BERLIN MASQUERADE, A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

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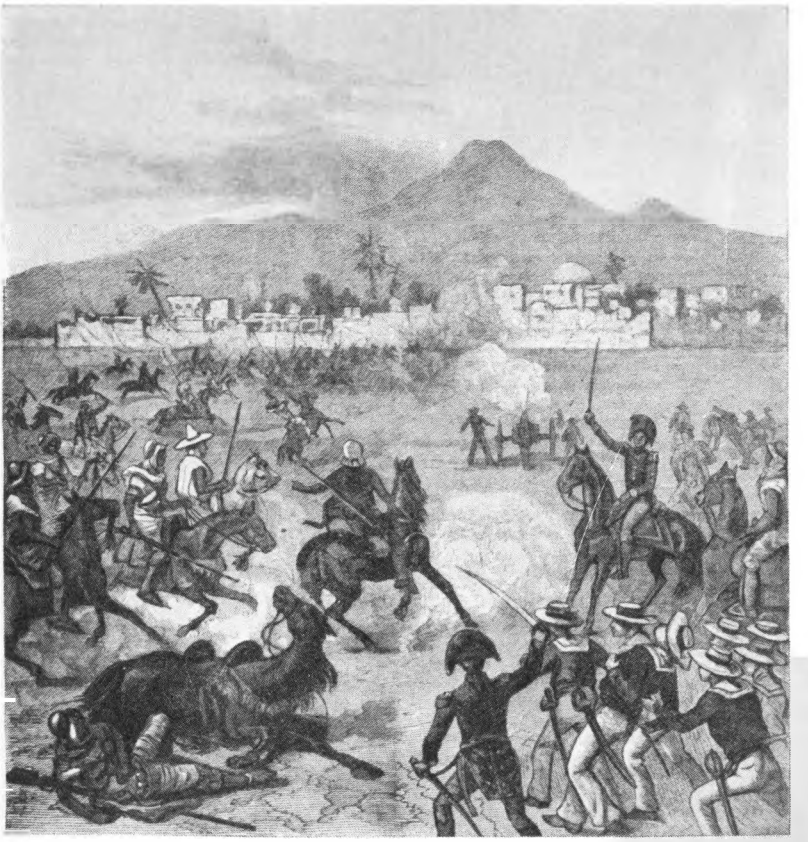
A story of the Viking Invaders of America in 1362

FREDERICK PAINTON • FULTON GRANT • H. BEDFORD-JONES

"Luck of the Spindrift," a novel by MAX BRAND

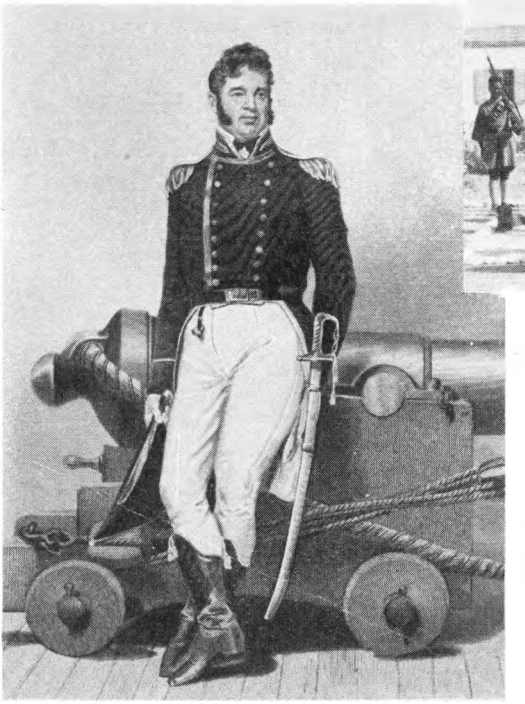


An old print showing the American assault on the Libyan town of Derna—an important place in the present British campaign against the Italians.

Culver Service

Our Battle of Derna

Below: Colonel Furlong, then military attaché with the British in north Africa, is the modest background figure at the left wearing a campaign hat. In the foreground are General Allenby and an Arab chieftain.



Captain Bainbridge, who with his three hundred men was made captive in Tripoli when the *Philadelphia* ran aground. Eaton landed with a meager force near Alexandria and fought his way six hundred miles overland to their rescue.

Culver Service

"My Head or Yours"

This was the answer given by the Tripolitan commander at Derna when the American General Eaton demanded his surrender.

By CHARLES WELLINGTON FURLONG

"WE were shown a huge, shaggy beast, sitting on his rump upon a low bench covered with a cushion of embroidered velvet, with his hind legs gathered up like a tailor or a bear. On our approach to him, he reached out his forepaw as if to receive something to eat.

"'Kiss the Dey's hand!'

"The Consul-General bowed elegantly, kissed it and we followed his example. The animal seemed at that moment to be in a harmless mode; he grinned several times, but made very little noise."

The writer was Captain William Eaton, a former United States Army officer who had served under Washington in the Revolution, and had fought in two Indian wars. Now he was United States Consul at Tunis. The "shaggy beast" was the arrogant and piratical Dey of Algiers, with whom on February 22, 1799, Eaton had an audience, in company with Consul-General Captain Richard O'Brien of Algiers, and James L. Cathcart, our Consul to Tripoli.

"Can any man," he further recorded, "believe that this elevated brute has seven kings of Europe, two republics and a continent tributary to him, when his whole naval force is not equal to two line-of-battle ships? It is so!"

There was little doubt as to what Eaton thought of the whole tribute-paying system, under which American and European merchantmen and their crews suffered. His two colleagues, O'Brien and Cathcart, had told him of their own terrible experiences as slaves.

The former, when captain of the ship *Dauphin* of Philadelphia, and the latter when a seaman on the *Maria* of Boston, were captured on the high seas by the Algerines, and taken to Algiers. From their own lips he had heard how they were stripped to the skin, given filthy rags to wear and brought before the Dey; how, half fed, with an iron ring on one leg as a badge of slavery, they labored until ransomed.

Eaton's major problem, like that of our other consuls to the Barbary States, was fighting for the freedom of the sea in the Mediterranean. While blockades by our Mediterranean Squadron hampered the Barbary corsairs and their sea-borne trade, their Oriental potentates sat unafraid, safely ashore in their palatial castles. Eaton had an idea. He proposed to raise an army and attack by land.

After Eaton had served six years as our Consul at Tunis, an important incident occurred, *i.e.:* the capture of the U. S. Frigate *Philadelphia* by the corsairs of Tripoli, the imprisonment of her officers and the enslaving of her crew of 307 men.* This not only brought Eaton's plans to fruition, and changed Eaton's entire career, but recorded one of the least heralded but most important episodes of our military history: *an American Expeditionary Force in the Sahara.*

After the loss of the *Philadelphia,* Commodore Preble (in command of the American squadron), tightened the blockade of Tripoli, resulting in worse treatment by Yusuf Bashaw of the crew of the *Philadelphia,* their slave labor increased, but their meager rations further cut down. One of them, William Ray, says: "We were so hungry that . . . . I was glad to pick up the peels of oranges in the dirty streets and eat them, filth and all."

IT was now the fall of 1804; the United States and Tripoli had been at war since May, 1801, when Yusuf Bashaw cut down the American flagstaff, and Consul General Cathcart had left that capital.

Eaton himself had taken an active interest in the course of events. It was from Eaton's office that a published circular was issued, not only declaring Trip-

(Please turn to page 4)

*See description in "The Most Daring Act" by same author, in March issue of BLUE BOOK.

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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Short Stories and Novelettes

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Except for stories of Real Experiences, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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Next Month:

"The Man Who Couldn't Lose"

By Fulton Grant

Also specially interesting contributions from James Francis Dwyer, Hugh Pentecost, Robert Mill, Max Brand and many other able writers.

Culver Service

GENERAL EATON.

(Continued from page 1)

oli to be in a state of blockade, but refusing Tunisian vessels passports for that port. It was Eaton who, supporting Commodore Dale in his request for more ships for bombarding Tripoli, wrote to Congressman Samuel Lyman that "Dale considered landing a force on the coast in conjunction with naval attacks would have a good effect," and continued: "I am of the same opinion, and am so confident of its practicability, that I will volunteer in the enterprise, in any character consistent with my former military rank and present station, with 2,000 active, light troops."

A campaign of launching inexperienced men on the Tripolitan Sahara was not to be taken lightly. But Cathcart and Eaton had put their heads together and evolved a unique plan. This was to enlist Hamet Karamauli, ex-Bashaw of Tripoli, whom his brother Yusuf, the ruling Bashaw, had deposed and exiled. This accomplished, Hamet's adherents would be rallied about a nucleus of Americans. The expedition under the American flag would then march from the east, on Tripoli, depose Yusuf, free the officers and crew of the *Philadelphia*, put Hamet on the throne and conclude with him a treaty of peace. Hamet, then an exile in Tunis, whom Eaton took into his confidence, expressed his willingness to coöperate.

Hamet himself, of a vacillating disposition, caused Eaton his first worry, for on his return from Tunis after a much-needed rest in Leghorn, he found Hamet about to embark for Derna, the capital of Cyreanica, in eastern Tripolitania, the Beyship of which had been offered him by his brother Yusuf Bashaw.

But Eaton suspected it was only a ruse of Yusuf's to get Hamet in his power, and persuaded Hamet to abandon his plan. Restless under Eaton's surveillance, Hamet decided to go to Malta. Eaton was fully determined to arrest Hamet to save him from his brother, should he attempt to go to Derna; but in the fall of 1802, Eaton learned the bird had flown, having accepted Yusuf's offer to become ruler of Derna. A year later Hamet fled to Egypt, leaving Derna in the hands of his enemies.

In a letter to the Secretary of State in June 1802, Eaton had reported the blockade of Tripoli the previous winter and spring as being very lax. This reflected on Capt. Samuel Barron of the *Philadelphia*, who was on blockade duty at that time. Through this and other criticism, Eaton's relations with certain naval officers were such that his plans for reinstating Hamet as Bashaw of Tripoli met with little encouragement. Meantime the crew of the *Philadelphia* suffered the tortures of hell in Tripoli.

ON March 30, 1803, Eaton sailed for the United States, arriving in Boston May 5, and went directly to Washington to present his case personally before President Jefferson and Congress. He succeeded in arousing a fair amount of interest in his plan of coöperation with Hamet Karamauli and an American land expedition, with the result that he was appointed as Navy agent to carry out the plan to put the ex-Bashaw Hamet back on his throne and depose his brother Yusuf.

Captain Samuel Barron, who had also returned home, had been promoted to Commodore, ordered to organize a new Mediterranean squadron and to relieve Preble, then in command in the Mediterranean. On July 4, 1804, Barron set sail for Tripoli with the U.S.S. *President* as his flagship, with Eaton aboard.

Eaton's first move was to locate the elusive Hamet, whom he had learned was still somewhere in Egypt. So, by Barron's secret verbal orders, Capt. Hull of the brig *Argus* was to land Eaton at Alexandria to search for Hamet Bashaw. Also, Eaton was assured of the support of vessels of Barron's squadron in any attack that Eaton might make against Derna or Bengasi, to reëstablish Hamet in the Regency of Tripoli.

On the 26th of November, 1804, the *Argus* with Eaton aboard, entered the ancient port of Alexandria, saluting the Turkish admiral's flag with seventeen guns, as she passed by his ship of the line. Ashore next day, Eaton felt that at last he had really started to carry out his plan, a plan which resulted in one of the most unique parallels of history.

For today we find Britain's Army of the Nile marching over the same route, through the same towns, in the same direction and for the same objectives—Derna, Bengasi, Tripoli—as that of Eaton nearly a century and a half ago. The main constituents of the forces are the same; white Christian forces supported by Arab and other Moslem contingents. We also find that General Sir Archibald Wavell's forces, like Eaton's, have depended on the coöperation of their naval vessels, not only to blockade the main ports of the enemy, particularly that of Tripoli, the capital, but to help supply the land forces and to coöperate with them in attack. Probably as you read this article, General Wavell's forces will be attacking or occupying Derna with naval coöperation, just as Eaton did so many long years ago. . . .

I have traveled by car with Allenby over hundreds of miles of this terrain, offering good traction for mechanized forces. I have traveled with Saharan trade caravans and alone with Arabs. I have listened to the weird rhythmic cadence of the desert songs of the caravan men, under the stars, just as Eaton, O'Bannon and that courageous little American army, with its nucleus of marines, must have listened on many a night. I have fought sleep in my saddle in the shimmering heat of midsummer, felt my horse sink under me and die the day it registered 155 in the sun. So, with a knowledge of these conditions, I bow my head in humble tribute to that heroic New Englander, William Eaton, who assumed the responsibility of leading an untrained force under inconceivable difficulties, through this inhospitable land, to victory—then to be robbed of the fruits of that victory.

FROM Alexandria the *Argus*, with Eaton aboard, sailed around to Rosetta, at the mouth of the Nile. Eaton went ashore to pay a visit to the battleground where three years before the British had driven out the French, and lugged off the Rosetta Stone to the British Museum. He saw ground still covered with human skeletons. He found Egypt in the grip of a war between the Turks and Mamelukes of Egypt. A renegade contingent of five hundred Albanian deserters (Arnaut Turks) were marauding over the country; and the wild Arabs had moved in toward peaceful villages of the Nile, and threatened the safety of both Europeans and natives.

Here Eaton learned that Hamet was in Egypt, but had joined with the Mamelukes against the established Turkish authorities, and with a few Tripolitans and Arab auxiliaries was actually besieged in the village of Miniet, two hundred and fifty miles up the Nile.

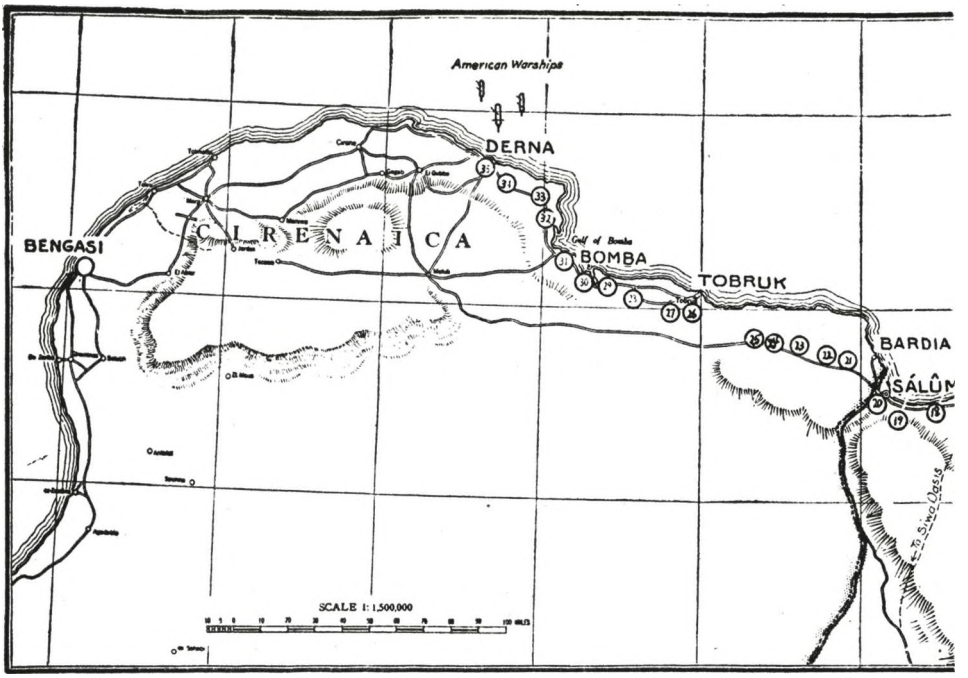
TO run the gantlet of the Turkish lines and reach Hamet Bashaw was a problem in itself; but to get the ex-Bashaw out of the besieged town, down the Nile and out of Egypt proper, seemed an insuperable task. But Eaton pushed on ahead. Where subterfuge or force would have brought disaster, Eaton's honesty, tact and diplomacy won out.

Letters of recommendation from Sir Alexander Bell in Malta to his Britannic Majesty's Consul in Alexandria and Resident at Cairo helped pave the way. On landing at Rosetta, Eaton was officially met by Major Misset, the British Resident from Cairo, who did everything possible to facilitate Eaton's plans.

Eaton's first move was to charter a forty-ton Nile river-boat with which to reach Cairo. Major Misset directed his secretary, Captain Vincents, to accompany Eaton in another vessel. On Eaton's boat were Lieut. O'Bannon of the Marine Corps, Midshipman George Mann from the *Argus*, Eli Danielson, Eaton's son-in-law, and Mr. Farquhar, an English recruit he had taken on as a sort of quartermaster, Captain Selim Comb, a janissary, and Ali a dragoman, with six servants, all armed.

On Captain Vincents' boat was Dr. Mendrici, who came to meet Eaton in Rosetta. He was formerly physician to the Bey of Tunis and a friend of Eaton, now chief physician to the Turkish Viceroy of Egypt. All were well armed, and the boat itself mounted two swivel guns.

Eaton found the Secretary of State and two ex-governors of Hamet Bashaw in Cairo, "destitute of everything but resentment." He learned that their sovereign, since leaving Derna, after many vicissitudes, was left no alternative but to join the Mamelukes. Access to Hamet



seemed impossible, even communication difficult. But Eaton's mind was made up. He would throw himself on the honor and hospitality of the Turkish sovereign of the country.

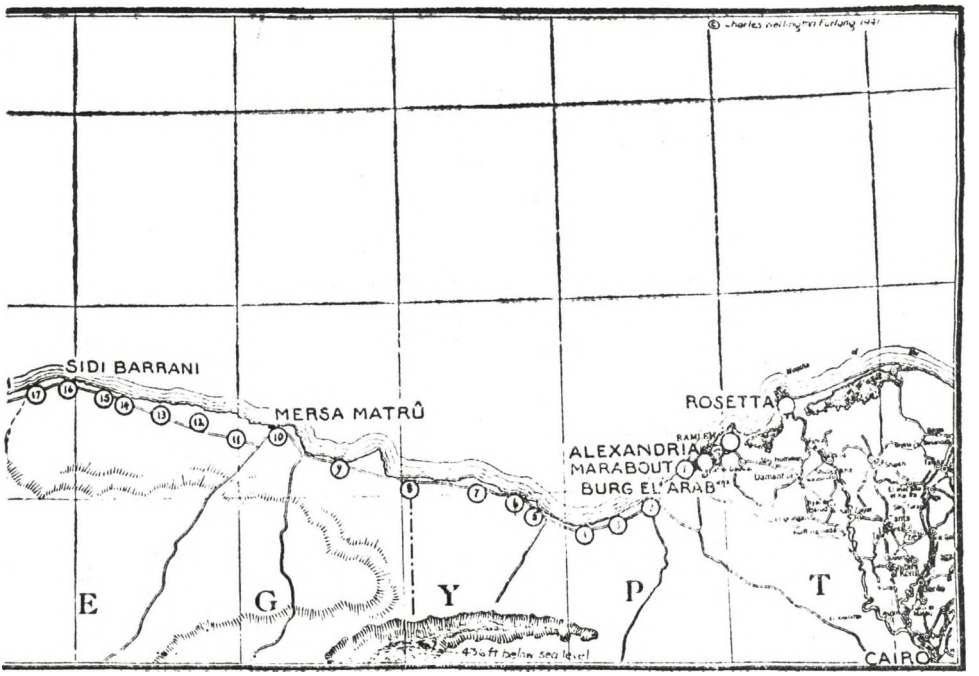
The next evening at eight, six richly caparisoned Arabian horses and a large escort of attendants arrived in the courtyard of the British Residency where Eaton was quartered, to conduct them to the Palace. Accompanied by Captain Vincents and Dr. Mendrici in their official uniforms, the procession, under flambeaux and torches, passed through a mile and a half of spectators *"curious to see the men who had come from a new world,"* then through the Citadel Gate by lines of troops. Dismounting, they passed up flights of stairs, flanked by superbly armed young men in rich Turkish uniforms, and were ushered into a spacious hall.

With dignified affability His Highness rose from a sofa of embroidered purple and damask cushions, and taking Eaton by the hand, seated him next to himself, and the other gentlemen on the right and left. After the general news of the day had been discussed over coffee, pipes and sherbet, the Viceroy signaled to the court to retire, leaving the visitors alone with himself and his interpreter.

Eaton frankly laid the whole situation before him. Despite Hamet's unfortunate relationship with the Mamelukes, through the intervention of Dr. Men-

GENERAL EATON'S 600-MILE

(1) Mar. 3. Delayed through embezzlement of commissary's funds. Sheik El-Taiib makes fresh demands for cash.
(2) Mar. 6-8. Arab's Tower. Assembled total expedition of 400 men here.
(3) Mar. 8-10. Camped on high bluff, good water. Camel drivers and Arab footmen revolted, mutiny suppressed.
(4) Mar. 10. Camped after 12-mile march.
(5) Mar. 12. Camped after 20-mile march.
(6) Mar. 13. Ancient Greek castle. Courier from Derna. Christian caravan escort saved from massacre.
(7) Mar. 13. Camped by drinking-water in numerous wells of great depth cut through solid rock.
(8) Mar. 14. Marched 26 miles, dividing ridge between Tripoli and Egypt.
(9) Mar. 15. Rain-water preserved in natural reservoirs excavated in rocks by cascades during winter rains. Mar. 16. Camp inundated.
(10) Mar. 18-21. Found a modern castle or *fonduk* (caravansary). Vestiges of ancient ruins, gardens, mansions, pleasure houses. Antony and Cleopatra trysting-place. Caravan chiefs refused to go further. Eaton destitute of cash, March delayed 3 days. Eaton stops rations, quells revolt.
(11) Mar. 21. 50 camels prevailed to return. Marched 13 miles.
(12) Mar. 22-27. Many Arabs of Oued Ali tribe here. Vast herds. First Christians ever seen by these wild people. Dispatched courier to Hull at Bomba.
(13) 47 tents of Arabs joined. News brought Yusuf Bashaw's army few days' march west of Derna. Excitement.
(14) Mar. 27. Half the Arabs under Taiib start back for Egypt.
(15) Mar. 27. Taiib and Arabs returned.
(16) Mar. 28-29. Hamet Bashaw gets cold feet. Takes away horses from Eaton's officers. Eaton threatens force. Bashaw capitulates. Latest recruits start back toward Egypt. Arabs brought back by an officer of Hamet.
(17) Mar. 30-Apr. 2. Constant depredations by Arabs. Bashaw absent to bring back deserting sheiks. Eaton wins out in dangerous showdown with Sheik Taiib. Bashaw and sheiks return.



