the sidewalk they pushed through the curious crowd and got in the waiting squad car.

"You guys are being honored," they were told. "The rest of your bunch are doing the trip by wagon."

This gracious favor did not appear to make Joe Spain any more cheerful. He fidgeted nervously. "What time is it, Jack?" he asked the taller of their hosts.

"Jack" obligingly consulted his watch: "Five to three."

"*Oy!*" groaned Joe Spain. "It'll be post-time for the third any time now!" Anxious perspiration beaded his fat forehead as he ripped open the precious envelope. He took one look at the paper inside and let out a howl of misery.

"Colonel Corn!" he yelped, nearly weeping. "Third at Hialeah! The *third*, and they're probably already coming from the paddock!" He grabbed the tall cop's arm convulsively. "Listen, chum, I paid twenty-five C's for this hoss! It's the McCoy! Read the name on this paper! It's a boat-race, understand? They'll be at the post any minute now. You can clean up a sweet wad on this nag, no kiddin'—I'm giving you the tip free. Just let me get to a telephone, will you? Handcuff me and come with me if you want. But just gimme a chance at the phone!"

The tall cop smiled indulgently. "Tell it to the desk, Fatty. We'll be there in a second."

Louie's mind was extremely uneasy. Not only was he in the toils of the law, but the bottom had dropped out of his hunch. Colonel Corn in the third! Just his luck that the race was on the slant! Why couldn't they have sewed up some other race? There were six others! But no, they had to pick on his hunch race! He wished to heaven he'd never seen Joe Spain!

"As far as the car goes, kiddies," announced the tall copper. They scrambled out of the squad car and shuffled into the station-house. Joe Spain was still muttering hysterically about post-time.

IN the station-house were the rest of Joe Spain's sewing-circle, all looking very sheepish.

The two policemen prodded them up to the desk.

"Attempted assault with a dangerous weapon, Sergeant," the tall cop said. "Found a rod on this bird." He nodded at Gus. "The rest'll be accessories after the fact. Lucky we had that tip from Brick McCrehan, or they might've got away with it."

The desk-sergeant studied the bandits with beetling brows. He spied Joe Spain.

"Spain!" he gasped. "What's the racket?"

"Listen, Mr. Shea," Joe groaned piteously, "this is all nuts, I tell you!" He stepped to the desk and spoke in muffled tones. "I'll explain later, but lemma use the phone, will you? Look, I've got the winner in the third at Hialeah. It's worth thousands, Mr. Shea! They're going to the post any time now—if they ain't already. I paid twenty-five C's for this hoss, honest! Lemme make the call, will you, *please?*"

Sergeant Shea looked undecided for a moment, but then he said, "Why, that's your privilege, Spain. You can use the

phone like any other citizen. What you say is none of my business."

As Joe reached eagerly for the telephone Sergeant Shea mumbled in his ear, "Is it the real goods, Spain?"

"Positively, Sergeant. A boat race."

"No harm in booking me for ten bucks, eh? Nora's birthday tomorrow. Like to get her something nice."

"Sold!" Joe Spain whispered. He took Sergeant Shea's wrinkled ten-dollar note, and then barked a number into the mouthpiece.

Sergeant Shea surveyed the rest of the bandits fiercely.

"Sergeant," spoke up Louie, earnestly, "Sergeant, I'm not in on this, no kidding—"

"Shut up!" cautioned Sergeant Shea.

Joe Spain was mumbling excitedly into the phone. "Yeah, that's it. Up to ten grand . . . Yeah, spread it around as quick as you can. Every second counts . . . Right! Now hold this wire open and give me the calls on the race."

As the minutes passed silently the tension in the room increased. Joe Spain's ear was glued to the receiver, but he looked not a whit more strained than Sergeant Shea. Sergeant Shea knew what that ten dollars was meant for—Nora's dentist bill. And if he should come home without it, no amount of talk about good intentions and birthday presents would cool Nora Shea's violent indignation!

"Any news yet?" he whispered to Joe.

"Nope—but wait! Wait!" Joe Spain suddenly barked into the phone: "Yeah, I'm here . . . What? . . . At the post?" He turned to Sergeant Shea. "At the post," he repeated. He pressed the receiver closer to his ear. "What? . . . They're off?" His eyes widened with excitement as he nodded to the sergeant. "Good! . . Colonel Corn away fast! . . . Takes lead! . . . Go ahead, I'm listenin'!"