MARCH ACROSS THE SAHARA

Eaton's expedition now totals 1200 people. Apr. 3. Sent caravan 5 days to Siwa Oases for dates and to rejoin Eaton at Bomba.

(18) Apr. 4. Capt. Selim Comb shot a 5-foot wildcat here. Vast ruins.

(19) Apr. 5. Remarkable ancient castle with immense cistern cut in solid rock. Greek coins. Arab thieves stole 9 of Bashaw's horses.

(20) Apr. 6. Water here heated and saline. Horses and people have not drunk for 42 hours. Fight at cistern for nauseous, fetid water.

(21) Apr. 7. Excellent feed, no water.

(22) Apr. 8. Water, thirst quenched. Bashaw and Arabs revolt. Troops line up, Eaton averts serious situation.

(23) Apr. 9. Two dead men in water cistern but water used.

(24) Apr. 10. On half rations. Both Arabs and cannoneers threaten revolt. Courier arrives from Bomba, American vessels there. Bashaw attacked by spasms and vomiting.

(25) Apr. 11. Gained only 5 miles. No water.

(26) Apr. 12. Troops eat uncooked rice, Arab tribes exhausted by fatigue and hunger.

(27) Apr. 13. Bedouins unable to march. Bashaw kills a baggage camel for food.

(28) Apr. 14. Come upon good feed and water.

(29) Apr. 15. Reach Bomba. No water, no trace of a human and no vessels in sight. Turmoil and resentment among Arabs. Vessels appear next morning. Situation saved.

(30) Apr. 16. Eaton moved camp to water here, goes aboard *Argus*. On 17th sloop *Hornet* arrives.

(31) Apr. 18-22. Good water, good harbor and landing. Refreshed famished army.

(32) Apr. 23. First natural spring since leaving Egypt.

(33) Apr. 24. Beautiful red cedars, cultivated fields, 5 hours from Derna. Yusuf's army approaches Derna. Chiefs alarmed, Bashaw despondent. Arabs mutinied.

(34) Apr. 25-27. Eaton's last camp site overlooking Derna after a 600-mile march across the Saharan Desert. Derna captured by General Eaton, supported by *Argus*, *Nautilus*, and *Hornet*, April 27, 1805.

(35) Occupied Derna during negotiation.

drici, who had great influence at court, and his own persuasiveness, he obtained from the Viceroy a letter of amnesty for Hamet, permission for him to pass through the Turkish army and leave Egypt unmolested.

Eaton had already dispatched letters to Hamet by two secret couriers from Alexandria and Rosetta, but now sent two more from Cairo. Finally the Viceroy's letter of amnesty and passport of safe-conduct were dispatched in quadruplicate to Hamet Bashaw by as many different couriers.

After Eaton diplomatically hurdled many obstacles, and circumvented the attempts of the French consul to block his plans, Hamet Bashaw at last arrived in early February at an appointed spot on the edge of the desert, about eight miles up the Nile, and Eaton's search for the refugee Bashaw was rewarded.

It was planned that Hamet go aboard the *Argus* and be landed in the vicinity of Derna, rally about him thousands of Barbary Arabs and capture that city. But the French consul at Alexandria, by charging "British spies," had deliberately aroused the suspicions of the governor of that city and of the admiral of the port. So when Eaton arrived with Hamet Bashaw and his suite at the English Cut, between Aboukir Bay and Lake Moeriotis, they were halted, and not only prevented from entering the city, but from embarking on the *Argus*.

Hamet Bashaw had been in favor, right along, of marching to Derna, Bengasi and Tripoli by land. In view of this and other circumstances, Eaton now decided on this course. At a conference, Eaton representing the United States of America, and His Highness Hamet Karamauli representing the sovereignty of Tripoli, drew up a convention dated at Alexandria, Egypt, February 13, 1805, which both signed and sealed, and which was witnessed by P. N. O'Bannon, lieutenant of marines, Dr. Francisco Mendrici and Pascal Paoli Peck, a sergeant of marines.

This convention, beginning with the Arabic salutation, *"God is Infinite,"* provided the terms of agreement of cooperation and friendship between the United States and Hamet Bashaw, the conditions under which Yusuf Bashaw was to be deposed and Hamet reëstablished on the throne, of future relations between Hamet Bashaw and the United States, and perpetual recognition of the American consular flag in Tripoli. William Eaton was to be recognized "as General and Commander in Chief of the land forces, which are, or may be, called into service against the common enemy, and his said Highness Hamet Bashaw, engaged that his own Subjects shall respect, and obey him as such." The last article provided that, "The convention shall be submitted to the President of the U.S. for his ratification: *in the meantime there shall be no suspense in the operations.*"

THERE was also an additional secret article in which Hamet agreed to use his utmost exertions to effect the surrender, to the Commander in Chief of the American forces in the Mediterranean, not only of the usurper Yusuf Bashaw and his family, but his chief admiral, the Scotch renegade Peter Lisle—who went under the name of Murad Rais—to be held as hostages, and a guarantee of the observance of the stipulations of the convention.

The commissaries and quartermaster's department, which involved the buying of the provisions, was entrusted to Mr. Richard Farquhar, to whom Eaton had advanced the sum of eighteen hundred and fifty dollars, nearly all of which Farquhar had embezzled or misapplied, in consequence of which he was discharged, and Eaton himself attended to the purchase of all provisions from thenceforward, throughout the entire expedition in the desert. . . .

It was now the second of March. Everything was in readiness to start, except transporting their provisions from the Port of Alexandria. At last the first lot of provisions of rice, Arab bread, etc., arrived by Nile boat at the Port of Alexandria. But here they were promptly seized by the customs authorities. A military cordon was thrown around the city, and the Bashaw's servants, who were just departing for Hamet's camp with the baggage, were arrested and imprisoned, and no one but American officers allowed to pass through the lines.

Turkish patrols even began to advance toward Hamet's camp, which was also Eaton's base; and it was only the firm conduct of Lt. O'Bannon that prevented Hamet and his entire outfit from fleeing into the desert. But through the influence of the British Consul these barriers were removed.

EATON engaged an Arab Sheik, El-Taiib, to provide a freight caravan of one hundred ninety camels at eleven dollars per head, but just as they were about to start, the Sheik raised fresh demands for cash, which Eaton managed to satisfy with promises. This delay overcome, three and a half months after Eaton's arrival in Egypt, he at long last broke camp on March 6, 1805. An American bugle sounded "Forward, march!" and the start of the American Mediterranean Expeditionary Force through the Egyptian and Libyan deserts began.

Two days' march over the desert brought the last of their *djemel* (baggage camels) to Burg-el-Arab, a castle forty miles due east from Alexandria. The ruins of this tower and its thirty-two-foot-high bastioned walls can be seen on a ridge of freestone mountain from far out at sea. (Despite its name, the architecture of Burg-el-Arab is Greek.)

Eaton at once arranged his caravan and organized his force. What a picturesque, motley horde must have taken up the march the next day! Eaton and his Americans in the lead with a few mounted Arab scouts in white burnouses and carrying long flintlocks, as a vanguard and flankers. Directly behind the Americans came Hamet Bashaw, mounted in state under his green umbrella, surrounded by Tripolitan horsemen, and with his personal baggage on camels and donkeys under his eye.

Following in command of the Turkish janissary Capt. Selim Comb, with Lts. Conant and Robb, and on their heels a

company of Greeks under Capt. Luco Ulovix and Lt. Constantine. Bringing up the rear were Sheiks El-Taiib, Mahomet and their Arab horsemen, some of whom, with a few Christians, guarded the heavily burdened camels and asses of the caravan that formed the tail end of our first and only A.E.F. in Africa.

The baggage-camels' pace of two and a half to three miles an hour, and the presence or absence of water, determined the day's marching. Due to a late start, the first day netted only five miles, but brought them to good water near the shore; here they camped on an elevated bluff overlooking the sea. But the next night found them still camped in the same spot, due to the camel- and horse-owners becoming mutinous because Eaton refused them advance pay. This was caused by the Sheik El-Taiib, who had insinuated that the Christians would defraud them; and on the day following, they openly revolted. Coupled with this, Hamet seemed irresolute and despondent.

"Money . . . More money!" was their cry, and after the entire forenoon was lost and no solution in sight, Eaton ordered all the Christians under arms, feinted a counter-march and threatened to abandon the Bashaw and the whole expedition unless they advanced immediately. This succeeded, the mutiny was suppressed, and they made twelve miles by nightfall.

ON the following day they marched twenty miles, the next twenty-one, then twenty-five. The route led through low sand valleys and rocky desert plains. On the third day a horseman appeared over the horizon. He was a courier from Derna, with a message for Hamet Bashaw, that informed him the entire province of Derna was for him and arming in his defense, and the Bey of the city imprisoned in his castle. This later proved to be a lie.

At this news the entire Tripoline contingent at the head of the line with Eaton and the Bashaw went wild with enthusiasm, and staged for their benefit a *feu de joie* or powder play, racing their horses and recklessly firing their long flintlock guns. The uninitiated marines gazed in open-mouthed astonishment, but when those who were in the rear with the baggage-camels heard the firing, they thought the entire expedition was being attacked by wild desert Arabs, and so in order to come in on the loot, they started to disarm and put to death the Christians who escorted the caravan. Fortunately, an Arab of some importance insisted on delaying their execution until they found out the cause of the shooting.

Eaton's first objective was the Arab village of Bomba, about five hundred forty miles westward, where Capt. Hull, with the *Argus*, was to meet him with supplies, money and reinforcements.

Their day's march varied from ten or twelve to twenty-six miles. Once they moved only five. Because of mutinies and desertion of their Arabs, a number of times they did not move at all for two or three days. Almost invariably Eaton discovered Sheik El-Taiib was responsible.

AFTER twelve days of marching, the expedition arrived at a castle which Eaton said the Arabs called Masroschi; at another time he spelled it Massarah. This place was no other than Mersa Matruh, once a favorite trysting-place of Antony and Cleopatra. He describes the ancient ruins of gardens, mansions and pleasure-houses in a cultivable valley. Near Mersa Matruh, high wind, thunderstorms and incessant rain forced a hasty removal to higher ground of their inundated camp.

(Today along Eaton's route from Alexandria to Mersa Matruh runs a desert railway. The British chose this as railhead—their first point of defense against Italy's advancing Libyan army; for here the bluffs, which are strongly fortified, include the castle, and overlook and control the broad flat valley below and the caravan route from the West. When I was serving with Allenby, Mersa Matruh was the headquarters of the Western Egyptian Camel Corps; and the ancient castle crowning the escarpment must have looked the same as it did to Eaton when he passed through.)

This point, alleged the owners of the baggage-camels, was as far as they had agreed with the Bashaw to go. They decided to return to Egypt, and demanded their pay, which Eaton planned to give them at Bomba. Eaton's own cash was reduced to three Venetian sequins, but with money borrowed from the Christian officers and men he managed to raise six hundred and seventy-three dollars, which he turned over to Hamet Bashaw. This, added to money Hamet had raised among his own people, met the claims of the caravan chiefs, who promised to go two days' march farther, where Eaton expected to find Arabs and hire another caravan.

That night, their hands on the money, all but forty of the rascals slipped off for Egypt; the next night the remaining forty followed suit, and Eaton found the whole camp in a turmoil. El-Taiib and other sheiks, including the Bashaw, resolved to go no further until assured of the arrival of the American warships at Bomba.

A rumor, traced to Sheik El-Taiib, had been circulated, that a Moroccan pilgrim on his way to Mecca reported a force of eight hundred cavalry and numerous footmen, sent out by Yusuf Bashaw from Tripoli, had already passed Bengasi to the defense of Derna. Eaton discovered this to be a plot of Taiib and others, in which he even suspected Hamet himself.

Eaton decided to take all the supplies, fortify himself with the Christians in the castle until a naval detachment could come to their relief. At midnight he called a conference with the Arab chiefs in the Bashaw's tent. When they refused to coöperate, he told them, to their amazement and confusion, he had ordered all rations stopped, walked out abruptly and retired to his own tent.

His action resulted in the return of fifty camels.

"We have marched," he wrote in his journal that night, "200 miles, through an inhospitable waste of world; without seeing the habitation of an animated being or the tracks of man, except where superstition has marked her lonely steps . . . opened a water source which now allays the thirst of pilgrims, bound to cross this gloomy desert on pursuits vastly different from those which lead to Mecca; *the liberation of 300 Americans from the chains of barbarism, and a manly peace.*"

TWO days later they reached a place called in the colloquial Arabic, *Oak Korar Ke Bari,* which undoubtedly was Sidi Barrani. Here he found numerous camps of a wild pastoral people of the tribes of the Oued Ali, whose vast herds of camels, horses, cattle, goats and sheep ranged over some twenty leagues of country. The Christians in Eaton's force were the first ever seen by these nomadic folk, who viewed them as curiosities and laughed at their strange dress.

Rice was all Eaton had left to exchange for their produce. From here he dispatched a courier with letters to Captain Hull at Bomba; and here, because of good feed and plenty of rain-water, Eaton's A.E.F. rested from March 22 to 27. Eighty mounted warriors joined the Bashaw the second day, and forty-seven tents of Arabs with their families on the fourth day, in which detachment there were 150 warriors on foot. Eaton recorded that "from Alexandria to this place there is not a living stream nor rivulet, nor spring of water." He now hired ninety baggage camels for transport to Bomba.

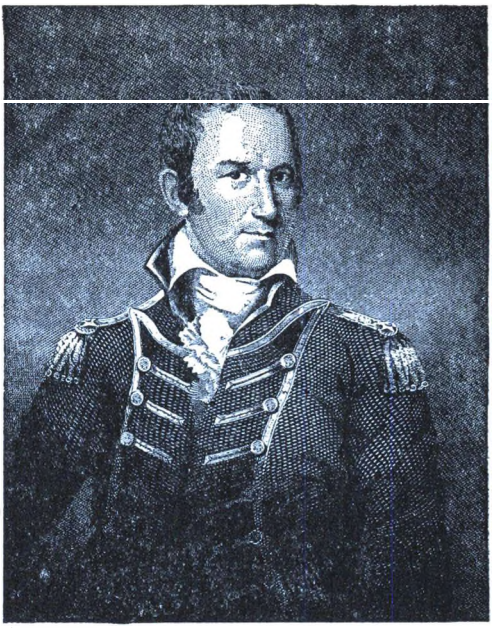
These Arabs had never seen bread, but they adored rice. "A woman," says Eaton, "offered her daughter to my interpreter for a sack of it: and the girl consented. . . . She was a well-proportioned, handsome brunette of about thirteen or fourteen years, with an expressive hazel eye inclining to black, arched eyebrows, perfect teeth and lips formed for voluptuousness. A bargain would have been concluded if my consent could have been accorded; prudence forbid it." (Which reminded me of the pygmy girl in the Ituri Forest I could have bought for ten pounds of salt. Prudence forbade.)

Just as they were ready to push on, a courier arrived from Derna, bringing word "that 500 of Yusuf Bashaw's cavalry, accompanied by great numbers of Arabs, both on foot and horse, were a few days' march from that place and would certainly arrive before we could." The camel-drivers fled with the caravan; Hamet Bashaw hesitated about going on, while Sheik El-Taiib absolutely refused, until assured of the arrival of the American vessels at Bomba.

Because Eaton reproached him for lack of courage, fidelity and broken promises, Taiib not only quit the camp in a rage, but incited an insurrection among the Oued Ali Arabs whom Eaton had engaged, and putting himself at their head, started off with half their number for Egypt. Hamet feared Taiib would use his influence and take part against them.

"Let him do it," countered Eaton: "I like an open enemy better than a treacherous friend. This will give me an opportunity to punish eventually, what I would do summarily if the respect for His Excellency did not prevent it. I have a rifle and a saber true to their distance. Carry this message to the Sheik." The Arabs had a wholesome respect for Eaton's ability as a marksman, for some of them had seen him split an orange twice in three shots at ninety-six feet. Mad with rage, Taiib swore vengeance, not only against the Bashaw but his Christian sovereigns, as he styled them.

COMMODORE PREBLE



Culver Service

Eaton at once gave the order to march. At ten a messenger came from the Sheik, which Eaton ignored. At noon came a second saying: "The Sheik El-Taiib will join up if the camp halts reasonably." So, acceding to Hamet's wishes, Eaton halted at twelve-thirty. The Sheik and his party soon hove in sight. Presenting himself at Eaton's tent, he said: "You see the influence I have among these people."

"Yes," retorted Eaton, "and I see also the disgraceful use you make of it." They made but five miles that day.

On April 6th Eaton reached the ancient castle and walls of Sollum by which they camped. The greatest problems of Eaton's expedition were the internal ones; straightening out altercations between Arab sheiks, keeping caravaneers to their contracts, preventing desertions, bringing back deserters, reconciling differences between chiefs, preventing and putting down mutinies, and with all, maintaining a morale and willingness to march when short of water and food. Things went with remarkable smoothness with his international Christian contingent, who proved to be both courageous and loyal, particularly Lt. O'Bannon, to whom Eaton pays the highest tribute. Even Farquhar, whom Eaton had reinstated, now showed himself both brave and devoted.

ON April 8, when they were camped near Bardia (recently captured by the British) occurred the most desperate situation. This might have not only ended Eaton's expedition, but Eaton himself, and prevented the subsequent treaty of peace with Tripoli. Food was low—only six days' rations of rice were left; so Hamet Bashaw and the Arabs decided to wait. "You can take your choice between famine and fatigue," Eaton told them. They preferred the former, and so Eaton promptly stopped their rations. The Bashaw and his Arab host as promptly started packing up, with the avowed intention of starting back.

But Eaton discovered, just in the nick of time, that their real plan was to seize the provisions. "Beat to arms!" he ordered. The Christian contingent sprang to action and lined up in front of the magazine tent back to back, holding a position facing the Arabs. Both sides held their positions for over an hour. Then the Bashaw prevailed upon his Arabs to dismount and pitch his tents.

Supposing the difference over, Eaton started to put his troops through the daily manual-of-arms drill. Taking alarm, the Arabs dismounted, yelling, "The Christians are preparing to fire on us!" and in a body of about two hundred, the Bashaw at their head, swept down upon the Christians—who, because of Eaton's training and discipline, stood their ground motionless. The enemy pulled up and withdrew a short distance, whence some of the Arabs had started with deliberate aim to single out Eaton's officers, when some of the Bashaw's chiefs called out: "For Allah's sake, do not fire! The Christians are our friends!"

O'Bannon, Peck and Farquhar stood firmly by Eaton. So did the Turkish captain of the cannoneers, his lieutenants and the two Greek officers; but the others drew back. One Arab pulled a trigger point-blank at Farquhar's breast; but his flintlock missed fire.

Eaton now advanced alone toward the Bashaw, whose retainers immediately aimed their muskets at his breast. Hamet was distracted. The universal clamor drowned Eaton's voice, as that brave officer waved his hand as a signal for attention. It was a critical moment. Suddenly some of Hamet's officers and a number of Arab sheiks, with drawn scimitars, rode out between the Bashaw and Eaton and repelled the mutineers.

Eaton reproached the Bashaw for his weakness. Even Zaid, Hamet's own *casnadar* (treasurer), had the temerity to ask him if he was in his right senses; whereupon Hamet, striking him with his bare saber, nearly started up the fracas

again. But Eaton, taking the Bashaw by the arm, led him away from the crowd. Hamet relented, and "confessions of attachment were repeated as usual on the part of the Bashaw and his officers."

The expedition started the next day an hour before sunrise, and after ten miles halted amongst some Roman ruins by a water-cistern in which Eaton states, *"We found two dead men. Probably pilgrims murdered by Arabs. We were obliged, however, to use the water."*

Two days later they were marching on half rations and rice only. Even the cannoneers threatened mutiny, and just as things looked blackest, the courier Eaton had dispatched to Bomba arrived with word that the American vessels were off that place and Derna. Things looked brighter, but the expedition now suffered from hunger and fatigue, and lack of water. Although they only marched seven and a half miles one day, the foot soldiers and Bedawi families were unable to continue. Hamet Bashaw had one of his baggage-camels killed for meat, and exchanged another with some Arabs for sheep which, though without salt, gave one full ration to the troops. They had now been twenty-five days without meat, fifteen without bread, subsisting entirely on rice. On the morning of April 15 they met three Arabs who said they had seen two vessels in the bay a few days before, and described the brig *Argus*.

With anticipation the worn-out expedition staggered on, and reached Bomba late that afternoon. But to Eaton's astonishment, he not only saw no signs of the vessels, but could not find the foot trace of a single human being, or a drop of water. Nothing Eaton could now say made the Arabs believe any vessels had been there. The Moslems accused him of treachery, and abused the Christians as impostors and infidels; and in council that night the Arabs all resolved to leave before morning. Eaton went off with his Christians to higher land, and all night long kept signal-fires burning on a mountain-top in their rear.

As the camp was breaking up at eight next morning, April 16th, Zaid, the *caznadar*, who had been up the mountain for a last look, rushed breathless into camp. "A sail! A ship of war!" he exclaimed.

It was the *Argus*. At twelve o'clock Eaton went aboard, and after attending first to provisions being sent ashore to the camp, bunked down for a good night's sleep. Two days later the sloop *Hornet* arrived, laden with more provisions. Picking a good place farther around the bay, with water and a good landing, the famished army was refreshed and had three days of complete rest. Now, well equipped with the necessary provisions to carry them to Derna, though lacking American reinforcements, they pushed on to within five hours' march of that place. Here they camped in a pleasant valley, where fields of verdure bordered a natural rivulet, by beautiful large red cedars.

After seven weeks of a slow and painful march through an inhospitable country, in which lack of food and water were the least of the various aggravations and setbacks, Eaton, on April 25th, found himself camped on an eminence.

Below him lay Derna....

Several horsemen on beautiful Arab mounts crossed the plain from the city and drew rein in front of Hamet Bashaw. They were sheiks with assurances of fealty. Derna, they told him, was divided in three departments; two were for him and one for Yusuf. But the last, though fewest in numbers, was strongest, being defended by a sea battery of eight nine-pounders to guard the northeast, with a ten-inch howitzer on the terrace of the Governor's Palace. The walls of an old building to the southeast, and the terraces and houses along the bay were loopholed. The Governor, Mustapha Bey, had thrown up temporary breastworks in front of these, the entire defenses being manned by eight hundred men. Strong reinforcements from Tripoli were also approaching rapidly.

Hamet wished himself back in Egypt!

The next morning, under a flag of truce, Eaton sent a letter offering terms of amity to the Governor on conditions of allegiance and fidelity. Back came the messenger with the laconic answer:

"My head, or yours."

EATON decided to attack at once. At sunup the following morning the brig *Argus*, accompanied by the schooners *Nautilus* and *Hornet*, appeared and stood inshore. Two field-pieces were sent ashore from the *Argus* in a boat. One, with great difficulty, was hauled up the precipitous cliff; but Eaton, wishing to make the most of every moment, abandoned the other aboard and advanced at once to his positions, while Derna's shipping was at once brought under fire by the Navy.

Under a favoring breeze, both schooners stood in and anchored where they could bring their guns to bear directly

on the city, the *Hornet*, under Lt. Evans, anchoring within one hundred yards of the battery itself. Capt. Commandant Hull anchored the *Argus* a little south of Lt. Dent's *Nautilus*, and threw twenty-four-pound solid shots clear into the town.

A detachment of six marines, a company of twenty-four cannoneers and another of twenty-six Greeks, including their officers, together with a number of foot Arabs, Eaton placed under the immediate command of Lt. O'Bannon, who was assigned a position covering the right flank, on a bit of high land near the sea opposite a large number of the enemy. The latter had taken up their positions behind the temporary parapets at the edge of the town, and in a ravine at its southeast quarter. The Bashaw had seized an old castle overlooking the town on the south. Behind this, on the plains in his rear, he disposed his cavalry. This covered Eaton's left flank, while Eaton himself, with a handful of Christians, with his field-piece, occupied the central and most vulnerable point.

At one-thirty the attack began, and soon the irregular but perpetual banging of Arab flintlocks was accented by the regular, ripping volleys of O'Bannon's regulars and Eaton's Christian troops, the staccato bark of the field-piece, and the deeper crescendo booming of the ships' guns and those of the Derna batteries. O'Bannon, with the strongest and most dependable force, slowly but surely began to close in. After three-quarters of an hour's fighting, the enemy, under the fire of the ships, hurriedly withdrew from the quarter of the sea battery, and reinforced those opposed to Eaton's little force.

The rammer of Eaton's field-piece was shot away, and greatly slowed down its loading. As its fire decreased, the enemy's increased, so that his half-disciplined troops were thrown into disorder. Eaton realized that to attack was his last and only resort.

"Charge!" he yelled. With a wild rush forward, he led his men against a horde of fighting-men who outnumbered them ten to one. The enemy began a retreat from their breastworks, but in irregular order, firing from behind every palm tree and partitioned wall they could use. The sand spurted in little golden fountains where the bullets struck. Men dropped and stained it red. Then the brave Eaton suddenly stopped, all but dropped his rifle, staggered, recovered himself, and blood dripped from his left arm. A musket ball had passed through his left wrist, and deprived him of the use of his rifle.

O'Bannon now charged forward with his marines, cannoneers and Greeks through a literal shower of musketry from the walls of the houses. On they went irresistibly, took possession of the battery, scaling walls, and from its highest ramparts ran up the American flag.

They now turned the battery guns upon the enemy, who were firing from their houses, windows and terraced rooftops, to which type of defense these Arab towns are peculiarly adapted. The little squadron, which had withheld fire during the charge, now poured a devastating barrage from their entire available batteries into the enemy. Hamet Bashaw, too, had been following up the advantage, and was soon in possession of the Bey's palace, while his cavalry flanked the enemy now fleeing from the town. A little after four o'clock Eaton was in complete possession of the city and gave the order cease firing.

THE action lasted about two hours and a half. The forces under Eaton and O'Bannon probably did not exceed eighty-five men. Hamet Bashaw, however, was able to bring two thousand Arabs into the field on that day, mainly as a result of money furnished Hamet through Eaton for that purpose. The total enemy force probably outnumbered the total American Expeditionary Force anywhere from three to ten to one in direct combat, as individual engagements during and subsequent to the attack on Derna proved. But there was no question that the enemy before Eaton's position outnumbered his troops ten to one.

The desperate character of the fighting may be realized when the casualty list of Eaton's Christian forces of a scant seventy-five, showed fourteen killed and wounded; three of these were marines, two of whom were killed; the rest were chiefly Greeks, who, Eaton said, "in this little affair well supported their ancient character."

Eaton could not speak too highly of O'Bannon's conduct, and recommended him for his intrepidity, judiciousness and enterprise. Midshipman Mann he likewise commended; while Farquhar, the young Englishman, because of his loyalty and firmness in danger throughout the expedition, Eaton recommended for a lieutenancy in our Marine Corps.

The final episodes of our war in North Africa will be described by Colonel Furlong next month.

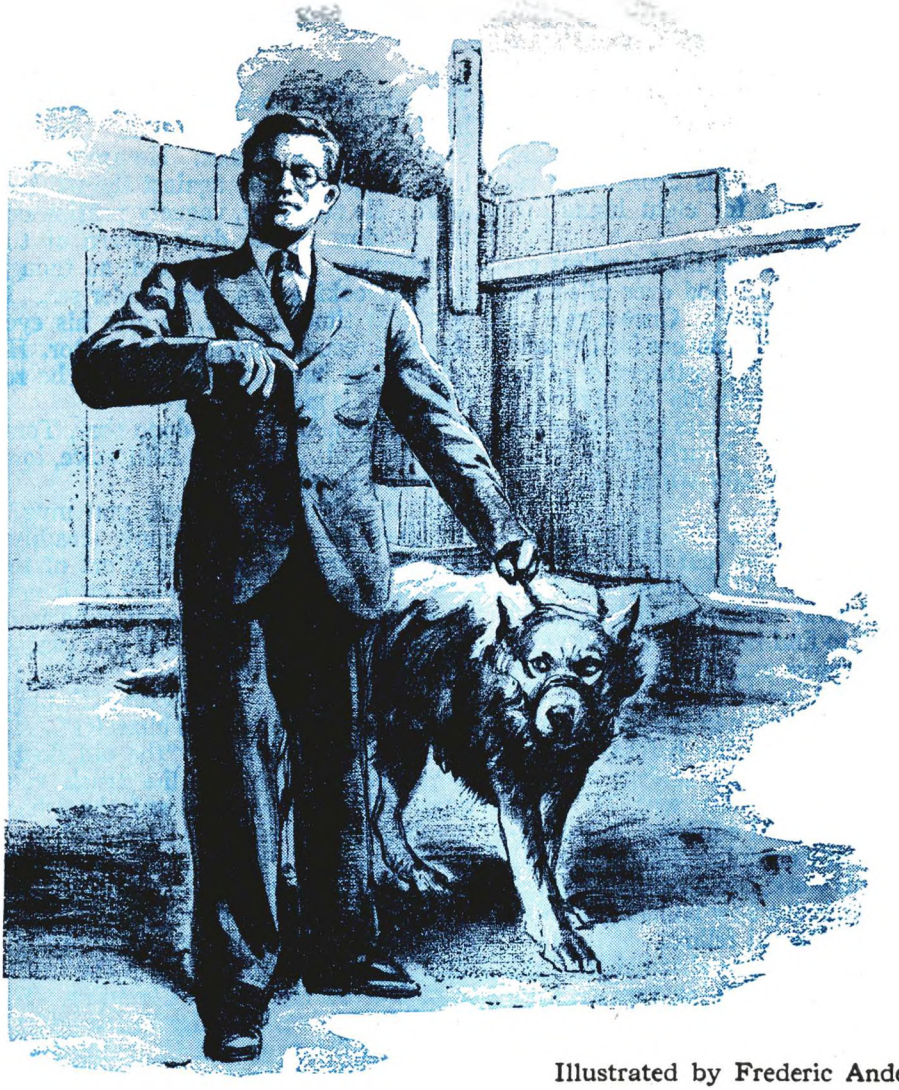
An epic tale of wild adventure at sea and ashore.

By MAX BRAND

The Luck of

SAMUEL PENNINGTON CULVER, Doctor of Philosophy, never used the titles he had acquired at Harvard and the Sorbonne because he was a man who did not believe in useless ornament. He considered himself a person of eminently practical mind; nature had bestowed on him, he felt, the glorious gift of a mind to use, and the wretched handicap of a body to support. For that support he had to work eight hours a day, and to fight off decrepitude or the danger of illness he spent another hour in exercise. It was his body, again, which demanded six hours of sleep. On the whole he considered it an unhappy bargain that required fifteen hours to meet physical needs, and left him only nine hours for his books. . . . His chief quest was a search for a key to the Etruscan language, some Rosetta Stone which he might decode and so give to the world the buried mind of that great people. . . .

Samuel lived in a small room that overlooked a backyard surrounded by a high wooden fence and bright with laundry on Mondays. To the east, through a slot between two buildings, he had a glimpse



Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

the Spindrift

of San Francisco Bay and the blue, feminine curves of the Berkeley hills beyond; but the distances he yearned for were not those that feet can wander through; and most of his time at home was spent seated at his corner table, where the light from the window streamed over his shoulder—or beside his reading-lamp.

He worked at night for an express company, his task ending somewhere between one and three o'clock in the morning, after which he walked briskly up the hills from the waterfront, ran up the stairs to his room, threw off his clothes, slipped into his bed, and was asleep the instant he closed his eyes. That was because he never permitted himself the luxury of sufficient rest. Six hours after he closed his eyes, a pin-prick of conscience roused him. He rose at once and commenced the hour of exercise which kept doctors and doctor-bills from his way of life. At thirty-five his body was still garnished with exactly the same two hundred pounds of lean muscle that had caused the college football coach to yearn after him. Having finished this task, Samuel Culver bathed, dressed, and ate

the breakfast which in the meantime had been simmering on the gas-stove in the corner of that tenement room. After this, Samuel sat down to his books. He remained with them for eight hours and twenty minutes.

Books, in fact, filled his friendless existence as utterly as God ever filled the life of an ascetic hermit. Once a year he was compelled to buy clothes for the sake of common decency; otherwise every penny he saved from his steady work and his monastic spareness of living went into new volumes. Nearly three thousand volumes were now within the walls of that small room.

If Samuel Culver had a friend in the world, perhaps it was that doddering old bibliophile James McPherson, who kept the second-hand bookstore and watched the market to find items for Culver; and the only pleasure excursions that Culver took into the world were among the musty stacks of books in the shop of McPherson. Only the day before, he had gone with his month's savings to McPherson and come away with Diodorus Siculus in a fine old edition. Jolly Diodorus! What a credulous fellow he was! Culver, at his work, could not help chuckling and wondering how he had got on so long without the old fellow.

As he chuckled, the sharp, hard lead of his pencil was running rapidly over the paper, putting down the names and addresses which Tommy Lester called from outside the little glassed-in booth where Culver sat writing out the labels.

IT was after eleven and the night's work promised to be short, so Samuel Culver already was foretasting the happy return to his studies. He breathed more deeply of the savor of the air off the Bay, but his eyes never shifted from the pad over which his pencil flew.

"From T. W. Langer," intoned Tommy Lester, "1149 Haight Street, S.F.; going to Mrs. Randall Scott, 918 Franklin Avenue, Fruitvale. It's a parcel—"

The pencil was flying over the address of Mrs. Randall Scott, when Culver's spectacles slid off suddenly, as though a sudden gust of wind had jerked them. Vainly he caught in the air to save them. They slithered off the tips of his fingers and left him to fumble in the obscure mist in which, without his glasses, he lived.

Touching the floor, he felt rapidly across its surface. Outside the window of the booth he could hear the stifled laughter of Tommy Lester, and knew that Tommy, with a reaching fingertip, must have played the trick on him. Now his hand found the glasses. He arose. His head banged heavily against the writing-shelf. He stood up, vaguely peering out the window at the dark cavern of the warehouse. All was blurred, as though he were looking at a scene under sea. It was high time, he felt, to give his eyes that rest recommended by his doctor. He rubbed the bump on his head as he readjusted his glasses.

"You shouldn't have done that, Tommy," he said. He had a mild voice, low-pitched and musical.

"Shouldn't've done what, you mug?"

Culver considered Tommy steadily; he had to use a surprising effort of the will to master a desire to lay on hands. Then he was able to say: "Go back to the Randall Scott address, if you please. I've forgotten what followed."

"Watch yourself!" whispered Tommy. "Here comes the old dope himself!"

And now Culver saw "the old dope" in person, standing in the truck runway. Channing floor-bossed the whole warehouse. He had a bad leg, and went about with two canes to steady a weight that was increasing every year faster than his salary. By sheer luck, as he stood now at watch, the horn of an approaching truck, as it swung around the inside turn, blasted the ear of Channing. He had to move with undignified speed to get out of the way, and Channing's dignity was his greatest possession. That was the moment when Channing heard Samuel Pennington Culver say again: "Go back to the Randall Scott address."

That was when Channing exploded. He eased his way into a speech that began: "The Randall Scott address? To hell with the Scott address! What's your address? You inside, there—you, Culver, what's *your* address? You may not know where the Scotts live, but do you know your own home number?"

Tommy, as he listened, shrank his head down between his lifting shoulders and squinted his eyes, as though he were facing a biting wind. Culver, on the other hand, leaned out the window and studied Channing with intense interest. With such a voice Achilles must have shrunk the waters of the Scamander and loosened the knees of the frightened Trojans; with such a voice old Rustum had thundered by the Indus when the sword of Sohrab had wounded him.

"A blow is about to fall," said big Samuel Culver to himself, "and apparently it

is to strike me." Meantime, he made careful note of the parted lips, the shaking jowls, the bulging eyes of Channing.

"Yes," said Culver, "I know my home address."

"Then why in hell don't you use it?" bellowed Channing. "Leave Randall Scott—leave everything, leave me, leave the whole damned company, and get out. And don't come back. If you know your way home, go there and stay there."

"The language of passion," said Culver, pleased to the smiling point. "I discover that it *is* rhythmical. I'll leave as soon as I've made a note of your speech."

And pulling out the notebook which always was with him, he wrote in it with his quick pencil; then he stepped outside as the floor-boss cried: "Rhythmical? I'll rhythmical you, you four-eyed flat-foot. Get out!"

"Personal abuse — passion — rhythm. Extremely interesting," said Samuel Culver, and wrote again in his notebook.

The red flower of anger faded suddenly in the face of Channing.

"Clean batty!" he muttered, and swung himself away on his two sticks.

Culver looked up to find a disconsolate Tommy staring after the boss.

"I'm going after him," said Tommy. "I gummed it, and I'm going to tell him what I done. Why didn't you bluff it through? Why'd you have to stop and ask questions when that dope was right here in our hair? Damn your glasses, anyway," groaned Tommy. "How would I know it would knock hell out of everything if I gave them a job?"

He set his jaw and started after Channing; but Culver's big hand stopped him.

"You stay here with your job," he advised. "I've only myself to think of; and you'll have yourself and your wife on your hands."

"Have you saved up some dough? Are you O.K. till you get a new job?" asked Tommy, biting his lip with anxiety.

"I'll do very well," answered Culver.

"You're a great guy!" broke out Tommy. "You're the greatest guy I ever knew! Listen, big boy—by God, I'd go to hell for you!"

Chapter Two

CULVER walked out of the warehouse still enchanted by his discovery that the language of passion is indeed rhythmical—until he stepped into the street where the wind was blowing billows of

CHINEE VALDEZ

San Francisco fog, a dankly penetrating mist. Under foot the pavement sweated with glistening blackness, and the whine of the wind joined together the whistles of two ships in the Bay, big-throated horns that gave to the air a mournful vibration rather than a sound.

Culver shook back his shoulders, but unhappiness would not fall from them. With his finger-tips, he counted the eleven dollars and odd cents with which he had been paid off. He walked on, surprised by the coldness in his heart; it was the fear of the unknown. . . . He found himself on an unfamiliar street-corner and paused there to take his bearings.

Automobiles in a continual stream carried their headlights up the hill, casting their white haloes before them, lurching across the level of the cross-street, and sliding smoothly on. A horn began sirening in the middle of the lower block, an urgency in the sound that pushed the fog-horns on the Bay into a hushed background.

From the seclusion of his thoughts, Samuel Pennington Culver regarded the hurried urgencies of the world with a sad amazement. Into that atmosphere of jump and bustle he would be forced to step, now, in order to find new work.

He realized, now, that he had come up a block too far, but instead of turning at once toward his home, he remained to watch for an instant the cross-currents of the traffic. The lights changed; the east-west automobiles roared an instant in first, shifted up to second, and lurched out over the level of the street-crossing, the car of the loud horn accelerating far faster than the rest.

Behind it a dark silhouette developed, bobbing up and down in the mist, laboring over the rise, and now developing into the vague outline of a dog that strained at the full bent of its strength. On the near side of the cross-street it overtook the car whose horn was already sirening again, and leaped for its running-board, slipped, rolled outward on the street, rose with cat-footed speed again as an eastbound automobile struck it a glancing blow that rolled it like a tumble-weed into the opposite gutter. As for the car at which the dog had jumped, Culver saw it sweep on up the rise of the hill. He could see only the man beside the driver with the glow from the street-lamps brushing dimly over him. He seemed to fill the automobile with his bigness. His profile was faintly sketched, but it seemed as hard as stone, with a jaw thrusting out like a fist, a huge beak of a nose, and the suggestion of a cruel smile. . . .

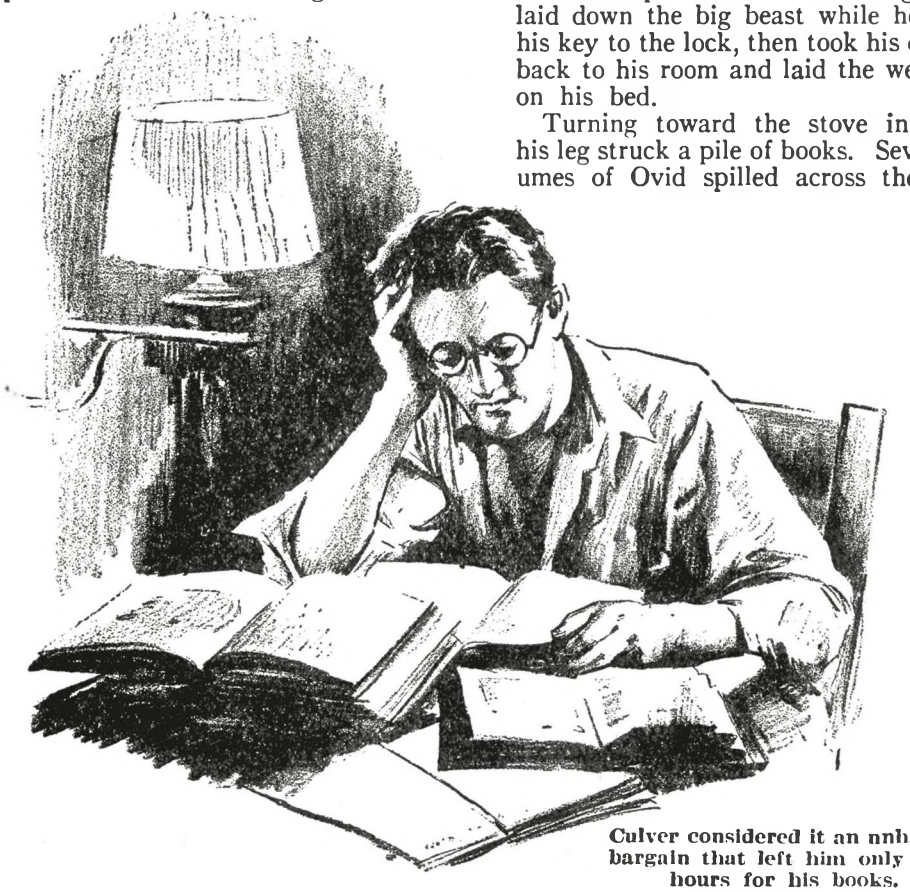
The dog lay in the gutter with blood on his head. His bulk dammed the small trickle which ran down the hill, pooling the dirty water; his tongue, creased as though with scars, lolled out into the pool. Culver lifted the big head.