A short pause.

"Quarter call!" breathed Joe, in a trance. "What's that? . . . Colonel Corn on top? . . . Two lengths over Bus Boy? Swell! Keep comin'!"

Another pause. Sergeant Shea's face was glowing happily.

"Half call!" announced Joe Spain joyfully, no longer remembering to be secretive. "Colonel Corn by three lengths over Bus Boy!" He nodded his head impatiently.

"Stretch call! . . . Colonel Corn by four lengths over Whodunit! . . . Bus Boy dropped to third! . . . O. K., keep comin'!"

Sergeant Shea's eyes sparkled as he leaned forward for the final call. Joe Spain's hand trembled, and he dug the receiver hard into his ear.

"What's that?" he choked excitedly. "Colonel Corn . . . he what?"

JOE SPAIN'S whole fat body jittered with panic. "Stumbled?" he gasped hoarsely. "Colonel Corn stumbled? . . . He's shuffled back! . . . What! What! Whodunit passin'? . . . Bus Boy passin'! . . . Speak up, you mealy-mouthed punk! What! Ohhhhhh . . ."

Joe Spain slouched weakly against the desk. "Ten grand!" he moaned. "Ten grand gone! Two and a half more—gone!"

Sergeant Shea's face was still twisted in an expectant smile, but his eyes were empty. He'd forgotten to change his expression. In a moment he remembered. His face went murderously stiff.

"Who won!" he roared at Joe Spain.

"We lost!" Joe sobbed angrily. "A long shot came up fast at the finish—Laddybuck."

An ecstatic cheer rent the funereal silence.

"Hooray! Hooray for Laddy! I knew he'd come through!"

Sergeant Shea exploded. "I'll give you something to cheer about!" he hollered. "Lock 'em up, Murphy! The whole bunch of 'em, the cheap fakers! Lock 'em up quick! Ten bucks! Gone!"

Joe Spain caught his shoulder entreatingly. "Listen, Sergeant, you don't mean that—"

Sergeant Shea brushed him off furiously. "I'll show you what I mean, you crooked tout! Off with you before I lose my tem-

per!" He glared ferociously. "Ten bucks!"

"Sergeant!" yelled Louie, in a final protest, as Turnkey Murphy tried to shove him away with the rest. "Sergeant! I ain't with these birds, honest! I got nothing to do with—"

"Pipe down or we'll turn the hose on you!" Sergeant Shea growled.

Louie felt himself being pushed toward the cells. "Sergeant!" he pleaded, frantic.

"Keep that mugg quiet!" Sergeant Shea bellowed, and Murphy shoved his hand over Louie's mouth.

Suddenly another voice chimed in. The voice of a delivering angel. A voice that was music to Louie's tortured brain:

"Hold on a second, Murph!"

Officer Brick McCrehan stood in the outer doorway, just arrived at the station from his beat.

"Louie's all right," he assured them, chuckling at his friend's harassed countenance. "He's the guy these birds were after. Leave him go, Murph."

Long-Shot Louie straightened his tie and looked injured.

"I told you I wasn't in on it," he told Sergeant Shea accusingly.

"Sorry, pal," grumbled Sergeant Shea. "We all make mistakes."

"Fact is," Louie continued, "I even got a ticket on Laddybuck from this fat mugg here." He pointed to Joe Spain.

"It's a lie!" Joe Spain snarled. "I never wrote him no ticket!"

"Let's see it," said Sergeant Shea. Louie handed him the scrap of paper. Sergeant Shea examined it. He picked up the receiver of the phone, which was still off the hook.

"Hey, there!" he shouted. "Hey, are you still on the wire? . . . Well, how much did Laddybuck pay? . . . How much? . . . Okay." He hung up the receiver.

"Twenty bucks flat," he said. "That'll make it an even five hundred for this fifty buck ticket."

He turned to Joe Spain. "Pay off, Spain. Pay off snappy!"

"I won't do it!" Joe howled. "It's a frame! I never wrote him no ticket—"

"Frisk him," ordered Sergeant Shea brusquely.

Murphy did so, bringing forth a bulging wallet.

"Pay off our friend here," said Sergeant Shea.

The obedient Murphy counted out ten fifty dollar notes and handed them to Louie. Joe Spain's profane protests went entirely unheeded.

The smile on Louie's face was wide as a Hallowe'en pumpkin's.