It was a surprising weight. The head of a grown man could not have been heavier. But he was huge all over, with forepaws almost as big as a doubled fist. A pelt of thick gray fur, loose as a lap-rug across the knees, covered the bones and rippling muscle beneath.

Culver saw that blood continued to drip from the head wound and knew that life remained in the great body. He lifted the dog from the gutter instantly to place it on the sidewalk. The head sagged down. The loose weight tried to spill from his arms like jelly. He had to hold the dirt and slopping wetness of that burden close to his breast; and as he did so a strange warmth began in the heart of Culver, flowing outward through his body. They were two outcasts, two discards. From that instant it was impossible for Culver to abandon the big fellow.

AT that moment the lights halted the east-west traffic, and Culver strode hastily across the street, the great dog in his arms. He had two blocks to go before he reached his house, but he made the journey without a halt. He climbed the front porch of the rooming-house, laid down the big beast while he fitted his key to the lock, then took his derelict back to his room and laid the wet body on his bed.

Turning toward the stove in haste, his leg struck a pile of books. Seven volumes of Ovid spilled across the floor.



Culver considered it an unhappy bargain that left him only nine hours for his books.

Epictetus and Lucretius lay unregarded in the fallen column; for the first time in thirty years, books meant nothing to Culver, as he got to the stove and lighted the gas. He filled the saucepan with water and placed it over the flame.

With a towel he rubbed down the dog vigorously; and still the brute, almost as big as a man as it sprawled on the bed, remained inert, with closed eyes. Half a dozen times his hand anxiously sought for a reassuring heartbeat.

It was a triangular, jagged wound that penetrated the scalp of the dog, how deeply he did not dare to probe. With hot water he washed the wound; with iodine he cleansed it more deeply, and as the pungent stuff entered the raw of the flesh, he heard a deep-drawn breath; the whole body of the dog shuddered violently, lay still again. But life was there. Culver cut some adhesive tape into thin strips and with it closed, with delicate fingers, the mouth of the wound. After that, he could think of nothing else to do except to sit on the bed beside the dog and stroke its head, particularly the leonine wrinkles of thought between the eyes. As his hand moved, rhythmically, words came mechanically to his lips. The meaning was not present in his mind as he repeated over and over again that fragment from great Sappho in which she describes, with her voice of music and her divine simplicity, the ending of the day that brings the sheep to the fold, and the child to its mother's arms.

While his lips still moved with those famous words, he was trying to think out the problem. The dog had been pursuing through the night either a friend or an enemy. No friend, surely, could have failed to stop his automobile when the poor brute reached the side of the car and was knocked headlong in the traffic the next moment. Yet Samuel Culver recalled the urgent haste with which the automobile had been driven; perhaps there was some mission in hand so vital that the life or death of a dog was as nothing by the way. This was a possible explanation. But when all was done, there was the picture of that grim fellow in the front seat. Once seen, he could not be dismissed. There came to Culver a foreboding that the man would enter his life again.

Something moved on the bed as swift as a striking hand. It was the head of the dog, and his teeth closed over the forearm of Culver between the wrist and the elbow, while the big brute gathered his legs beneath him as though preparing to spring. His eyes were on Culver's throat.

Instead of defending himself, Culver put his free hand on the head of the dog and continued stroking, keeping rhythm with the lines of Sappho. Sweat from his forehead ran into his eyes, but he continued the stroking and the sound of his voice; if the spell broke, he would have that fighting devil at his throat in an instant! Now, by small degrees, the pressure across his arm was relaxing. The big dog with a sudden movement jerked his head back and held it high to study the face of this new man. There were depressions in the fur behind his ears and across his face. That was where the bars of a muzzle must have chafed.

This high lifting of the head had made a gap between them and broken the current, as it were; and now Culver moved his hand slowly to cross the chasm. The upper lip of the beast instantly curled up from the teeth, flaring out the black nostrils. A snarl of murderous promise ran up the scale; the vibration of it set the bed trembling, but Culver kept on extending his hand. He was half minded to reach for the brute's throat and try to batter his head against the wall, but a far stronger instinct urged him to continue that quiet battle of will against will. Yet it was not a battle, either, but rather an attempt to bridge that gap, a million years wide, between man and beast.

The dog drew back his head like a snake ready to strike. The fur on his throat and breast bristled. But the hand of Culver reached him. And Culver could feel the shudder of the whole body under his touch in a complete horror of revulsion. Still the teeth remained bare, the snarl continued; but he felt that the electric connection between his brain and the brain of the animal had been established again by that sense of touch.

Chapter Three

THE morning light and the pin-prick of his conscience wakened Samuel Culver from a dream in which he had solved triumphantly the Etrurian language.

He remembered that he had something other than study before him, on this day. He had to start out on the pavements to find a new job. Now, at last, he might have to accept work as a translator, even if the rate were only twenty cents a page. Or perhaps he could find some sort of

task as a laborer. At this thought his future brightened for him instantly. For if he worked as a common laborer, perhaps in the street, he would get exercise in plenty without having to use a precious hour out of every day in keeping that body of his in a healthy condition.

Stretching and yawning, he turned his head—and saw, against the slowly shifting white of the morning mist, a great dark silhouette pasted against his window. It was not a silhouette; it was a living creature. And now the full recollection of the evening's adventure returned suddenly upon him. He stood up from the bed. The dog, shrinking as it turned its head, favored him with one brief snarl. Then it resumed its study of the blankness of space as the fog drifted past.

All those hours of the night preceding had not established an amity between them, but rather a state of armed truce out of which battle could be precipitated by a single hasty gesture. As for the rapid movements of his setting-up exercises, it was plain that Culver could not indulge in them while this package of emotional dynamite was in the room as an audience. At that, it probably was hungry dynamite! He dressed, and hurried down to the little corner market.

Mr. Farbenstein was greatly surprised.

"Hai, Mr. Culver!" he said. "What are you wanting at this hour?"

"Meat," said Culver.

"Meat!" cried Farbenstein, amazed—for Culver never bought meat.

"Perhaps not," said Culver. "But what else would you feed a dog?"

"A dog? You have a *dog* to feed?" cried Farbenstein. "What kind of a dog, please?"

"Something bigger than a police dog, but somewhat that wolfish type. Much bigger."

"Well, feed him dog biscuits."

"Dog biscuits?" murmured Culver. "I don't think so. Raw meat, I should say."

"I'll grind it for you," declared Farbenstein. "How many pounds?"

"Two at least. Good meat, if you please."

"Yes, yes!" said Farbenstein. "Good meat for the dogs of good people! How I can tell people by the things they buy is nobody's business, it is so wonderful. I don't need to read the mail of this neighborhood; I only watch their grocery and their meat orders. That is enough. Next to what the laundryman knows, the grocery-store is what can tell your mind from day to day."

He got out the meat, weighed it, and began to push the cut-up scraps into the grinder. The electric motor sent through the shop a deeply vibrating sound that reminded Culver of the dog's snarl. . . .

As Culver, returning, opened the door of his room, the dog whirled from the window and leaped at him. Recognition stopped that attack before it was driven home. On braced legs, the big fellow skidded to a stop. His first reaction still gave him the mask of a green-eyed devil.

Culver unwrapped the meat, squatted back against the door, and offered a morsel of Mr. Farbenstein's best in the palm of his open hand. The dog pricked his ears, sniffed, and then lifting his head, he looked across the room toward the window as though food were entirely beneath the dignity of his attention; he was betrayed by a thin streak of saliva that drooled down from his mouth. Culver smiled and waited.

Hunger is a great bender of dignity. The big dog turned his head once more toward the meat. He seemed to find a mystery in the close association of Culver's hand with the meat which it held. His nose, constantly sniffing, seemed to draw him forward against his volition. But long minutes went by, and the extended arm of Culver ached to the shoulder before the big head darted out and the fangs nipped the meat cleanly away. The dog, recoiling as though from danger, leaped away half the length of the room.

BUT there was another morsel in the hand now, and the scent of fresh meat laid hold on the very vitals of the dog. He could not help slipping near again. Perhaps there was a memory of the night before, when a strange warmth of kindness had passed from those same fingertips into the whole body of the dog. At any rate, he ventured in and with a wolfish side-slash of his teeth clipped away the red meat again. It was not so clean a job, this time. A tooth-edge had split the skin of Culver; his own blood was kneaded into the next lump of meat which he offered. And the dog, with that added scent in the air, began to snarl as he worked his cautious way closer.

When blood is drawn, there is a fight. What could be a more elemental rule than this? Culver knew it for the first time as he watched the brute come in for the third time, sidling, alert to spring in any direction. But this time, instead of the sidelong flash of the teeth, the dog thrust out his head with only scent to guide it,

while his green eyes dwelt constantly on the face of Culver.

The meat was his. He shrank back as he swallowed it, but without shifting his feet. In fact, there appeared to be no danger. Not for an instant was his caution laid aside, but hunger kept him steadily in place until the last morsel of the meat was gone. Still the bleeding hand of Culver was held out empty before him. The dog, snarling from the depths of his throat, licked that blood away until the shallow wound was dry.

To Culver, it was an act of infinite grace; for he remembered among primitive people a tasting of blood in the ceremony which creates blood-brotherhood. It was a silly fancy, perhaps, and the actions of the dog immediately afterward kept all intimacy at a distance. He returned to his window and sat down before it, oblivious of Culver, oblivious of everything in the world except some undecipherable goal.

It came to Culver, as he reflected, while he cooked his breakfast, that other people in the world had something which differentiated them from him. They had something other than the love of books. They had something beyond images of solemn Etruscans or slant-eyed Orientals. They had deeply possessive love.

Was it better to possess others and to have that hungry need of them, or to be married to the great minds of the past? He had made his choice long ago in spite of certain stirrings of the flesh, and yet he was now disturbed to the bottom of his nature because he had gained a sort of speaking acquaintance with—a dog!

He sat down to his bowl of porridge and brown sugar and ate slowly, his eye fixed on the heroic outline of the animal, but his mind groping far beyond the fog that still drifted white against the window. He had a feeling that this dumb brute, like the figurehead of a ship, was traveling over mysterious seas of desire about which he knew nothing. And he wanted to know. There grew up in Culver a blasphemous feeling that he would rather read the mind of the beast than solve the Etruscan mystery.

He put this thought behind him with a guilty haste, washed the porringer, and left the house again, this time to walk a number of blocks until he came to a little corner store which carried notions of all sorts. They had dog muzzles, and he selected a big leather contraption with collar and leash in one. The cost was two dollars and nineteen cents!

And Butcher's edition of the "Poetics," which by mysterious neglect he had omitted from his library, he could buy from his bookseller for a dollar sixty-three! He broke into a fine sweat as he thought of this. He went home still darkened by this quandary and so pushed open the front door of the house and heard, with horror and fear, the frightful snarling of the dog from the rear of the house. Above that sound rang the screeches of Mrs. Mary Lindley, his landlady, and the sharp, clear voice of a man who spoke with authority. The uproar came from the back yard. He was out on the rear porch instantly. There he saw that his preparations to take the dog for a walk had been much too late; the brute had taken a short-cut to exercise and freedom by diving through the window. The ragged remnants of the pane remained, and bright splinters of it were scattered on the cement beneath. On the porch cowered Mrs. Lindley behind a tall young policeman who held a duty revolver in his hand and pointed it down the steps toward the dog.

"Be easy, madam," he was saying. "I'll take care of him if he makes another step toward us."

For down there was that gray monster with his mane ruffed up like a lion's as he advanced a stealthy paw for the next step.

"Put up that gun," said Culver, stepping past the policeman. "I'll handle him. But put that gun out of sight."

"Mr. Culver, Mr. Culver!" wailed the landlady. "What are you after doing to the good name of my house that you bring a *wolf* into your room? Oh, my God, he'll have the eating of me before he's done. Let me back into the house. Oh, the dirty beast! Officer, Officer, will you do your duty, or will you stand there like a man made of wet dough, and God help us?"

"Put up that gun or I'll take it away from you," said Culver.

"You'll what?" asked the policeman.

CULVER held back his hands with a mighty effort.

"Point it another way, then," he said, and walked down the steps straight toward the gray beast that seemed to be stalking them all. Afterward he remembered it all with amazement, wondering at himself, but at the moment he had no earthly fear for himself but only dread that the gun might explode behind him and snuff out the life of the dog. Most wonderful of all, the brute paid not

the least attention to him, but allowed the muzzle to be slipped over his head without the slightest attempt to escape. Samuel Culver, fastening it, said to the two at the head of the steps: "You see, he's entirely harmless."

He straightened, smiling at them.

"Harmless?" shrilled Mrs. Lindley. "Harmless, when he's smashed my window to flinders? Oh, Mr. Culver, that *you* should be playing tricks!"

"Find out if there's a shot of something worth drinking in your house, will you?" asked the policeman; and as Mrs. Lindley disappeared he added to Culver, who was nearing the head of the steps: "What were you saying about taking the gun from me, just now?"

Samuel Culver looked him over with patient calm. He was a big young man, big enough to give trouble and something over; and all the days of his life Culver had prepared his hands for defense merely, never for attack.

"If I've offended you, Officer," said Culver, "I'm very sorry for it."

"Yeah," said the large young policeman. "I've taken a lot of lip from some of you mugs because I was on my beat." He looked at the threadbare clothes, the bagging trousers of Culver, and let his anger run more freely. "But I'm here where there's no one to see," he added, "and it would be only a second for me to peel off this coat and be the same as any man. Why don't you take off your glasses and talk up to me?"

Samuel Culver ran the red tip of his tongue over his lips and narrowed his eyes a little. There is freedom in this world, he thought, for some men to use their hands, and for some dogs to use their teeth, but his own rôle was that of peace. He said, breathing a little hard as he spoke the words: "I want no trouble with you, sir!"

"Ah, that's it, is it?" murmured the man of the law. He sneered openly. "It's only the clothes you wear that are big, eh?" And he turned away with a shrug of his fine shoulders. Culver walked slowly past him. The dog followed without pulling back on the leash, but snarling savagely at every step. So they came back into the room.

Chapter Four

IT was not the same room that it had been for nine years before. In place of the fine old musty odor of the books there was a taint of sea in the moist air. It was not as though a mere pane had been knocked out of a window; it was as though a whole wall were down, letting the raw San Francisco air come billowing in, blowing its visible breath into every corner. In a strange way, it seemed to Samuel Culver as though waves of the sea were washing over his books, over his aspirations, and leaving only a soggy ruin behind.

He tied the dog to a leg of the bed and sat down on it to put his thoughts in order before he began his day's work; but every moment he remained there the work became more and more distasteful to him. He decided to take the dog for a walk.

The leash made all the difference. It exercised a miraculous control, and the big dog never let the strap grow taut. To see this wild spirit so thoroughly controlled was like watching a bushman do a toe-dance. Yet when they reached the street, Culver was not leading him; he was leading Culver. For he walked out to the end of the lead, keeping his head slightly turned like some small boy beckoning another forward. Culver obediently followed to the corner from which he had first seen the dog galloping through the mist, then out into the street, where the big fellow went in an eager zigzag with his nose close to the pavement. When the traffic flowed down the street to the south, he jumped to the sidewalk, but returned to his study the moment the pavement was safe.

Whatever sign he sought for, Culver knew that oil- and water-drippings and the rub of ten thousand tires had wiped it out long ago, but he was touched by the persistence of the dog. So a good scholar patiently goes over and over the page in search of the little things which may lead into great answers.

Suddenly the dog stood back on the sidewalk with his head raised, pointing into the wind, and his eyes almost closed. What did the wind tell that sensitive organism, of tarry odors from the wharves, and cookery in a thousand kitchens?

Then, determined on a new course of action, or else finding something in the wind that served as a clue, he turned suddenly about and led off, his head still half-turned as though imploring Culver to follow. And Culver followed—almost reverently—the passion of this animal in the search. He saw that he was being taken down toward the waterfront, with its rumblings of trucks and hootings of

whistles that kept the sky busy with noise. Now they were turning up a side-street. The dog veered, and started up a flight of steps over which hung the sign:

ROOMS: *By the month and transient.*

At the very end of the leash he paused while Culver made up his mind; then Culver followed and rang the bell. The door was opened by a bald little man with a bright nose, like a red dab of paint in the middle of his face.

"No dogs," he said. "Can't keep dogs—get that brute out of here!" For the gray dog had entered the dark hallway past the proprietor.

"Certainly," agreed Culver. "But are you sure that the master of this fellow hasn't been here?"

"Not with him. Not that I know of," came the answer. "Trot right along with him, brother."

Culver fumbled in his pocket and brought out a fifty-cent piece.

"Suppose you let him walk in—and right out again?" he pleaded. "He seems to be going somewhere."

The proprietor took the money, spun it in the air, let it spat against the palm of his hand. The solid thump of the half-dollar against his skin seemed to decide him.

"All right," he said. "But step lively. Lay him alow or aloft, and get him out again. I can't have a dog messing up a decent place."

CULVER followed the dog into the hallway. Straight upstairs he was led, past a weather-stained print of an old clipper that flew through a storm under upper topsails only, with the bone in her teeth. With a perfect surety the dog was clambering on, turning left in the upper hall. Now he paused in the dimness at a closed door and sniffed the crack at the bottom of it. Culver tapped gently. Voices ceased in the room.

"Who's there?" barked a man.

"I wanted to know if a dog—" began Culver.

The door jerked open. A man as squat and bowlegged as a bulldog stood in trousers and undershirt on the threshold. On one arm a golden nymph rode a purple dolphin. On the other the Stars and Stripes waved from elbow to shoulder above a pair of battling seagulls on the lower arm.

"Hey! Lookat!" called the husky voice of a woman. "Lookat, Jack! That aint a dog. It's a plush horse!"

Culver picked up a little ebony cross.

She lolled back in an armchair with the fat of her legs crossed. The make-up that had made her young the night before had smudged crookedly and gave her a lopsided face. She had a half-glass of beer in her hand, and the liquid sloshed up nearly to the brim as she shook with laughter.

"The dog is looking for something," said Culver, "and he wants to try to find it in this room. Will you tell me if you ever have seen him before?"

The sailor leaned to stare. A snarl, a flash of teeth that made the muzzle seem more fragile than tissue paper, sent him backward a stumbling pace or two.

"Maybe I've seen him, but he's never seen me," said the sailor.

"Come here, honey. Come here and see Aunt Molly," said the woman, smiling and turning coy for the dog. "Babies and dogs, they always come to me. If I had my rights, I'd have a house full of them. Come here, sweetheart, and see Aunt Molly. . . . Oh, go to hell, then, you ugly beast! Get him out of here, Jack. Throw 'em out, if you're a man!"

For the dog sniffing rapidly across the rug, had paid her no attention.

"Move on," said Jack, waving his thick arm toward the door. "We've had enough of you both. Take your dunnage and roll ashore, will you?"

"One moment!" pleaded Culver, as the dog scratched back the edge of the rug and tried vainly to pick up some small object with his teeth. Culver picked up from the floor a little ebony cross bound with silver rope at the crossing. The dog leaped for it, almost knocking it out of his grasp with the thrust of his nose. Culver put it in his pocket.

"What's he got?" asked Molly. "Take it away from him, Jack."

"No," said Jack, sea-law asserting itself in his moral mind. "No: finders, keepers. . . . Barge along, brother."

"Will you tell me when you took this room?" asked Culver, passing back into the hall.

"Last night. This morning, I mean—and what the hell is it to you?" asked Jack.

He slammed the door, and Culver went slowly down the stairs. He was no longer led by his companion. The dog followed at his side, frantically nuzzling his coat pocket, and making deep in his throat that whining noise which was hardly distinguishable from a snarl except that there was added to the sound an almost human note of inquiry.

The proprietor was waiting impatiently at the front door.

"You've taken long enough," he said. "Good-by to you and your dog—and what kind of a shenanigan is this, anyway?"

"Someone he knows has been here," answered Samuel Culver. "Will you tell me who had that room last night, or yesterday? The third door to the left from the head of the stairs."

"What you want to know about *him?*" asked the proprietor. "I dunno who you're talking about, anyway."

"I think he's the master of this dog," insisted Culver.

"Ah, damn the dog!" said the old man, and pushed Culver through the door.

He stood for a moment on the porch, adding up, while the dog kept nuzzling the pocket which held the treasure. What human picture came to him with the scent of the cross, Culver would have given much to know; but all he could tell was that he had found a lodestone to which the dog now pointed, as though a powerful magnet had been placed near a compass and drawn it from its true north.

The whole sidewalk for the moment was clotted with a heavy traffic, and into the thick of it the dog pushed himself with return of the old eagerness of the trail. Culver, surprised and pleased, followed the leash once more until he identified the subject of this new quest. It was a stocky man with red hair that bristled out beneath his hat, and a fire-red neck; a thick-set, powerful man of thirty or more, who walked with a sailor's swaggering step.

They had come almost to this stranger when a change of the traffic lights cut off the crowd. The dog's quarry crossed the street in a hurry as the east-west traffic began to flow, leaving Culver impatiently on the edge of the curb. That impatience grew as he saw his man enter a taxi. All he gained was a glimpse of the profile, a stubbed and blunted profile with apelike brows that jutted out almost as much as the nose. The taxi carried him away, while the dog, without putting the least tension on the leash, reared and whined in his desire to follow.

There was only one way to follow now, and luck brought an empty cab past them at this moment. Culver stopped it with a wave of his hand.

"That cab down there in the next block—follow it—follow it fast. Catch up with it, will you? I've got to speak to that man."

He had the dog inside. They started on the jump as he slammed the door and sat forward on the edge of his seat. The gray dog watched also, hanging his head out the window and pointing forward anxiously. The pursuit kept weaving toward the north until they started up the sharp slope of Telegraph Hill. Then the inevitable happened. A change of the lights cut them off at the next corner. Culver groaned till he saw the cab that led them actually pulling up to the curb in full view. It had paused in front of a small house with a splash of green garden running down to the sidewalk. It was a white house, and there was a girl in white in front of it with the sun glistening on her dress; and the sun made a red jewel out of her hair, as she chatted with the man who had stepped from the cab. The traffic light fortunately changed as the stocky fellow turned back to his taxi, but unfortunately a truck had forged ahead too far, and a traffic officer appeared from nowhere to deliver a lecture, together with a ticket. He halted everything in the meantime; before he stepped back and waved the automobiles on their way, all hope was gone from poor Culver. He stopped the car and paid his fare on the far side of the street. Once more the price of Butcher's "Poetics" had disappeared from his pocket; he felt it like the loss of blood.

There remained nothing before him that offered even the shadow of a clue except the girl in the white dress. He headed for her with the dog at his side, pointing again continually at the pocket in which the ebony cross was hidden.

Chapter Five

THE fog had broken up, and the sun was making white crystal of the girl's dress as she leaned with a trowel to work

at her garden. When Culver came to the edge of the lawn, he took off his hat and waited. The dog sat down with his muzzle pressed against the pocket which held the treasure. How to begin such a conversation as this, Culver had very little idea, so he stood waiting until the girl looked up.

"Do you want something?" she asked.

"I can't say that I do, or that I have a right—" said Culver, and halted, finding that words came with difficulty.

"Should I know you?" she asked. "I'm no good at remembering faces. Or do you know me? What a magnificent dog! What a *glorious* dog!"

She held out her hand toward him; though his back was turned, he seemed to sense the gesture, and that soul-stopping snarl came out of his throat as he whirled about.

"Steady, boy," cautioned Culver. "I'm sorry," he apologized.

"That doesn't matter," said the girl. "You can't ask pretty manners out of a thunderbolt, can you? What's his name?"

"I don't know," said Culver.

"Hi, Sally!" called a voice from the open house-door. "Hi! I've got it!"

He was a streamlined young man of at least a 1940 model. The sweeping way in which he brushed his hair, the easy room which his legs found in his trousers without disturbing their pressed edge, and the sea-brown color of his face were all even more than up-to-date.

"I've got it, old girl!" he called again. "Right on the nose! Come on in and hear Australia."

"Coming in a minute, Tommy," answered Sally, and turned back to Culver with the smile for Tommy still shining in her eyes.

"'Not for the words but for the manner of them,'" quoted Culver. "'Not for the face, but something shining through it.' A very handsome young man. A brother, perhaps—or a husband?"

"Not a brother," said Sally. "And not quite a husband."

"I hope the good day will come soon," answered Culver. "How frank you are! How charmingly frank and open! Hidden thoughts leave a shadow on the face, as some one says, somewhere. Was it beautiful old Firdusi?"

"Who was he?" asked the girl.

"He was one of the modern Persian poets. Well, not exactly modern, but not so many centuries ago. But Tommy has something to show you, and I must not keep you here."

The girl smiled and was turning to go when something stopped her to say: "But wasn't there something you wanted to know, at first?"

"Was there?" echoed Culver, rather at sea, for it was easy for him to grow absent-minded at the slightest provocation. "Ah, but of course there was: I wanted to ask about the man who was in the taxicab, the one who spoke to you."

"Do you know him?" she asked.

"I don't," said Culver. "But I've an idea that he is the master of this dog. I picked him up, straying, the other day, and his heart is breaking to get home."

"But he's devoted to you. He won't leave you for an instant!"

"I have a relic of his master in my pocket. That's why he stays so close," answered Culver, sighing. "There's a special beauty about that, don't you think? A devotion so perfect that even a trinket is loved because the master has touched it?"

IT seemed to Culver that something about these words drew the girl so that she came a little closer to him.

"I'd like to know you," she said.

"Would you?" asked Culver, astonished. "You would like to know *me?* But you may, of course, as much as you please. That is to say, when I've found the dog's master, and then a job."

"Are you out of work?" she asked, puckering her forehead.

"Oh, I'll find something presently," said Culver. "But I'm keeping you from Tommy still. If you only could tell me where I can find the man who was just talking to you—"

"I haven't the slightest idea," she answered. "He wanted to know if I could locate another man for *him*. Walter Toth, an uncle of mine that I haven't seen or heard of for a dozen years. He wanted to know if I could give them an idea where Walter Toth might be—somewhere in the South Seas; and I hadn't the foggiest notion. So he left—like that. I never saw him before."

"What a pity!" murmured Culver.

"Look!" said the girl. "Come in a moment and talk to Tommy. His father is putting men to work all the time. Lumber. It wouldn't be much of a job, but it might be a stop-gap. *Do* come in."

"Won't I disturb you?" asked Culver.

But she had him by the arm, drawing him forward in spite of the tremendous snarling of the dog. Culver, bewildered by this cordiality, tied the dog to the

"You can't ask pretty manners out of a thunderbolt, can you?" said the girl.

hand-rail by the steps, and went inside with her. It was a double house, with the girl's family living in one side of it and Tommy on the other.

Thomas Wiley was standing back from his work and wiping his hands.

"It's going to knock them over, Sally," he said. "They'll have to put that on every good radio in the world, I think; and when the cash begins to come in—"

He looked steadily at her. The girl flushed with happiness, but she touched Culver with a brief gesture. "Mr. Culver's out of work," she said. "Tommy, your father can help him, somehow."

"If you say so, he can and will," answered Tommy. "Will you tell me what you can do, Mr. Culver?"

"I could do translation," said Culver.

"What languages?" asked Tommy.

"The Romance tongues, of course," said Culver, "and the Scandinavian and German and Dutch, also Russian and Chinese; my Japanese is quite imperfect, I'm sorry to say. And in Arabic I'm a little out of touch. I'm sorry about that, too."

"In lumber!" exclaimed the girl.

This singular remark caused Tommy to wince a little. "But lumber is the old man's job, after all," he said. "Mr. Culver, could you keep books?"

"What a pity!" sighed Culver. "My own accounts never will tally correctly. So I'm quite sure that I couldn't keep books."

"Have you ever done any selling? Canvassing? Anything like that?"

"I'm sorry that I've had no experience," apologized Culver. "But if there were a place in the business requiring manual labor, that would be an advantage to me."

"Ah?" said the girl, with a strange iron in her voice. "Have you done manual labor?"

"No. I've worked in an express office as a writer of labels, you understand. But I think manual labor would be better. It would pay as much, and it would leave me without the necessity of taking exercise."

"Yes. It would do that," said Sally, looking sternly at Tommy. "It would save that time for you. Now, Mr. Culver, Tommy is going to think of something. Will you come to dinner?"

"To dinner?" asked Culver, amazed. "But I never go out!"

"I want you to come. Come for dinner, please," she said. "In my house just next door. . . . Romance languages—that means you know French and Spanish and Italian, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said Culver. "You take all three in a breath, don't you think? They're so thoroughly rooted in Latin."

"In a breath?" repeated the girl. "Well, will you come to dinner—tonight?"

"How very kind of you!" said Samuel Culver. He went toward the door.

"At seven-thirty," said the girl. "Tommy will have thought of something."

"I shall be here," said Culver. "It's odd," he murmured as he paused in the doorway. "I feel as though the burdens had been taken away." He looked into the girl's face without seeing her features. "I think I understand now," said Culver, "what the poets mean by the touch of ultimate grace."

HE left the house on Telegraph Hill in a pleasant haze so unusual that he almost forgot the dog walking beside him as he swung along on the way toward home. When an explanation came to him, the shock of it stopped him stock-still on a corner curb.

Pity! It might be pity that had stirred her. Suddenly he wished to be alone with his books, immersed in the uncounted centuries of them, walled in by their eloquence and their wisdom; for only the dead speak words that are not barbed with poison; only the dead speak like the gods from a height. The sense of shame threw a shadow over the sky.

Someone said: "Heads up, fellow!"

That was the tall young policeman who had come to the rescue of Mrs. Lindley.

Culver halted.

"The next time you walk that dog out with no license, I'm going to take and jam him in the pound, and they'll give him a whiff of gas," said the policeman. He gave Culver a sneer, and walked on. And as he walked, he laughed.

He laughed, and Tommy had smiled. From the very beginning it had been like that for Samuel Pennington Culver. His schoolmates, in the old days, had laughed in his face, or smiled. There were always the poverty-stricken clothes, and that earnest, patient, plodding manner. It was as though the rest of the world possessed some superior knowledge of life and the ways of society which for his part he lacked. Perhaps it was that sense of difference which had caused him to make his isolation more perfect and shelter himself in the world of his books.

Culver reached the rooming-house. As he pushed open the front door, the shrill voice of Mrs. Lindley came down the stairs.

"Culver?" she asked.

"Yes," he called back.

"Have you got that filthy brute of a dog with you?"

"I have the dog," he admitted.

"Well, you'll have to get him out," she shouted. "I won't have him around the place. This aint a kennel. And there's six dollars and fifty cents for the glazier for fixing the broken window. I'll thank you to have that ready for me in the morning!"

When he got in the room, he removed the muzzle of the dog. He was thirsty, which reminded him that the dog might be, also, so he filled a basin with water and put it on the floor. The big fellow stood over it and wolfed it up with a passionate need. And somehow the ache went out of Culver's heart, for a moment.

But how could he avoid returning to the white house? That was the problem which troubled him most. He looked anxiously toward the bright new pane in the window. Six dollars and fifty cents!

He dared not give the animal the freedom of the room if window-smashing was the order of the day, so he tied the leash to the leg of the bed and went to his books. But they were no good. Nothing would stay in his mind. . . .

Something had to be done about the white house. He went to the hall telephone. He found the number of a Thomas Wiley on Telegraph Hill and called it. That clear young voice, easily recognizable, returned to him over the wire.

"Mr. Wiley," said Culver, "I regret that I cannot come this evening for dinner. Will you tell the lady? The fact is that I can't leave my dog in my room without having him break up things; and if I take him into the street, I'll be arrested for having no license for him."

"He can't come," translated the voice of Wiley, full of an obvious relief. "Dog won't let him go." . . . . Then he added: "Wait a moment. Sally wants to speak to you."

"This is Sally Franklin," she was saying. "Mr. Culver, are you sure that you can't break away? I've been counting on seeing you again."

"It would be pleasant," answered Culver, tasting and retasting the sound of her voice. "But unless you could come here, I don't see how—and of course you and Mr. Wiley wouldn't want to—"

"Come there for dinner? Of course we'd come there!" cried the girl.

A dim roar of protest sounded in the distance.

"Tommy couldn't make it, but *I'll* make it. May I come?" she was asking.

Another roar of protest issued from the background. With dismay, Culver thought of his room, heaped and crowded with books. But what could he say? He found himself giving his address. Seven o'clock would be the hour for the meal. He was not to make any special preparations. She would have exactly what *he* had intended for himself.

"Rice?" he thought. Would she have been contented with rice—and apples bought at a third the usual rate because they were unsound and had to have the spots of dry rot cut out of their cheeks?

No, he would have to get something else for her.... This brought him again to the money question. From his remaining store he counted out the six dollars and fifty cents which was the cost of the windowpane, and discovered with a stone-cold heart that there remained to him exactly fifteen cents in silver and three in copper. He looked wildly around his room. In the entire world he had nothing worth a price with the exception of his books. The thought shocked him as a blasphemy would have shocked the high priest of a temple. Yet he picked up a whole armful of his treasures, jammed a hat on his head, and went out, with a feeling that the deluge was upon him.

He went to Farbenstein's, first.

"Mr. Farbenstein," said Samuel Culver, "I have to cook a meal for a lady. Will you kindly tell me what I should give her?"

"A lady? *You* cook a meal for a lady?" echoed Farbenstein. "Young or old?"

"Young, if you please," said Culver.

"Young, eh?" snapped Farbenstein. "Then it looks as though it was *your* pleasure, not mine, Mr. Culver. For a young lady, make it steak. Young ladies once ate chicken wings, and didn't cost much. But young ladies today ride horses and hit golf balls and swim and tennis, and they eat steak—rare. A good tenderloin or a fine sirloin at fifty-five cents a pound; and baking potatoes; and a head of lettuce; and oil and vinegar and English mustard for a dressing; and best coffee; and maybe a grapefruit to begin, and ice cream for ending it. If eating is the end, eh?"

He leered at Culver.

"I'll be back," said Culver, sickened by the face of the man, and by the thought of this mountainous expense. "How much for everything?"

"Why, maybe two dollars and a half would almost cover everything," answered Farbenstein.

Two dollars and a half! Culver could live for eight days on such a sum; but perhaps it was fine food that gave to Sally Franklin the aroma and the delicacy of beauty in spite of her deviation from the classical canon. Perhaps it was the abandon of gay good living that enabled other people to smile down at Culver's vegetarian existence?

REACHING the shop of James McPherson, he paused at the entrance of the cellar store to inhale for a moment that musty fragrance which roused in his imagination a chorus of dim, great voices from the past.

"Ah-ha!" called a rusty voice.

There was James McPherson, nodding and smiling. He was a pale old man with skin almost as white as his hair. "Here is the Butcher. I knew you'd be back for it. I knew you'd be back!"

Culver, descending, said: "This time I've come to sell, not to buy."

"To sell? To sell?" said McPherson, losing his smile. "What's happened to you, Mr. Culver? Not whisky? Not women, I hope?"

He teetered forward a little, staring at the glasses of Culver, trying to penetrate his mind. The mere mention of women, it was plain, roused up the evil in every man!

"Well," said McPherson, "what have you brought me?"

"I don't know," answered Culver, and put the pile of books on a table.

"You don't know, eh?" gasped McPherson. "Are you daft, man? Bringing me books that you don't know?"

"Ah, I know them well enough," said Culver, identifying them with one sweeping glance. His heart seemed to go out of him with his breath, as he spoke. "It's the Spinoza that I can do best without, because I have two other sets of him. I can do without the Spinoza. But not the Lucian. It's Gluckman's Lucian, and I can't do without that!"

He reached out anxious hands toward the volumes. If he were leaving his Lucian, was he not leaving all tiptoe gayety and charming frivolity out of his life? What is Voltaire but a handful of thumbs compared with the exquisite touch of Lucian?

"Not Lucian!" repeated Culver. "But what will you give me for the Spinoza? I paid you more than three dollars for the set."

"*You* paid!" snarled McPherson. "*You* paid for a fine, crisp set, clean and clear.

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the unknown is what we fear; but light suggests knowledge, and knowledge is beauty, and beauty knowledge. Keats, of course, said it in different words. You permit me to make the note?"

The startled look was quite gone from her eyes. Instead, they crinkled a bit at the corners as she watched him.

"Of course I permit you," she said. "And I suppose," she added, "that my mouth *is* crooked."

"It is," agreed Culver, who knew nothing except to speak the truth. "It's singular, isn't it, that although my eye tells me that you are far from the Phidian canon, far, even from the ideals of Scopas or Praxiteles, yet at the same time a voice, or a warmth rather than a voice, a spirit inside me keeps telling my heart that you are perfectly lovely."

"This is very strange, of course," said the girl, and she looked him straight in the eye with a certain sternness.

"But obviously you are unlike other people, as Sappho was unlike other poets. They speak; she sings. You remember the lines—"

"I don't read Greek," she said.

"Not really!" cried Culver. "I would have said that you were all Greek. How many people have laughed at me, and always given me pain. But your laughter was a delight."

"Was it?" she said, and laughed again.

He was enchanted. "Continue! Encore! Encore!" he cried.

"But I can't laugh forever," she said, laughing still.

"If you could see yourself," said Culver, "you never would stop. You are touched by a miracle, when you laugh. It is something which I never could put in my notebook. This is how Euphrosyne laughed, and all the Olympians could not keep themselves from happiness. Oh, Homer, now I understand!"

"WHAT is it you understand?" asked the girl.

"What the old men thought to themselves as they sat on the walls of Troy," answered Culver. "But you are eating nothing. And it is growing cold."

"How can I eat, when you talk to me like this?" she wanted to know. "Do you often talk as you've been talking to me?"

"No, never," said Culver, anxiously. "Because I never talk with women."

"You will, however," she stated.

"I don't think so," he told her.

"Oh, but you will, and you mustn't," she said.

"I won't, then," agreed Culver humbly. "Will you tell me what I said that was wrong?"

"I can't tell you," she answered, shaking her head. "It's something that you simply have to know."

"I want to learn. Perhaps from you," said Culver, "I can learn why people always have smiled at me, and laughed behind my back. But you, laughing to my face, have been only delightful."

"If people have smiled at you," she said, "it's because your eyes have been too high to watch where your feet were stumbling."

"That is something I shall have to consider before I understand it," said Culver, attentive as a pupil in a class. . . . "Have you eaten all you can?"

"And everything was delicious," she said. "I've never had such a good time. Why does your face fall when I say that?"

"As Goethe says—and sometimes he was both good and wise: 'One sees the intention and becomes depressed.' So I see your intention of kindness, and I am a little depressed. Forgive me. I know

there has been nothing here but poor food, and bad service, and a crowded room—"

He looked around him and it seemed to him that he was seeing his room for the first time.

"I have brought you into a kennel!" said Culver. "And I have given you nothing but cold food, and talk!"

"But such talk!"

"It offended you!"

"Offended? It will never be out of my ears. It will ring and ring in my ears. I'll never be really unhappy again. I've only to remember what you've said about me, and then I'll have to appreciate my own company. It was hardly talk at all."

"You have made me feel rich," he said. "You have taken all the trouble away. Like Hope. You know the fable."

"Of Pandora? Thank God, I do!"

"Why do you say it in such a way?" he asked.

"Because I *am* thankful to know one thing that you refer to!"

"Ah, I refer to books—I am too bookish, and sometimes people don't quite understand. I shall make a note of that and try to be better," said he.

"If you change yourself in one slightest way, I'll never forgive you," said the girl. "But the world will change you soon enough, probably—in spite of these fences and walls of books that you've built around yourself. . . . Speaking of that, here is a note that Tommy sent for you. You are to take it to his father's office. And now—it is ten; but I wish I could stay for hours and hours more."

"If you wish that, it is almost the same as though you had stayed," said Culver. "And it gives me permission to imagine you still in the room until midnight and after—which will be very companionable and pleasant."

She looked at the floor, at the books, and then at Culver. She said nothing at all. The silence endured for an alarming moment until he said:

"Is that something which I should not have told you?"

Still she considered for an instant before she said: "No. I think you can say anything to me. But *only* to me."

"Because other people would not understand?" he questioned.

"That's exactly it. They wouldn't understand," replied the girl.

He went out with her to the front porch. He walked down the steps with her to the street. It was a clear night.

"See how clean the sky is!" said Culver, as he took her to her car. "As though the fog had been used to wash it this morning."

"Do you need those huge lenses in order to see?" she asked.

"I'm afraid I do," he said.

"Will you take them off for a moment?"

"Certainly," he agreed, and removed them from his nose.

"Can you see me now?"

"Yes, I can see you. But it's rather a misty picture."

"Are you going to work yourself quite blind?" she asked.

"Don't pity me, please," urged Culver. "I have a wonderfully happy life, in fact. That is, I've always thought it was happy. . . . But don't pity me, will you?"

He could see her, rather vaguely, lift her hand to her lips, and then the fingertips touched his eyes quickly and lightly. It surprised Culver so much that he had not even wits to say good-night, as she slipped into the car and drave away.

Chapter Seven

CULVER returned to his room and forced his hands to obey him until the dishes were washed. There was a great deal of the meat left. He cut it small and fed it to the dog. It was wolfed down greedily, and his hand was licked clean afterward.

It was easy to advance to this stage of familiarity with the huge beast; but not a step farther—the moment the feeding obviously was ended, the big dog turned away his head, truly like a nobleman from his gutter-bred servant. It came over Culver that he could serve the beast for a thousand years and be no nearer to him than poor Egyptian peasants were to Anubis, the divine jackal.

When he stood up and looked about him, it was extraordinary how small and wretched the room appeared. A singular unrest possessed him, body and soul, and he determined to take the dog for a night excursion.

So he muzzled the big dog and took him on the leash down to the street. At once he found himself being led—heading down for the waterfront again. There was no turning up side streets on this occasion. Instead, the dog took him across the big open thoroughfare in front of the piers and led him close to the piers for block after block. He turned to the right, at last, to a pier-side where a

three-masted sailing-ship was tethered by ropes that looked inadequate to the work. There was enough stir in the hull to keep the mast-heads swinging slightly across the stars.

The dog became more and more excited as he drew near the gangplank. Culver had small chance to take special note of the craft, except that the bow was extraordinarily fine.

"Yeah, and who are you, buddy?" asked a man from the waist of the ship, standing up out of the shadows.

"The dog," said Culver, "seems to know this vessel. And I had an idea that perhaps someone here might tell me the name of his master."

"Wait a minute," said the sailor.

He walked aft to the break of the poop and sang out: "Hi, Mister!"

A voice roared an indistinct answer.

"There's a mug here with Napico," said the sailor.

Footfalls sounded aft. A man came out and stood looming big against the sky.

"You're batty, Joe," he said.

"Take a look for yourself down there in the gangplank," answered Joe.

"Mister" hurried down the ladder to the deck and was instantly at the gangplank.

"Yeah. It's him," he said. "By God, it *is* him. Leave go the line, stranger, and let him come aboard."

"Certainly," said Culver; but as he saw that alert figure of the dog and felt the tremor coming up the tautness of the line, his heart was pinched small. If he let the leash go, the dog would be gone with it, forever; and presently a whole ocean would lie between him and this strange event. For the dog, he felt, had been like an opening door which had admitted him already into a new existence, and the promise of things still more strange. It was due to the dog that he had been led to Sally Franklin, for instance, and her name was no longer a poison in the air he breathed.