"Thanks, Murph. And thank *you*, Joe. Sorry to see you looking so sick, pal. Maybe it's that old indigestion, eh?" Louie turned from the speechless Joe Spain. "Likewise, Sergeant," he added, "he's got the coat to my suit, too."

"You'll get everything that's coming to you," Sergeant Shea promised him, rather sourly. He was still thinking of Nora's dentist bill.

"Thanks again," said Louie. "And I swear right here and now that never again will I say you coppers haven't got plenty on the ball."

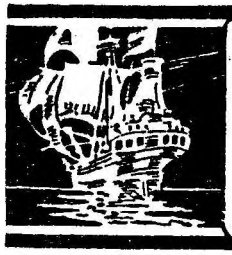
Brick McCrehan chuckled. "Speaking of the ball, Louie . . ."

"Oh, sure, the ball. How many tickets for that affair have you got on you, Brick?"

"About twenty. Why?"

"They're sold. And cheap at twice the price, kid!"

THE END



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

HERE'S the kind of magazine wanted by

F. D. BELL

Here is my own personal list of things I would like to see between the ARGOSY covers:

1. More stories by Theodore Roscoe; mainly, another serial about John Keats. I enjoyed "War Declared," but "The Kingdom of Hell" was the best of the two

2. A good adventure serial by J. Allan Dunn even if he uses his old "rich girl-poor boy" theme.

3. A continuance of the logger stories by Frank R. Pierce. By the way, is *Kentucky Logan* still making his moonshine?

4. More stories about that tattooed ape, *Bellow Bill Williams.*

5. Not more than one Western story in an issue. Tell W. C. Tuttle to keep *Henry* supplied with "prune juice."

6. Let's have more of Ted Copp's "racket" stories such as "The Diogenes Angle." I'd rather laugh at the crook than hate him

7. I'm glad to see that Fred MacIsaac is coming back.

8. True adventures like "White Adventure."

9. Another great Legion story by J. D. Newsom.

10. Not more than four serials in an issue.

11. A World War air story by George Bruce.

Terre Haute, Ind.

A PLEA for old friends from

MRS. IRVING MOOT

I have just finished Geo. F. Worts' "Mr. Hazeltine—Murderer" and I surely am glad to see *Mark Storm* get his at last. But I am scared sick for fear *Mr. Hazeltine* gets lost now. Tell Mr. Worts to get someone else for him to fight with or something, for he is far too good to let him get away.

It breaks my heart when one of the old friends get lost in the shuffle, as *Tarzan* was several years ago. Do you remember when *Tarzan* escaped from the city of the lions in the long, long ago that you promised us a sequel? I wonder if E. R. Burroughs let you down or did you forget? Oh, I hope you get it, for I really think E. R. B. is always at his best when he is accompanying *Tarzan* on his adventures.

And please don't forget *Mr. Hazeltine* nor let Mr. Worts forget either.

Oneida, N. Y.

AN old idea for something new from

ARTHUR BART

I've been reading ARGOSY for about five months, so I can't qualify for an "old-timers'" club, but I've been delighted with it so far. I managed to get many old issues and they too maintain ARGOSY's high standard. Your best characters are *Gillian Hazeltine, Peter the Brazen* and *Bill* and *Jim.*

How about printing a reissue of the first ARGOSY selling for 10 or 15c? I'm certain the great majority of your readers would like to have one.

Hollywood, Calif.

YES, we'll try to please a faithful reader,

S. F.

What's happened to A. Merritt? Is he dead or has he stopped writing fantastic stories? I can't remember when I've enjoyed a story quite as much as his "Creep, Shadow." I love creepy stories, and his takes the cake. Could you please get him to write a sequel to the aforementioned serial —also a sequel to "Burn, Witch, Burn!"

Annapolis, Md.

S. H. HAYNES

I have just finished reading the April 11 Argonotes department and does one of those letters burn me up! (This is but the most recent of about half a dozen that have flooded the ARGOSY lately.) This writer says:

"If there is one thing that gets my goat it is the continuous growling of somebody about criticism: Accuracy hounds make me sore as hell! Throw out the critics! Let's cut out the printed letters from censors! Etc. Etc!"

I'm afraid this would be a sorry looking world if there were none to criticize. Not only do these corrections and suggestions aid the authors and editor, but the readers as well. When "fact" is mentioned I expect truth. We all can learn by not only ours, but the other person's mistakes.

I also notice that everyone is courteous and constructive in his criticism and at the same time has numerous compliments to offer.