"I wonder," said Culver, "if I could find the master of the dog on board?"

"Sure. He belongs here, don't he?" asked Mister. "If you can see anything, you can see that!"

"But his master?" asked Culver.

"I'm his master," said Mister. "Come along like a good fellow, Pico."

The dog answered first with a shuddering vibration that Culver felt distinctly up the strap, and then with a growl of murderous hatred.

"Why, damn you!" said Mister. "Why, damn you, I've got a mind to brain you, you—"

"Look, Mister," said Joe, "what good is that cut-throat to us now? Who wants him aboard, anyway? Who ever *would* want him, except—"

"Shut that crazy mouth of yours, will you?" commanded Mister. "I didn't hear your name, sir?"

"Because I didn't speak it," said Culver, with his customary frankness. "But my name is Samuel Culver."

"I knew a Sam Cutler in New Orleans, one voyage," said Mister. "He was a fine hand with the cards, and at dice he was no slouch, either. Why don't you come on board for a minute or two, and the skipper will be along."

"I thought you said that *you* were the owner of the dog?" asked Culver.

"Why, I'm the mate of the *Spindrift*," answered Mister. "I'm Jerry Burke, and when the Old Man's below, I'm on deck in his name over everything in the ship. I stand in his place most of the time, d'you see, and that's why I said that I was the brute's master. Though God knows, there's only one master for him in the world. Come aboard for a yarn, Mr. Cutler, and the skipper will be along in no time at all."

Culver went aboard. There was a certain unwillingness in his feet, and a weakness in his knees of which he was aware; and he knew that a voice was calling him a fool, for there was something smugly sinister about Jerry Burke; the ship's lantern showed him smiling and extending a welcome with his waving hand, and yet there was a sneer behind his smiling, as though he despised the fool who trusted his words and could not keep his contempt from showing its teeth.

YET Culver's feet took him up the gangplank. He saw a strip as of metal between the wharf and the side of the *Spindrift*. That was the water of the bay gleaming faintly. Crossing that, he entered that other and outer world of the sea, with its new language and new laws. He stepped down on the deck, and at once felt beneath his feet the slight motion, the liquid sway and yielding of the ship as it wavered beside the pier, as though even in harbor she still felt the danger of the sea.

He looked up to the wide-spreading yards, then down to the slender hull, and wondered. Even in her sleep she stirred beside the pier with dreams of the ocean.

"Now what you think of our giblet pie?" asked the mate, following Culver's glance.

"Giblet pie?" echoed Culver.

"I mean," said Mister, "that the *Spindrift* is all wings and legs. She's been a flyer, brother. She's had her Melbourne days, her China days, and she's been blackbirding, too."

"*Spindrift — Spindrift —*" murmured Culver. "I think that I've heard of the name."

The dog was at the far end of the leash, still trembling, and facing right aft, forgetting even to snarl at Mister.

"You think you've heard the name," echoed the mate. "Maybe you've heard of *Cutty Sark*, and *Thermopylae*, and God Almighty too! But the fact is that this isn't the great *Spindrift* that wore the big main course, the biggest mains'l in the China Sea. This is a sort of a stepdaughter of that old girl, as you might say."

"Extremely interesting," said Culver; "but since the skipper is not here, I'd better go back. I'll leave my name and address, if he wants to come for the dog."

"Why, but he'll be back in a minute," said Burke. "I'll hold the dog, if you want."

He looked past Culver and made a motion with his head. Culver felt rather than saw the other sailor step behind him. All the logic of his mind told him that there could be no danger. But all the instinct in him was crying out.

"I'd better keep the dog till I'm sure," said Culver.

"Till you're sure?" shouted Burke in a sudden rage. "Can't you see that the dog's at home?"

There was a good deal of truth in that, of course; but Culver answered: "It seems to me that this dog isn't at home either on a ship or on shore, anywhere, until he finds his master. That's what I'm interested in. Not the places he's familiar with, but the man who owns him. . . . Have you anybody on board," he added, "who dares to take the muzzle off that dog?"

There was a bit of a silence. Culver felt more assured than ever.

"If there's anybody on the ship," he said, "who has the courage to do that, I'll leave the dog on board."

"Or else?" asked Burke.

"Or else, I'll have to take him back."

"All right, Joe," said Mister.

Something stirred behind Culver. He whirled about and stepped back from the shadow of the coming blow. He saw the face of Joe twisted up so that the eyes became almost invisible; but his teeth were grinning as his lips stretched back in a wide contortion of the mouth. He had had to work up his resolution quickly for this act. He was not striking straight out. It was a down-pawing motion. There was enough of the boxer in Culver to block the striking hand, but something whipped over his raised arm. . . . The leather-covered blackjack struck him squarely between the eyes and dropped him into a thousand miles of darkness, a pit into which he kept sinking, sinking.

Chapter Eight

DEEP in that pit of darkness presently voices were shouting; it seemed that many hands were tapping at a door. Culver wakened and thought he was in hell.

He was in a room with curving walls and a huge iron windlass in the middle, sweating with damp. He saw this through a fog and reek of tobacco smoke. He saw it through a mist, as it were, of many odors—the smell of wet rust, and sweat, and dunnage, and tar, and the sea. He knew that he was in the forecastle of a ship. The tapping was the constant pound of the waves under the prow, now one by one, now in hurried rushings.

Through this mist of smoke and stench, he saw men drunkenly swaying, shouting, singing, talking. It roared into his ears in a tumultuous babble.

"*'A hare, a parson, or a captain's wife—'*" someone was singing.

Then: "Who's seen my chest? The lashings is round sennit and damn' diamond hitchin'—"

"*'Casey Jones, with a hammer in his hand—'*"

"You take Star plug, it has more molasses in it—"

"Where's my chest? My God, I done them lashings over wire!"

"'Belay that,' says the skipper, hot as hell. The squarehead up and answers: 'You damn' old barnacle, belay that—sir!' The Old Man jumped right off the break of the poop and come forward with a rope's end—"

"For God's sake, where's my chest?"

Culver shook his head to clear the mist away, the fog through which the figures moved obscurely. Then he realized that his glasses were gone. They must have been smashed to flinders by the blow which had knocked him senseless.

He was lying across a yard that bucked and trembled like wild horses. . . . He thought of Burke, and murder came up in him.

He lifted his hand to his face. His fingertips slipped in blood. The cut ran up from between his eyes to his hair, angling to the left a little.

He took the hand down. His head began to throb with increasing pain as fuller consciousness returned to him. Then, just above him, he saw the obscure face of Joe.

"Well, you've come out of it, have you? I thought I'd cracked your skull for you. I told Burke there was no need to bash you down like that. But he's got a cock-eyed idea that nobody but you could handle the damned dog. And maybe he's right. How'd you come to get so chummy with that man-eater?"

Culver thought of the senseless body in the gutter. He thought of the teeth that had closed over his arm the other night. There was no use trying to explain how he had walked the edge of a cliff of danger, so to speak, before the big fellow had accepted him as a millionaire accepts a servant. He had no words for explaining; but he said: "I must go back on shore."

"Sure, sure!" said Joe. "Sure you'll go ashore. Four or six or eight thousand miles south, you'll go ashore. Don't you worry about that, brother."

Joe disappeared, and the beating of the waves of the sea seemed to grow louder. Culver tried to think. There was no brain in his head for the effort. "Four or six or eight thousand miles south!"

But there were his books in his room. What would happen to them?

Besides, he had to see Thomas Wiley's father, the next morning, and get whatever job the charity of Sally had provided for him. He had to see her, also, and thank her again. He had not thanked her enough, the night before.

A voice roared, entering the forecastle. Mighty shoulders butted the mist aside.

"Lay all aloft and loose the sails. All hands, there! Lay aloft!" the voice was shouting.

Sails—and this was the age of steam. There could not be anything to this dream of the *Spindrift*, and the dog, and Mister, and the blow with a blackjack.

A big hand took him by the hair of the head and jerked him out of the bunk. It seemed as though the top of his head had come off, cut away by a red-hot knife.

He sat up, ready to fight. The mighty form had passed on, jerking other men out of bunks. They staggered with liquor and sleep. Some of them mumbled: "All right, bosun. Laying aloft—"

The men were crowding out from the reek of the forecastle; the bosun kicked the loiterers on their way as Culver came to his feet again. The bosun had a face like a child's, smooth and gross, the face of a fat child on top of an enormous body. "Step lively, you!" he shouted. "Lay aloft!"

"I have to go ashore—" said Culver.

HE saw the blow coming, but his dim eyes could not tell how to block it. It caught him on the tip of the chin and slammed him against the wall, stunned.

"Now lay aloft, will you?" roared the bosun.

Culver staggered after the others. The foot of the bosun helped him out on deck.

But there was no use trying to fight back. He kept saying that to the animal which was beginning to rage inside him. There was no use trying to fight back through the twilight that covered his eyes. He had to be a sheep, driven by the shepherd's dog.

On deck, the sea-wind cut him through his wound to the brain. Lights on either hand drifted back behind them, like glow-worms in the dark hedges of an August night. That was San Francisco over there on the left. They were through the Golden Gate. The great bridge spanned the sky behind them with a single leap. The pilot-boat lay off in the near distance, and the pilot was going out to it in a small skiff. The tug which had brought the *Spindrift* out of harbor lay right ahead on the towline.

"All hands aloft!"

Culver looked up and saw against the sky the masts and the cordage like spider webs of infinite confusion. The mast heads went right up among the stars.

"Follow me, buddy," said a voice.

Culver followed, licking his lips and tasting his own blood.

He climbed the ratlines, feeling his way with hands and feet toward each separate hold, for his eyes left everything a mist. It was like a dream in which he chased a monkey through a forest in a cold, naked winter, a forest of thin shadows with branches of dimness wavering before his straining eyes.

WHEN he reached the lubber's hole at the top of the foremast, he would have gone up through it, but the voice of his teacher called: "Don't go that way. Learn right if you're gonna learn at all. You follow Alec!"

He followed Alec, clambering out until his body hung almost horizontal above the deck, then swarming up again. Already they were a frightful distance above the deck, and the *Spindrift* was rocking in a sharp seaway.

"Now you're taking the proper sailor's road aloft," said Alec. "You'll learn, but you're slow with your hands, and that's hell afloat."

"My eyes are bad," said Culver. "I've got to get ashore. I've been shanghaied. Can I get ashore?"

"Sure, somewhere in the South Seas," answered Alec. "Now look alive and be a sailor. A sailor's hands has gotta be his brains. He thinks with 'em. The sea-air will fix up your eyes, all right. You watch me, and do the same things."

He followed Alec, trying to obey. But he kept saying in the emptiness of his heart: "South Seas! South Seas!"

How far that was from the study of the mysterious Etruscan past, where the voice of Etruria some day would be made to appear, perhaps, and a tongue be given to a whole dead civilization! Even the face of Mrs. Lindley began to seem friendly and full of cheer, as he remembered the life from which he had come; but chiefly there was that beautiful opportunity wasted of finding employment with the Wiley lumber company; and there were other unnamed happinesses which he felt, though he hardly could give them name and face.

HE was lying across a yard that bucked and trembled like wild horses. He climbed dwindling rigging until it shook and gave uneasily. He was up there in the cold, windy sky, miles above his old life, miles above the deck, so that the thought of the downward journey took the breath and the heart out of him.

There were gaskets to be loosed. Other sails were being set. The wind got into them. The lights, thinly scattered along the shore, drew off into a far immensity of radiance which with its fingertips touched the clouds. That was San Francisco. That was life. And time was sliding away beneath him like a fast-flowing river. Wasted time, weeks, perhaps months of it, stolen out of his life.

He thought of Burke, and murder came up in him.

Other blots and clots of darkness clambered in the rigging of other masts. The sails were blooming like dim flowers against the dark of the sea. Suddenly the *Spindrift* heeled over, far over, and slithered him from his foot-rope. His left hand lost its grip. He hung by the slack of a rope with his right hand only, and clawed his way back to the mast.

"I thought you were gone!" shouted Alec. "But you got a pair of hands. They may be slow, but you got a pair of hands. Once you get your feet under you, you'll make a sailor. We'll want you in the port watch. I'll tip the second mate the wink. We'll want you, brother."

The lifted voice of Burke shouted from aft: "Cast off the tug!"

Another voice in the bows roared through a megaphone: "Cast off the towline!"

The thin streak of darkness that connected the *Spindrift* with the tug, and which was the last spider-thread of hope

that linked Samuel Culver with the land, disappeared. Men on the forecastle began to hand in the line on the run, looping it down on the deck.

Orders shouted up to them. They went down to the deck again, Culver hurrying as he tried to keep pace with Alec. But Alec was as active in the rigging as an ape.

Now the headsails were loosed, the topgallants followed. He was hauling on ropes here, ropes there, with the elbow of Alec in his ribs from time to time to spur him on. The wind was taking them strongly. The lightship rocked away, became hull down. Except for that light, the horizon was a great bowl of darkness, and through everything blew a new, thin voice of music, the wind in the rigging.

He stood idle for a moment. The sails climbed up the sky on pyramids of blue, all standing to the royals, filled with wind, and each seeming to have a separate voice, like caves of sound.

"Ay, look up," said Alec. "The devil himself would make a proper sailor if he would keep an eye aloft."

There was time now to stow the mooring-lines; as Culver worked, the river ocean flowed beside him, and they passed out of the darkness into the dawn. He watched the sails turn lustrous apple-green like chrysoprase, then thin alabaster; but when the sea-fog parted above them, letting the sun through, the sails shone like bubbles, frozen hard by the wind.

Some of the trouble went out of Culver as he watched. This was beauty such as he never had seen before; but he felt that his poets, perhaps, had seen it three thousand years before him. Perhaps the great sea-song had first formed in the throat of Homer when he saw the wind lean into a sail and heard the rushing of the bow-wave.

IN the excitement of the work, and the danger aloft, he had forgotten the pain of his wound; and now it seemed that the wound had forgotten him. The ache of it would have been enough to crush Culver, ashore, but at sea it was a trifling thing.

"All hands lay aft! Lay aft!"

He went with the rest, a crowd of yellow, black and white, in clothes already fingermarked with tar and grease. They had their own thoughts. Some of their glances touched the wounded forehead of Culver with casual eyes, as though it were no more than a bit of meaningless print on a page.

The crowd gathered at the after hatch of the ship. Above the break of the poop stood Burke, big, blunt-faced, red of neck. A little round man with a jolly face walked up and down the deck behind him, the only person who moved on the ship as Burke stood there, surveying the crowd.

"There goes Jimmy Green," said Alec, whispering at Culver's shoulder. "Damn him and double damn the rotten swine! Now hark at the Old Man. That's what Burke is, aboard this ship, now that Valdez has gone out of it."

CULVER put the name of Valdez away in his memory for future reference. Burke spoke. His voice was deep, but somehow there was a high whine in it, like a bull-terrier working at a grip.

"I'm gonna say something to the whole of you," he called out. "It's something important. A lot of you are new, and it won't mean much to you, part of what I say. But the old crew will understand. The rest of you, lay it down, frame it, timber it, and calk it tight, because it's the idea that we're sailing by.

"I'm talking about a fellow named Walter Toth. Some of the old crew ought to remember him. They remember the day when we picked him out of the water up at Juneau, a couple of years back. They remember that he was hell-bent on getting to the South Seas to pick up a whole backload of pearls. They remember that they got half drunk and staked him with cash, to make the try, and he was going to give us our split. Well, I won't tell you the whole story. The rest of the boys will tell you that. All I say to the new part of the crew is that you get double pay if the job comes off. And to the old crew, I say that we split up our part of the swag even all around, unless you want to vote extra shares for your officers. Walter Toth is out there dying; and some of us think we know the place where he lies. We're going out there to hunt for him. It's no easy job. It's hard, because everybody that's up against Chinee Valdez is up against something hard."

He paused. Like a sound of the wind, low and complaining, a groan came out of many throats. It came from Alec along with the rest. That name of Valdez took on a new meaning, for Culver.

The next installment will appear, of course, in our May issue.

Illustrated by
Merritt Berger

THE Williamsburg street was dust-thick, and the summer sun was hot; but here in the King's Head was coolness and heady ale and headier company. The House of Assembly was in session, and certain members were more often at the tavern than at the capitol, venting their wordy war with Governor Spottiswood over a mug and a pipe.

Gwynne, walking his shaggy nag through the dust, and aiming for the tavern, drew rein before a new construction bustling with workmen and nearly finished. The city was small, but it was elegant; and this building drew Gwynne's curious stare. He called to one of the workmen, asking its purpose.

"The Governor's new playhouse," came the response. "Going to be opened on Thursday. How's everything in the backwoods?"

Gwynne laughed. "Quiet—as far as the mountains, anyhow!"

He rode on, conscious that his appearance was utterly at variance with the elegance of this capital city, but quite careless of the fact. Here in Williamsburg centered wealth and fashion and the best blood of England transplanted to Virginia; not London nor Bath had finer coaches, more gallant beaux and belles, more lordly and aristocratic a social life. And Gwynne was too obviously one of the backwoods wanderers who came down to tidewater from time to time, especially

The first theater in America—in Williamsburg, Virginia—is the scene of this fascinating story.

By **H. BEDFORD-JONES**

First in America

since Governor Spottiswood had come into power. For the braw governor welcomed these vagrants from the backcountry, which he himself had explored and opened.

Gwynne was long and lean, clad in weathered buckskin and moccasins, a fur cap perched on his uncut hair. His clean-shaven features were also long and lean, very brown, lined by wind and weather; he was barely thirty yet looked much older. Thin lips, thin nostrils, thin strong chin and gray eyes that could laugh or squint at the sun, and a heavy skin-wrapped pack at his saddle: such was the man who rode into the tavern courtyard and dismounted. He handed his reins to the black slave who ran out.

"Put up the horse," he said. "I may be here two or three days. Bring the pack to my room, as soon as I secure one."

Two men were sprawling on a bench, with long pipes. One clapped the other on the knee and pointed.

"Look at the bumpkin!" he cried eagerly, quite regardless that Gwynne must hear the words. "Egad, Martin, there's our *Americus* to the very life! There's our question answered, our problem solved! Have at him, and hire his costume for yourself!"

Martin, a monstrous thin, shabby fellow, looked up with drink-dulled gaze.

"Aye, belike," he said thickly. "Time enough. He's a harmless rogue from the provinces, and I'll think about it."

David Gwynne

Gwynne turned away from them with a catch of his breath. His face tightened and tensed; incredulity flashed in his gaze, to be replaced by a glint of wild, harsh anger. He mastered it and approached the innkeeper, who stood in the doorway regarding him sourly.

"Good day, host," he said in a low voice. "I'll have a private room, if you please."

"You will not, fellow," replied the rubicund host. "With the House in session, and this troupe of players on our hands, we've no room for backwoods vagabonds."

Gwynne smiled. "Come, come! It's a mistake to let the apparel so proclaim the man, my friend. Bestow me in a good room, then send word to the Governor that his friend David Gwynne is here and awaits his commands. And have a barber come to my room, to trim these wild locks. I have some garments in my pack, to be pressed at once. And I want some ale and a bite of food, while the barber's at work."

The rubicund jaw dropped.

"Pardon, your worship!" exclaimed the host, losing his scornful air. "I'll see to it at once. Enter, I pray your worship. The word shall go to His Excellency."

Gwynne walked into the tavern, a thin smile on his thin lips. A harmless rogue, was he? Good God, what a meeting after twelve years! It was now 1718; and it had been 1706 when he had last seen Moonlight Martin in London. Moonlight Martin, and Spark i' the Wind. . . . Was *she* here too? No—he remembered with a familiar pang: She was dead.

"A harmless rogue, am I?" he muttered. "To think that this rascal should be here! After these years! And he didn't know me again, praise be."

The landlord bellowed orders at drawers and tap-boys, and himself conducted Gwynne to a room on the upper floor, out of which a slave was hastily moving some personal effects.

"Those rascally players can double up," said the host. "His Excellency has guaranteed their credit or they'd not be here. Is the chamber to your fancy, sir?"

"Quite," replied Gwynne. "How many players are in this troupe?"

"Four, your worship. The two gentry outside on the bench, Mistress Spark, and the sweet Mistress Sylvia. How she ever came in such company, heaven knows!"

Gwynne's heart stopped. "Who, did you say? Mistress Sylvia?"

"A real lady, your worship," babbled the landlord. "I hear 'twas because of her His Excellency hath given them employ; the others are dirt on her ruffles."

Gwynne drew a deep breath. Sylvia! No, not the same; the name was a common one, and the Sylvia he had known was no longer living.

AN hour passed; he was a different man now, dressed in sober plum-colored garb, white linen at throat and cuffs, hair trimmed and knotted behind. A slave brought word that His Excellency ordered Mr. Gwynne to await him, for he was coming to the tavern.

Gwynne left his room. He sought the narrow stairs; then, at the turn of the landing, he stood aside to let a lady pass. At least, he thought she was a lady until she came up to the landing and saw him. Gasping, she caught at the balustrade, her eyes wide. Despite her silks and laces and wide hat, her face betrayed her quality. Still young, it was a face of ravaged beauty, but brazen and challenging; and her voice was shrill.

"Dick!" The words burst from her. "Dick Lovell!"

Gwynne bowed slightly. "Your pardon, madam. My name is David Gwynne."

"No, no!" She clutched suddenly at his arm. "You know me, Dick, you must know me! You remember Spark, your little Spark i' the Wind? You mind me well! Ye haven't forgot Drury Lane, Dick!"

"A most regrettable mistake, madam." And Gwynne drew himself away. "Some chance resemblance has tricked you, no doubt."

Leaving her silenced and staring after him, he descended the stairs and turned into the taproom. Here a number of gentlemen were sitting over their wine, pipes alight, voices well roused. They were discussing the Governor with some heat, cursing him for a stubborn domineering tyrant. The landlord called abruptly:

"Careful, gentlemen, careful! His Excellency is coming now, here's his coach!"

Gwynne stepped out into the courtyard, warm with the afternoon sunlight.

The gayly painted, heavily rumbling coach was swinging in from the street. Hostlers and slaves were running; the two men on the bench were straightening up in beery respect. The coach halted, and Spottiswood stepped out—a man of forty, a splendid figure in his gold-laced coat and plumed hat, brawny features stamped with resolution and authority.

An eager laugh on his lips, he clapped Gwynne about the shoulders.

"Welcome, welcome! You rogue, why did ye not come at once to the house and stop with me? I'll take you with me now."

"Thanks, no," said Gwynne, smiling. "I've outgrown the ways of civilized folk, Your Excellency; I'm more at home in a tavern, upon my word!"

"Well, you look damned civilized for a man who's kept company with redskins the past year!" declared Spottiswood. "To your room! I'm wild to talk with you."

He led the way in to the tavern and the taproom, with a nod to the two players who saluted him humbly. From one of these, from Martin, broke a gasp and a wild word. He came rushing after, catching hold of Gwynne, staring at him with wide-eyed recognition.

"Dick! Dick Lovell, for the love of heaven!"

"Be off," said Gwynne curtly. Shaking himself loose, he followed the Governor into the taproom, where the drinkers had come to their feet respectfully. Martin, however, was after him, seizing him.

"Wait, wait!" cried the man. "You mind me, Dick? It's Martin! Moonlight Martin, you used to call me.... 'Catch me if you can and a heel in the moon!'"

"Here, here, what's all this hullabaloo?" demanded Spottiswood.

Gwynne freed himself, and gave the staring Martin a severe look.

"Faith, that's what I'd like to know, Your Excellency! Who's this curving shinbone of a fellow? Why, he's a veritable splinter from a haunted house! He hath the air of a weasel in pain. Look at those three teeth that jut above a lip of liver, like gravestones awaiting the companioning death!"

His drawling words were greeted by an outburst of mirth. Martin fell back a step, his lean and scrawny features convulsed by helpless fury. Gwynne continued mercilessly:

"And those hands—what hands! Why, stap me if they're not thick, moist hairy pads like sausages a bailiff has long sat upon! I'll warrant they gather airy loot when they scratch among his thatch! Why such long hair, rogue, except to hide cropped ears? And a pillory look to your hangdog visage as well!"

Martin attempted voluble protest, but Spottiswood, who was shaking with laughter, silenced him with one peremptory word and gesture, then turned to the company.

"Rascal, leave your betters alone. Gentlemen! This is my friend and agent Mr. Gwynne, who has been in command of my trading enterprises in the West. I commend him to your kind attention while he's in the city. Now, Gwynne, to your room! Landlord, send us up some of your best Canary, with tobacco and pipes, and permit no one to disturb us."

They turned to the stairs.

SETTLED at the table in the room above, with tobacco burning and flagons filled, Gwynne made reference to the scene in the taproom.

"Why, the graceless rogue really seemed to think he knew me! Spottiswood, what's all this about a new playhouse and a company of players?"

The Governor stretched out comfortably. "Well, I planned the building to house the trading company, but our fine gentry are slow to back the enterprise; so, for the nonce, I've turned the building into a playhouse. On Thursday, His Majesty's birthday, I'm giving an entertainment at the palace, as they term my house; and we'll go to the play afterward."

Gwynne laughed. "Admirable! But where on earth did the players come from?"

"England. I sent for them. Had to turn off some of them; a varied crew, egad! They were better at pantomime than aught else. With the four remaining, we shall do rather well. One of the company, a Mistress Sylvia, is a most extraordinary person; none of your immoral creatures who infest the theater in Eng-

land, but a lady, a real lady. She's my guest at the palace now, and brightens the whole place. You must meet her. She's gone on a visit today to the Colepeper plantation—she knew one of that family in England."

"I'm not interested in your players," said Gwynne. "The play's the thing, Spottiswood! Do you realize that this will be the first play ever given in these colonies—that your playhouse marks a new high level in culture and civilization, this side the water? A splendid innovation! And you should make money by it, if you keep it up."

"That's not the point," Spottiswood rejoined. "I want to inculcate ideas—I have money enough already. This playhouse should be invaluable, for that purpose. If we can train a few local persons, we'll be able to put on all the London pieces."

"And what piece are you giving on Thursday? What's its name?"

"A new piece, writ for us after my own wishes. 'Americus: a Phantasy,' is the name. It was provided by Sir Charles Hart, a sprightly gay blade who knows the theater. He's one of my guests, also; came down last month from New York."

GWYNNE changed countenance. His smile waned and died; that name struck into his heart like an evil omen.

"Hart, you say?" he repeated slowly. "Sir Charles Hart?"

"Aye, and with a pretty turn to the lines he writes. But never mind all this; let's to more important business." Spottiswood leaned forward and became animated. "Damme, to think I haven't seen you in a full year and more! Gwynne, things have happened. D'ye recall my talk of iron ore? Well, we've actually located it, on the Rapidan River. Aye, and I'm settling a colony of Germans there to work it. Now I'm laboring hard to get the trading company established, and to force the Assembly and the home government to build forts out to the mountains and the headwaters of the Ohio. It's a hard job."

Hard, indeed; the Governor's schemes were both ambitious and expensive. The burgesses were niggardly, England had no money to waste on these colonies, and the energetic Spottiswood was rapidly making himself enemies galore.

"But surely," said Gwynne, "I've accomplished enough to make them all see that the fur trade is tremendously rich, if we can grasp it."

"You've done wonders," came the reply. "From a money standpoint, too. Why, man, your share of the enterprise is making you wealthy!"

"I've left the accounts to you."

"They're well kept. But damme if I can make the Assembly see the point! Those fellows wax rich on tobacco. I've forced 'em to see the value in iron mines, but they won't look twice at the fur trade." Spottiswood sighed. "So much the better for ourselves, you might say, but I'm thinking of the whole province, of this whole vast country!"

"I know," assented Gwynne, frowning over his long clay pipe. "But vision's a hard thing to pass on to other men."

"I want your help," said the other bluntly. "This entertainment and play is no idle pastime. Sir Charles did a good job of writing on 'Americus'; it's aimed to present facts to our friends the burgesses. And I want you there. They tell me you came into town today in your buckskins. Eh?"

"Of necessity, yes."

"Then you're the very man to take the part of *Americus*. You can learn the lines 'twixt now and Thursday—"

"I'll not be here on Thursday."

"Eh?" Spottiswood's keen gaze struck through the smoke, and Gwynne nodded.

"I'm returning in the morning. There are reasons. I can leave with you the list of goods we'll need, and you can have a wagon follow me."

"Are you mad? To make this long trip and then return in a few hours?"

"No," said Gwynne. "Not mad at all. Very sane."

Spottiswood eyed him for a space.

"Gwynne, I've known you ten years or more. We're friends. You've never spoken of the past; I've never asked a question. You're a man of education, a gentleman. Why you left England is none of my business. But I'll not let this nonsense come between us. What's happened, to make you leave here in the morning?"

Gwynne's gray eyes darkened. "Your troupe of players, and Sir Charles Hart. If I stay here, there'll be trouble, perhaps bloodshed. Oh, there's no disgrace in my past! But I've carved out a new life, and I'm sticking to it."

"Hm!" said the other. "I might as well argue with a Tuscarora chief, of course, as with you. So that rascally splinter of a man downstairs really had known you?"

Gwynne nodded again. "Twelve years ago I amused myself by taking stage parts under the name of Dick Lovell. I

played at Drury Lane in the first performance of 'The Recruiting Officer,' the night Nance Oldfield brought it out. The day after, I was drugged and put aboard a ship for the plantations; I woke up at sea to find my life wrecked, and the person I most loved, dead. That was Charles Hart's doing; he had not inherited a title then. It is just as well that we don't meet now—just as well for his safety, I mean."

"So!" The Governor sipped his Canary. "Say the word, and I'll lay Hart by the heels, even if he is my guest! Wilt lay a charge against him?"

"No. Life's too short to go to law where a sword would serve better."

Spottiswood smiled. "So you'd run away. Well, I'll respect your confidence. The person who died—a woman, I presume?"

"A girl," said Gwynne. "The shipmaster and others aboard had word of it; she died that same night, when a coach overturned. It was after the performance," he went on more freely; after all, the pain had been deadened by long years. "She was a young girl from Norfolk, her people dead; the stage attracted her. She was of good birth and was not the kind to follow the loose life of the average player. She was known to the company as Sylvia Paston. Well—I've spoken to no one else of it. Pardon my inflicting it upon you."

"Why, Gwynne, it's an honor! Sink me if it isn't!"

Spottiswood checked himself, eyeing the lined, bitter features of Gwynne sharply. He remained silent, thoughtful, frowning. At last he spoke, slowly.

"You've put me in a difficult position—a devilish difficult position!"

"I have? How?" demanded Gwynne.

Spottiswood waved a hand.

"Never mind; it is nothing, after all. It's getting late, I must leave. Will you do one thing for me?"

"Of course, if possible," said Gwynne. "What is it?"

"Wait here in this room until I send back a messenger with a note from my house." He rose and put out his hand. "And count me a friend who desires to serve you in all ways possible."

WITH this strange request, he stamped out of the chamber, leaving Gwynne staring after him in open astonishment.

Wait here in this room! Well, easily done. Laughing, Gwynne filled his pipe afresh and poured more of the good Canary. It had eased his mind and assuaged the old hurt to impart this confidence to the one man he could trust. He should have told Spottiswood about it long ago, but he had ever shrunk from the subject, keeping it hidden away, himself trying to forget.

Governor Spottiswood

This sudden, unexpected meeting in a far corner of the world had shaken the truth out of him, and he felt better for it.

Moonlight Martin! A rascally thief and cutpurse, a hanger-on of the theater, a sly and crafty fellow full of nimble tricks and cheap strategy; so Martin was an actor now! As for his doxy Spark, she had been a pretty lass in past years. No paragon of virtue, this Spark i' the Wind—a fitting companion for Moonlight Martin—yet there was something more in her than mere rascality. She had stuck to Martin, and strangely enough possessed a tender womanly spirit . . . Gwynne was tempted to term it a sense of decency.

But Sir Charles Hart—ah, there was a very wolf of a man, a rakehelly gallant, a wild spendthrift and black-hearted rascal beneath a veneer of gentility! It was Hart who had caused the drugging and the kidnaping, hating the actor Dick Lovell viciously. As he thought back upon those days, Gwynne smiled a little.

"Why, after all, it was the making of me!" he reflected. "Here in America I've found my place, a new free life, wealth

and fortune if I want it! I've a grant of broad acres in the Shenandoah, and if a road is ever built to those parts I can clear the trees and have a regal estate! But what matters?"

Nothing mattered. Ambition had died in him when a girl died. . . .

Sunset was roseate upon the city when Gwynne heard a clatter of feet at the stairs, and a knock came at his door, with voices in the corridor. He opened the door to see one of the Governor's blacks extending a folded and sealed paper. Gwynne handed him a coin and took the missive. Then, before he could close the door, came a flutter of skirts and Spark i' the Wind was upon him with eager pleading voice.

"Dick, Dick Lovell! You must give me a word; man, you must hear me!"

"What!" said Gwynne coldly. "Still barking up that tree, lass?"

"I know well enough who you are; you don't fool me. Dick, Dick, give me but a brace o' minutes! It's life and death—not to me, but to you, Dick!"

Gwynne was startled by the wild passionate desperation of her manner. With a light shrug he turned, going to the window.

"Come in, then, and shut the door. As soon as I've read this note, I'll hear you."

She slid in, closed the door and stood against it, panting, her gaze upon him.

He broke the seal and opened the paper. It bore a line of writing in the bold hand of Spottiswood:

The name of Mistress Sylvia is Paston. Forgive my telling you in this manner; it seemed best.

For a moment he actually could not realize what the words meant, until they hammered at him with increasing insistence. Sylvia Paston! Bewilderment engulfed him. Some woman bearing the name of the girl he had known? No, no! He recalled the strange manner of the Governor: this man, faced with telling a friend that all the old story was based upon some error—why, she was alive, alive!

GWYNNE lifted his head and found Spark crying out at him. He became aware of her words, that chimed so queerly with this note in his hand, and yet were so dissonant. At first he really thought her insane.

"Why have ye never writ to her?" Spark was saying. "Oh, sir, we thought

ye dead in the New World! Word came to us that you had died on the voyage. And ye run off without as much as a by-your-leave, and she crying her eyes out!"

"Why, lass, you're out of your head!" broke forth Gwynne, shaking the paper at her. "Dead? *She* was the one dead. Here's word she's alive, alive—it can mean no less! It was your spindly Martin who drugged me and set me aboard ship; and when I found she had been killed that same night, what mattered?"

She fell back a pace, her eyes like saucers.

"Martin! Drugged!" A storm of blasphemy escaped her; she flew into a frenzy of passionate words, that made little sense, then calmed. "Why, Dick, where's the roguery here? We all thought ye dead; we had sure word of it. She might ha' married Sir Charles and would not. She's kept us with her, because we were your friends. She's trailed us about the provinces these many years, and at last would come to the New World because you, though dead, had started for here."

"You were ever an honest lass, God love you! . . . Break it to her gently—gently!"

Gwynne shoved her into a chair, poured wine for her, gulped some himself.

"Let's have the truth of this," he demanded, and between them the truth came.

He was aghast, seeing it all. There had been no accident; Sylvia had not been hurt. They received word that he had suddenly fled with the bailiffs after him for debt, and later came positive news of his death aboard ere the ship reached the Virginia Capes. Who had told it? Who—but Sir Charles Hart?

So it came clear, as twilight settled upon the room. Trickery, lies and gold in the itching palm. It had done no one any good; Sylvia distrusted Sir Charles from the first and would not look twice at him. His hatred of Dick Lovell was appeased, perhaps, and the sly crafty Martin had money in his pouch; that was all. So much done, for so little gained!

"For this, I'll help ye scotch him, Dick!" exclaimed Spark, in a fury. She had been no party to the fraud, as Gwynne clearly perceived. "Look! Martin's naught but a thief, a stealer at the bill. I can tell how he stole a chain from the very windpipe of a keeper of the Tower—aye, and many a pouch besides! We'll have him clapped in jail this very night."

"Hold hard, Spark." Gwynne got a grip on himself. "No word to him of this, no word to any."

"But you'll tell her? You'll see her?" insisted Spark.

HE thought for a moment. See her? His every pulse was for leaving at a run, gaining the Governor's house, and rushing to her—but, no! Spottiswood had been a wise man. This was nothing to gulp out with hasty speech and hot words.

"Where's Martin now?" he demanded.

"Drinking, with Tom Blood, the other of the troupe," said she. "He swears that you are Dick Lovell or his twin!"

"And he'll be off to tell Sir Charles about it, eh?" Gwynne laughed suddenly. "Why, Spark, I bear 'em no ill will—let it pass! Yes, I must see her."

"It's to be rehearsal in half an hour now," said she. "Before supper. To try the footlights in the new playhouse."

Gwynne caught her arm. "Then keep a close tongue. I'll be there, I'll see her! . . . Wait, now. Let me think."

He found himself shaken, trembling, all in a fever. Patience, at such a moment, came hard; yet he managed to orient his mind, to conquer his agitation.

He sprang to the table, where writing materials lay. Seizing a quill, he opened the Governor's letter and below the message scrawled a response. He sanded it, folded over the paper again, and put it with a coin into Spark's hand.

"You were ever an honest lass, God love you! Send this to the Governor, now, at once, on the instant; the money will pay a bearer. I'll be at the playhouse. You get a word with Sylvia. Tell her that Dick Lovell is dead, but that David Gwynne is alive; she knows my real name. Break it to her gently, lass—gently! And tell Martin that the Governor hath found another player for the rôle of *Americus*. Off with you! Half an hour, eh? Get the word to her ear, and I'll bless the name of Spark i' the Wind."

She was gone, staring but compliant.

NO need of candles; in the last of the twilight, Gwynne stripped and got into his old grease-suppled buckskins and moccasins. He slung the long hunting-knife at his belt and clapped the fur cap upon his head. Now for a mask—a strip of the bed-curtains would serve. Rehearsal! He laughed again when at length he opened the door and went quietly down the stairs.

Below, he paused. Voices were riotous in the taproom. Listening, he found that a group of the burgesses were arranging to hold a celebration of their own on the Thursday in the House of Assembly, in order to slight the Governor.

"Why, damme, to drink the King's health in the company of scurvy play-actors would be an outrage!" roared somebody. "We'll stay away from the Governor's palace and from the play as well."

Gwynne stepped out into the gathering darkness. A lot the King's health mattered to a man from the Shenandoah country, a man who had found life and hope and ambition after twelve lost years!

The interior of the new playhouse, with the benches not yet emplaced and everything reeking of fresh paint, was of surprising size. So it had to be—for Williamsburg was small but Virginia was large. On the royal birthday, planters would be in from miles around for the assembly at the palace and the general celebration; there would be cock-fighting and throbbing viols; Gloucester Highway would be rolling with coaches, and the first theatrical performance in America would be attended by fine gentlemen with swords at their sides and ladies in silk and satin on their arms.

BUT tonight, the simple scenery was turned to the wall away from paint-splatters. The footlights were all aglow, illumining the stage. Half a dozen slaves held lanterns to light the interior and the entry, when the Governor's coach came trundling up.

Spottiswood alighted, with Sir Charles Hart and Mistress Sylvia bearing him company. They were joined before the door by Mistress Spark and Moonlight Martin and the shabby actor Blood, who followed inside.

There, Martin conducted Sir Charles aside and spoke with him, low-voiced. Spark seized the arm of Sylvia, led her through to the stage; they stood in the wings together, talking, while Spottiswood surveyed the half-finished decorations. He was engaged with the contractor, who had come this evening to display the work, but in the midst of their talk he recollected the business in hand, and swung around.

"Sir Charles! Go ahead with your rehearsal! Are the footlights as they should be, Mistress Sylvia—eh? Where is she? Ah! Splendid, my dear, splendid! They light you perfectly!"

Sylvia appeared, coming down to the footlights. That she was in great agitation was obvious, but she conquered it and swept the Governor a smiling curtsey.

"I understand, Excellency, that you—that you have secured a new player for the part of *Americus*," she called to him. "When does he appear?"

"Eh?" Spottiswood looked around. "Oh, nothing is certain yet. Don't wait for him."

"But what of me?" Martin pushed his lean length forward. "That's my part, Your Excellency; if you've secured a new player, what of me?"

"To the devil with you, rascal," snapped Spottiswood. "Go through your lines and ask no questions. Ready, Sir Charles?"

"Damme if I understand all this, but we're ready," said Hart, advancing to the footlights, and ordering the others to the wings.

He was a slender, handsome man, darkly resolute and attired in the greatest elegance. Tapping his snuffbox, he announced the prologue, and Sylvia came down center with an elaborate curtsey to the imaginary audience.

"Egad!" exclaimed Spottiswood under his breath. "Her like has never been seen in the province! 'Twill cause a sensation!"

His admiration was deserved; if Sylvia were past her first youth, she had entered upon glorious summer of womanhood. Her beauty held a charm, a radiance, a glowing appeal that Spottiswood had never before glimpsed. Even Sir Charles watched her with a fascinated air.

"Well done, well done, Sylvia!" he applauded as she finished. "Why, you'd put Oldfield and Bracegirdle themselves to shame! Well, come along, *Americus!* Where are you? Martin, you rogue—it's your entrance!"

Martin was not making an entrance, however. The paper bearing his lines had been torn out of his hands by a man in stained buckskins, who suddenly appeared and thrust him aside—a figure striding forward toward the lights, whose face was hidden by a black vizard. From Spottiswood burst a rousing exclamation, cut short by the voice of this *Americus,* voicing his lines with superb intonation.

But, at the first ringing tones of that voice, Sir Charles Hart stood transfixed and staring. He put up his snuffbox; a startled oath escaped him. "You!" he exclaimed. "In the devil's name—"

GWYNNE tore off the mask he had fashioned.

"Why, Sir Charles, here's a better dramatic note than the one you've hit!" he cried. "A man trepanned and sent into far places, returned from the dead! What's more, staring into the eyes of the rascal who had him kidnaped, who proclaimed him dead—"

With one leap, Sir Charles was over the footlights and on the stage. His sword whipped out, and he paused an instant.

"You shabby rascal, you dare use such words to me?" he cried hotly.

"Nay, nay, abate your venom," said Gwynne, and laughed heartily. "I've unmasked you as liar and rogue, and I seek no more from you. You shall go your ways with Moonlight Martin, and if he doesn't lead you to the stocks and the pillory and the gallows, then—"

FURY had done its work, however; Hart, losing his head completely, flung himself at Gwynne, and his sword drove in. Screams of women, an unheeded shout from Spottiswood, were lost; Gwynne took the rapier through his upper arm, and grappled with Hart. At the same instant, however, the incredibly thin shape of Martin came flying from the wings, a knife in his hand.

The three men became a whirling, confused mass, struggling and writhing—Gwynne desperately trying to evade the knife that plunged at him, while he held Sir Charles in a close grip. The three of them rocked back and forth, twisting and cursing; then they toppled and went in a headlong mass, and the stage shook to the weight of their plunging fall.