"LIQUID GOLD"

*SHOUTED MEN...*AWED BY THE MONEY-MAKING POWERS OF A STRANGE NEW FLUID DISCOVERED BY SCIENTIST

Takes Place of 26 Products in Home Competition Paralyzed—Sales Run Wild!

Sweeping the nation . . . salesmen dropping everything to grab the EASY money . . . factory swamped with orders. That's the record of KEMSOL in the short 90 days since it was announced to the American public. No wonder KEMSOL is shattering all records, pyramiding profits for salespeople, proving to be the greatest money-making opportunity in years. Read the astounding facts.

KEMSOL is new—does things differently—upsets all present methods of cleaning. Takes the place of soap flakes, soap powders, rug cleaners, window cleaners, water softeners, drain openers, laundry aids, deodorants, bluing, naphtha, ammonia, spot removers, etc. Imagine! This one fluid does the work of all these products—and does it quicker and with a big saving in time and drudgery. Unlike other inventions or discoveries, it throws no men out of work, but saves labor for the housewife who does all her own work anyhow. With the benefits it brings the housewife, it creates for you the greatest profit opportunity of a lifetime.

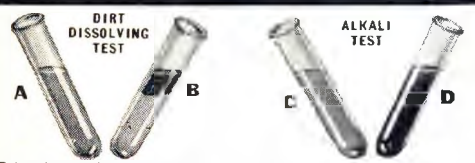
KEMSOL WORKS DIFFERENTLY

For generations people have cleaned by tediously and laboriously loosening dirt through backbreaking, back-aching, scrubbing, rubbing, or by applying mechanical means—to enable soap to float the dirt away. That's what you do when you clean with soap—you loosen dirt by rubbing or scrubbing so that soap can float it away. KEMSOL is revolutionary because it does not make you wear your fingers down loosening dirt. By harmless chemical action it D-I-S-S-O-L-V-E-S dirt, grease, and grime—M-E-L-T-S it away. This chemical action takes place almost instantaneously. Think of the millions of golden hours that KEMSOL'S chemical action will save daily for housewives, janitors, scrubwomen, etc. Then you will realize what a tremendous boon KEMSOL is to humanity. KEMSOL cannot harm any surface or fabric that water alone won't harm, because KEMSOL contains no alkali—the "jinx" in practically all cleaners—even many toilet soaps.

EXCEEDS PREDICTIONS

Let your imagination run wild and you can't think of anything that would fit in better with your ideas for making money than KEMSOL. It has everything you need for success. Experts predicted it would be a big money-maker from the first day it was announced. Already it has exceeded their predictions. From every indication, you should be set for life, if you grab this opportunity. But don't lose any time and let some other alert person in your territory steal a march on you.

WE FURNISH YOU WITH EVERYTHING TO MAKE THESE STARTLING TESTS



Tube A contains KEMSOL and water added to dirty, grimy crankcase oil. Notice from the green color that KEMSOL has dissolved both the oil and dirt. Tube B contains SOAP CHIPS and water added to crankcase oil. Notice the oil and dirt on top of the soap and water. It merely FLOATS the dirt and oil. See why KEMSOL is different and better than SOAP. We furnish you with test tubes, crankcase oil and KEMSOL to make this convincing test in your own home. Chemicals also furnished for a sensational water softening test that will leave you dumfounded.

Tube C contains KEMSOL, water, and four drops of Phenolphthalein. This chemical turns a solution PINK or RED if it contains ALKALI. There is no change of color when it is added to KEMSOL. Look at Tube C. It is clear. Now examine Tube D. It contains a solution of soap flakes. The Dark or Red shade proves that the flakes contain ALKALINE material. Take any Soap Flakes, Chips, Powders, Cleaning Preparations and add this chemical and see it turn PINK or RED. KEMSOL'S color remains clear. We furnish everything to make these tests.

MAIL COUPON GOOD FOR SPECIAL OFFER

The story of KEMSOL is too big to be told here. Its money making possibilities are too great to be enumerated in this space. The coupon below will bring you FREE facts, without obligation. Mail it today—now. Tear it out before you turn this page.

Ogden Chemical Laboratories
306-E East 3rd St., Cincinnati, Ohio

TESTING CHEMICALS AND SALES OUTFIT OFFER

Ogden Chemical Laboratories, 306-E East 3rd St., Cincinnati, O.
Send me details about KEMSOL and the Testing Chemicals and Sales Outfit which you will give me, so I can test KEMSOL in my home and prove its money-making powers.

Name .....

Address .....

I Want Men

To Show Long Wanted BUSINESS DISCOVERY

Make Up To $46.00 IN A DAY!

Men! Your opportunity is here! A sensational new discovery, needed and eagerly sought for by every business man, merchant, manufacturer, and professional man, now offers you the opportunity to earn as much money in a week as many men earn in six! This discovery so effective, it is used constantly by many of the nation's largest firms, yet works wonders for any size concern, saving hundreds of dollars for even the smallest users. If you are dissatisfied with ordinary earnings in ordinary lines, I offer you the chance to step into a new, big money field in which earnings of up to $46.00 in a day—or $275.00 a week—can be made in only 3 easy sales a day!

Read This PROOF of Tremendous Cash Earnings

"$135.00 in 10 Days!"

"My net earnings in 10 days with your discovery were approximately $135.00. This certainly beats any other items I've sold in the past." L. E. McGlaughlin, Ill.

"$2900 to $3800 Per Month!"

"I have never heard of a proposition that has been greeted with so much confidence and enthusiasm. I regard it as THE step whereby I may achieve an income of $2,000.00 to $3,000.00 a month for myself." Wm. A. Forant, Col.

"$46.00 in Less Than 2 Hours!"

"I'm mighty glad to tell you what a fast seller I've found your discovery to be. I made $46.00 with it in less than two hours." T. D. McCarthy, Wis.

"$150.00 in 4 Days!"

"I sure did hit on a gold mine with your discovery. As you know, the first four days I was out I made $150.00. I'm 100% sold on your Company." M. L. Livengood, Ind.

Guaranteed to Return 12½ Times Its Cost to Customer

With this remarkable development you do not ask your customer to pay out money. It actually does not cost the customer a single penny! Instead you PROVE that by its very nature, this extraordinary discovery MUST BRING MONEY IN and that profits are increased from the first day it is installed. It can't fail! That's why we GUARANTEE that it will return 12½ times its cost to the customer or we refund his money WITH 6% INTEREST.

Gives Better Results at A Saving of 80 to 90 Per Cent!

The plain, unvarnished, PROVABLE facts about this amazing discovery close sale after sale for you without the need for "high-pressure" methods or super-salesmanship. For example, you lay before a garage owner undeniable proof that a similar business paid $152.00 for work that our discovery can do for only $10.00! Or you show that this installation can do, for only $20.00, work for which a doctor paid $434.12! Or you show proof that a college paid $1,063.00 for services this discovery does for only $20.00! And you show many other records like these from all professions and lines of business—records that quickly convince any prospect of the money-saving, profit-earning possibilities in installing this revolutionary discovery.

Unique FREE TRIAL Plan Makes Sales for You

With this amazing business development you not only present convincing proof of its remarkable effectiveness, but also, through our unique Free Trial plan your customer pays nothing until the money it produces is actually coming in. IT SELLS AND PAYS FOR ITSELF! You then keep up to 70 cents of every $1 he pays for it! And every customer means constant repeat business for you. For once this discovery is used the business or professional man keeps using it for years, bringing you a steady, ever-increasing income that can mean financial independence for life. In the column at the left are given the earning records of just a few of hundreds of men who have been started on the high road to prosperity with this sensational development. This opportunity can be YOUR opportunity!

No Experience Needed—Start Without Risking a Penny!

I want men now—TODAY—to place this discovery with business and professional men everywhere, and cash in on the extraordinary quick-profit opportunity it offers. No previous experience necessary. We train you and supply everything. Many men who joined us without previous selling experience are now in the high income class and well on the way to permanent prosperity and independence. This opportunity is now open to you with our exclusive franchise in your territory. You start without risking a single penny. Limited space here gives you only the high lights of this unusual proposition. The complete facts will amaze you even more. Mail the coupon for these facts today. SEND NO MONEY! Simply mail the coupon and prepare to start on the money-making career you have dreamed of.

THOMAS YOUNG, General Manager
105 W. Adams St., Dept. G-41, Chicago, Ill.

MAIL COUPON Now!

Thomas Young, General Manager,
105 W. Adams St., Dept. G-41,
Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: Please send me full details of your amazing money-making proposition, whereby I can make as much as $275.00 a week on only 3 sales a day!

Name .....

Address .....

Town ..... State .....