The angry voice of Spottiswood, the cries of the two women who were rushing forward, were abruptly checked. Gwynne, with the agility of an Indian, rolled clear of the tangle and leaped to his feet, the rapier still transfixing his arm. Sir Charles remained sprawling and motionless. And Moonlight Martin came to one knee, an expression of unutterable horror stamped in his wild features—his hand still gripping the knife. The blade was fast—aimed for Gwynne, it had thrust to the heart of Sir Charles!

In that stricken silence, the boots of Martin scraped the boards as he rose to his feet. A terrible wordless cry burst from him; with a leap, he was over the footlights and away in mad panicked flight. Spottiswood roared at the slaves to stop him. Nothing could stop him; in very sooth, he made good his boast of a heel in the moon. He was out and gone, like a fleeing shadow.

Gwynne carefully drew the sliver of steel from his arm and let it fall. He found himself face to face with Sylvia. They stood, wordless, looking into each other's eyes, until Governor Spottiswood came stamping up to them.

"Egad!" said he, a grim smile in his eyes. "Egad! Have ye both lost voice? 'Tis high time to let fall the curtain on the tragedy that's turned to a happy ending!"

But neither Gwynne nor Sylvia heard what else he said, for the curtain was indeed fallen upon all the years between.

Boston during the British occupation is the scene of the next story in this series.

"It's Harlan's! It's a four-alarm fire! Get going, gang!"

Hell Hath No

IT came about two-thirty that afternoon. God in His heaven was pelted with prayers—breathless terror-stricken little prayers made in panic, at the dread cry: *"Fire!"*

The word echoed in the wail of sirens, in the clang of Number 4 Hose Company's truck, in the press and the confusion, and in those hasty silent prayers of shoppers fighting their way out of Harlan's, and in the hearts of anxious families at home.

Cars scudded to curbs as Commissioner Bride's red coupé bore down Memorial Avenue. Brakes screeched. Tires reeked of burnt rubber. A mob formed to stare and gasp when smoke burst out of the top story of Harlan's.

"Fire!" Only the urchins escaped panic. God has compassion for youth. Glee, not panic for them, as they scrambled after the engines, afoot, on scooters, on velocipedes, proving the adage anent the ill wind.

Like "The Monster-Maker," in our last issue, this story is based on the discovery of a means whereby people can be keyed up to tremendous power — for good or for evil.

Fury—

By FULTON T. GRANT

But ill was the wind that blew a forced draft through the storeroom door at Harlan's when an unsuspecting assistant shipping-clerk opened it to fetch excelsior packing. Pent-up flames bursting out nearly singed him to a crisp. Before he could stagger, half blind, to the general-alarm bell, a sprinkler system had flooded a floor of shoppers with water and panic. Before the word "Fire!" hit Ladies'-wear, Toys was already in flames, Rugs was a place of smoke and fear, the Gift Shoppe was a bedlam. Thank God for trained floor-managers quelling the crowd, bringing back order into panic!

AN automatic signal brought the alarm into the *Record's* offices. Awe filled the city-room. City-editor Bush's voice bellowed his orders:

"It's Harlan's! It's a four-alarm fire. This could be a helluva mess! Get going, gang! And get action! Murphy, you locate the Commissioner and park on

his neck. Fanny, you take the woman's angle. Sob plenty. Gimme three columns. Allen, you cover the finance angle. Get old Harlan—he'll be around, squealing like a stuck pocketbook. See how much he stands to lose, if any. Check with the insurance companies. Maybe this fire is one of those things—I wouldn't put it past that old skeezicks, at that. And see if there's any neglect angle. Harlan's such a tightwad, it could be.

"Carpenter, you check with the store personnel and get their slant. Might be a grudge-fire. Sabotage—grievances. I hear the employees don't like Harlan. He's had plenty of strikes, and somebody could be sore. Find out who, if any, and why.

"Miller, you take the firemen. Get me some heroes. We need heroes. Take all the camera-men along too. Tell Riley I said so, and you're in charge. And Garland, you write the general story—that's your assignment. Can't scoop anybody, maybe, but we can print the best damn' story in town, and it's up to you. I want this to take a Pulitzer. That's all, gang, now get going!"

MR. A. (TONY) DA CAPPO, whose office door styled him "Human Relations Counsel" (formerly Personal Relations Counsel, and thus altered, no doubt, to permit a broader scope of activity), stared out of his window. It was already after six o'clock, and his staff had gone home, all save Miss Clews, the patient, old-maidish secretary.

He stared at the twilight settling over the city like a cloud of gray moths. From his fifth-floor office he had a long vista of the city's main thoroughfare; at the far end of it he could still see thin smoke lifting from the remnants of Harlan's. As he stared, he puckered his thin face and frowned.

Presently a metallic voice came from his communication-box on his desk.

"Mr. da Cappo? There is a Miss Brown here for you."

This was the voice of Miss Clews, from the reception-desk. Mr. da Cappo relaxed his frown.

"Well," he called back, approaching the desk, "send her in. And you can go home, Minnie. That's all for tonight."

Within a few moments the door-handle turned, and the frosted glass door admitted a woman. She was both tall and obscure. She wore one of those half-veils which women sometimes affect. She was dressed in somber black. Her hat was old-fashioned and resembled an inverted waste-paper basket. But her step was strong, striding, unfaltering as she walked toward Mr. da Cappo's desk.

The Human Relations Counsel glanced at his timepiece.

"You got here early," he said. "I didn't expect you for half an hour yet."

THE woman announced as Miss Brown made no reply directly. She stood at Mr. da Cappo's desk, opened a large purse-bag, removed a roll of bills, peeled off three of them, and laid them on the desk.

"That," she said, "settles that." And she turned away, starting for the door.

"The hell," said Mr. da Cappo brutally, "it does. That's only three. There's two more grand, lady."

"I think," said Miss Brown, "that will be quite sufficient. You informed me that—his price was three. There it is."

"His, yeah. But what about me? I aint in this for love, lady."

"I pay you a retainer for such services as you render. An adequate retainer."

"Not for this job, it aint. I got two grand coming."

Miss Brown had already reached the door.

"Ah?" she said, and her voice was rich with irony. "And may I expect a lawsuit, Mr. da Cappo?"

The little man executed a movement that was a combined jump, a run, a slither, all done with a remarkable speed. In a flash he was within only a step of the woman, and his lean Latin face had a wolfish look in it. His voice was no longer mellifluous, but rasping.

"That door's locked," he said. "And it stays locked until I press a button. Don't start something you can't finish, lady. I want that dough." There was no doubt about the menace in both his eyes and nervously moving fingers. Miss Brown, however, did not flinch. Instead she opened her bag as if to comply, but suddenly stiffened,

"Push your button, Mr. da Cappo. I have a gun in this bag. Don't force me to use it.

The half-veil showed a resolute chin embraced by lines of cold, impersonal purpose. The mouth was large but tight-lipped. The lips made a flat v-shape which might have been a smile if one can imagine a smile carved in granite. Possibly in his entire lifetime Mr. da Cappo had never before been out-faced by a woman, but he was intelligent enough to

"Fire!" Toys was already in flames; the Gift Shoppe was a bedlam.

know that he was encountering that experience now, and he capitulated. He reached for the button on his desk and as he pressed it, the door clicked and opened. The woman backed through it and vanished in the corridor.

Mr. Tony da Cappo did not move for seconds. Then he murmured:

"Geez, but I'm a cluck. I mighta known the old—" And he proceeded to pace up and down his office, wearing the expression of a man contriving a scheme. Presently he stopped and went to his desk, taking the telephone from its cradle. As he dialed a number, he grinned a little.

"That's it," he growled aloud. "That'll hold the old witch. A newspaper is better than a megaphone. And a lot less personal. That'll fix her wagon."

A voice on the wire said musically:

"Firmingham *Record*."

"Gimme," said Mr. da Cappo, "the city editor."

But just then there came a tapping on the frosted glass panel of Mr. da Cappo's door, and he quickly put the receiver back into its cradle. He looked at his desk clock before he called:

"Smoke?"

From outside a voice said quietly:

"Yeah."

Da Cappo pushed the release button which let his door open. A dark shape came softly into the room. A man's voice said:

"Aint you got no lights in this joint? Whatsamatter?"

"Sure I got lights, Smoke. Close the door and push the switch on the wall is all you gotta do." But before the lights went on, Mr. da Cappo's hand had found its way into the center drawer of his desk. His fingers had closed on the butt of a small automatic concealed therein, and immediately the momentary pallor left his face. As the light went on, he was smiling.

"You don't waste no time, do you, Smoke?" he said genially. "It's only half-past six."

The man called Smoke was, at first glance, not a person whose presence would suggest recourse to hidden weapons. One might pass him in the street unwittingly. He was neither large nor small, neither tall nor short, and had no outstanding features at all. The dull Oxford gray of his simple business suit was the general color of his personality. But with a glance at his strange, burning eyes, all this changed.

SAID this man called Smoke: "Why waste any time? This is payday."

"Yeah," said Tony. "Yeah—sure. Oh, sure." But as he spoke, he lifted the entire telephone stand from his desk and moved it to another position, so that its base entirely covered the three folded bills which Miss Brown had left there. "Yeah," he repeated, "that's right, Smoke. I knew you'd be in for it. Sit down, Smoke. Take it easy. You don't have to stand up all night, do yuh?"

Smoke did not move.

"You was on the phone just now," he said; and behind that simple statement of the obvious lay the implication of both question and menace. Da Cappo was unperturbed, however.

"Why, sure," he said. "Sure—somebody tried to ring here, or something. Guess it was a wrong number. Nobody on the line. These here automatic phones is always going cockeyed." He might have left it there, but chose to add: "It aint like the Big Town, in this burg, Smoke. Know what I mean? They aint got them phones workin' right, see?"

"Yeah," said Smoke. "I see, all right."

Almost too quickly the other said:

"Whatsamatter, Smoke? You got a grouch? Aint you gonna sit down?"

"What for? I got business. Gimme my dough."

"Sure I will, Smoke, only I don't keep that kinda dough up here. We gotta go get it."

"Where?"

"In my flat. I'll buy you a taxi, and we'll—"

"You lie," said Smoke evenly. "You got that dough right here."

Da Cappo was visibly troubled by this but he contrived to maintain an even voice as he replied:

"What you mean, I lie? Hell, it aint *my* dough. I only handle it, is all. Why would I wanna lie to yuh, Smoke? That aint no way—"

"Okay, okay, save it," cut in Smoke. "So we take a taxi, huh? I don't take no taxi. I got a bus downstairs already. I got a pal waitin' down there for me. I'm gonna blow outa this burg right away. If we gotta go some place for that dough, we go in my bus, see? And we gotta get started now, see? Get your hat and get goin'; and you better have that dough—know what I mean?"

"Why, sure, Smoke," said Da Cappo; but his face was worried. "Any way you want it. That saves me four bits, hey? Ha-ha!"

"Yeah," said Smoke. "It saves yuh four bits. Yuh always was a lousy little punk, would think about four bits. Come on."

Da Cappo took his hat from a clothes-tree and started for the door.

"You go first," said Smoke. "Take the stairs. We don't need no elevator. Nobody seen me come in. Nobody sees us go out, see?"

"What's the matter, Smoke? You act like I was a—"

"In this game," said Smoke, "yuh don't trust yer own mother. You go first and keep yer hands outa your pockets. Leave that gun in the drawer where yuh had it all the time. D'ya think I'm blind?"

Whatever Da Cappo thought, he did not say. In a silence of desperation he stepped through his door. His legs were not quite as stable as they had been. They sagged at the knees. His face was chalk white under parchment yellow. Behind him he heard Smoke close his office door with a click of the latch. He had not, however, seen Smoke dart quickly to his desk, lift that telephone, take those bills which he had so impulsively concealed, and form a hard, animal grin with his teeth. He did not see the look in Smoke's face then; and that was fortunate for his peace of mind.

JOHN GARLAND of the *Record* was a tired young man. The business of covering a major fire is a thing to wear down even the sturdiest nerves. And then the business of writing a three- or four-column story under the impatient eyes of an editor who snatches it page by page from you in order to get it set in type in time to make an extra edition is another thing that makes a heavy drain. John was worn out; and as he walked homeward, he badly wanted a drink. So he strode toward the nearest tavern—on the corner of Murdoch and Ovon, a place he had often passed but never entered.

It was not an attractive place. Sawdust littered the floor, and a beery smell

tinctured the air. Three or four rough men stood at the bar in glum silence, drinking. The burly bartender with an unlovely face did not lift his head from his newspaper until John had twice said:

"A double whisky."

Then he looked up sourly to say:

"We don't serve 'em double."

"All right," said John. " Any way you serve 'em, only serve one. I need it."

"Yeah?" said the barman, and the word was like a challenge. Apparently strangers were resented in this place.

The whisky came at last, and John was just raising it to his lips when there came at the door the sound of a roaring motor. A car drew up outside. A door slammed. Voices were heard talking loudly. Presently the street door opened, and an odd and somewhat pathetic group came in.

THERE were three men, all in sundry stages of intoxication. Two of them rather shakily supported a third, who was very patently unconscious. His head flopped and dangled. His knees buckled, and his legs could not or did not support him. His arms hung limply, and the other two had a firm grip under his armpits to hold him, lest he fall to the ground.

One of the men spoke thickly, drunkenly, to the room in general, but evidently intending his statement for the ears of the bartender.

"My pal," he said, "is plastered, and how! All he wants is a couple minutes' sleep in a corner. He won't be no trouble."

The bartender frowned but jerked a thumb in the direction of some alcoves for private drinking which were separated from the main barroom by a half partition. The gesture said, without words: "In there."

The three drunks proceeded on their wabbly way, the two dragging the third. There was some laughter of a dismal sort in the room. There were some un-funny remarks anent the condition of the third drunk. But when the two carriers had deposited their burden on a settle within this first alcove—where his head sank to the edge of the table and his arms hung limply—and returned to the bar, such remarks and empty laughter ceased abruptly. When John saw the men's faces, he knew why. They were not pleasant faces. The plain-faced one in Oxford gray might be a tradesman, a clerk, a small business man. He was nondescript, self-effacing, all save his eyes. But the eyes, deep in their sockets and yet half concealed behind drooping lids, were too bright, too—dangerous. They were, thought Garland, killer's eyes.

The other man was a rough fellow, a man of quick ire and ruthless brutality; yet again there was about him nothing obtrusive in feature.

But they drank in silence, those two. And while they drank, the street door opened and admitted a small crowd of workmen in overalls—gay, free at last after a day of labor. They jostled each other playfully as they came in. They filled the bar to overflowing, crowding one another, bumping into their places, shouting for drinks, jarring John's hand as he lifted his glass for one last sip. Their confusion distracted attention from the three drunks for that brief instant; and when the newcomers had settled down and the bustle had ceased for a moment, John discovered that the two soberer men had slipped out. They had left a crisp bill on the bar, and had left their unconscious partner asleep in his alcove.

"Hey," said John to the barman, unable to resist the urge, "those boys forgot their pal in there."

But a motor was running outside, and a car slid away from the bar entrance.

"I'll be damned!" said the barman, staring into the alcove, where the intoxicated one sprawled. "Whaddya know about that?"

John's curiosity had made him step into the alcove and examine the sleeper. As he looked at him, he had a sense of something irregular, something wrong.

"That's funny," he said inwardly. "When a man's as drunk as *that* bird is, his face ought to show it—" By which thought he meant that the face of a completely intoxicated man falls, the muscles sag, the curious, drawn, pinched look of the drunkard comes upon them. But this man had no such look. True, his face was pale and bloodless, but it did not sag. Moreover the eyes were open and staring, but—

"Hey," cried John loudly to the entire gathering of the barroom in general and to the bartender in particular. "Hey," this bird isn't drunk. This bird is dead!"

His fingers on the man's dark brown jacket had come away moist. He stared at them. They were red.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY BOYD was talking. "Very well, gentlemen," he said to the other three. "You seem to have demonstrated beyond a doubt that we are con-

"My pal," he said, "is plastered—and how!"

fronted with the work of a professional firebug. In short, the Harlan fire, then, is not only arson, but highly skillful and professional arson. Am I not correct?"

"You put it," said Chief Luden, "in a whole lot of words, but that's what they mean. We got the evidence."

"Just in case my own—ah—limited experience in such matters places me at a disadvantage, Luden, will you be good enough to describe the evidence again?"

"Sure. It's still perfect. Listen, D. A., did you ever try to burn up a dry battery?"

"A dry battery? I'm afraid I—"

"Well, it can't be done. They don't burn handy."

"And so you discovered a—"

"Six of 'em. Six dry cells tied together with wire. They was in a wooden box, but the box was nothing but charcoal when Bill Stude picked it up."

"I take it Stude is one of your—"

"Bill is the best Hot Papa west of New York. He wears his asbestos benny like you wear tails at the Mayor's speech-dinners, D. A. Bill drives me when he aint eating fire. We got down about the time the chemicals got in. When I saw the flames came from the top floor, I had a hunch already. The chemicals got control pretty soon for a little while, and I sent Bill Stude up to take a look. He figured the way I did. It was the excelsior room."

"But isn't that a little—"

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

"Hell, no! Department store—any outfit that packs a lot of fragile stuff—keeps a big store of excelsior packing. We got new laws that says they have to store it under the roof, on account it catches fire easy. Bill Stude locates that storeroom right off. He goes in before the flames is half out. He walks right on top of those batteries—"

"Batteries!"

"Not only. There was a box, like I told you, and an alarm clock—pieces of it, with a dial which was set for a little after two, and the hands stopped at two-fifteen sharp. There was a lot of little glass particles too, and a gob of mercury."

"Why mercury?"

"A switch on the alarm-winder. When it dips, it turns on the current. Six volts is plenty to heat up a hunk of nichrome wire—it's an old gag, D.A., and when you see it, you can be damn' sure it's a professional job. Which is—"

"Naturally," broke in Commissioner Bride. "But—"

"*Naturally* is right," cut in Luden. "And what's it mean? It means that somebody hired a professional. Brought him to this town for a purpose. So—"

"That," cut in the D.A., "would be your reason for bringing this to my personal attention at once, eh?"

"Right."

"I haven't much use for Harlan," Luden said. "He's not my type—too sancti-

monious and too oily for me. And it's really a phony name—they let his father take it when he was naturalized because his own was too hard to pronounce. Too, no man ever made as much money as Harlan made in the store business so quickly, without being offside somewhere. But I still can't see Harlan in this fire."

"No? Why?"

"No profit. We checked the insurance companies. He had three policies, but two had lapsed. So he stands to lose plenty—a hundred thousand or more, depending on what lawsuits this fire brings, and counting property damage and replacement."

"Isn't it—ah—remarkable that a man like David Harlan should let his policies lapse?"

"Yes and no. Looks like he was taking a chance on them to renew after the first of the year when he showed his profit. Harlan thinks no more of a nickel than I do of my right eye, and he'd be thinking about the interest on that premium money. No, I can't see any way to implicate him. Tell you the truth, I rather wish I could. He has killed too many small businesses in this town already. We could get along pretty well without David Harlan, if you ask me."

Mr. Boyd broke in:

"I hope, Captain, you will not allow your personal opinion of the man to bias your judgment. I have sent for him, and he should be here presently. In the meantime, I am inclined to agree that Harlan is not involved in this fire—indeed, if a professional incendiary was brought here to destroy Harlan's store, he was contacted and hired by some person hostile to Harlan. There is a motive underlying such a—"

He did not finish his statement, because the telephone on his desk began ringing at that moment, and he paused to lift the receiver to his ear. The others heard his quick monosyllables.

"Yes? Boyd here.... What's that?... Good God!"

Then he turned to his visitors:

"I regret to say, gentlemen, that Mr. Harlan will not be here, after all. He has just been found dead. Sergeant Lovelle informs me that it seems to be heart-failure. I am on my way to his apartments immediately."

IT was only to be expected that Garland's statement regarding the condition of the supposedly drunken man in the rear alcove of the saloon should have caused general excitement. It did. In a matter of seconds he was surrounded by a dozen excited men. They had stretched the dead man out on a table. They had ripped away his shirt and revealed a small wound on the dead man's left side, from which the blood had slowly been oozing, to soak into the absorptive cloth of his heavy suit. There was consternation among the newly arrived laborers when they saw the blood.

"Geez, I'm gonna get outa here!"

"Hell, I don't wanna be mixed up in nothin' like this!"

And before the general feeling of shock could abate and be translated into common-sense action, the entire small bar had been emptied of all save Garland himself and the bartender.

This last gentleman behaved peculiarly. The man had only the smallest grumble for the two drunks who had dragged their dead comrade in to leave him there, but to John he said:

"Whaddya wanna make all that noise fer, huh? Aint it bad enough luck I got a stiff parked in this joint without you gotta go and yawp about it and lose me all my trade?"

TO this, in his amazement, John found no adequate reply at all.

"You'd better call the police," he said. But the angry man resented this too.

"The cops, my eye! Think I want a lot of cops hangin' around this joint? You think I'm gonna lose all my business on account of somebody dead is stuck on me like this? Besides, how d'yuh know he's dead, huh? You a doc?"

John denied the implication, but he assured the barman that he was quite able to recognize death when he saw it. The barman appeared to doubt it.

"The hell with you!" he said. "We got a doc lives upstairs. I'm gonna call him down here." And he turned his back and stepped into the phone-booth.

To Garland, action seemed urgent. As soon as the barman had closed the booth door, he made for the entrance door himself. Outside, he ran to the opposite side of Murdoch, darted down Sayres toward the Avenue, where, he knew, Officer McGuire should be walking his beat as was usual for him at that time of day. He found McGuire inspecting the doors of a loft building, and breathlessly informed him of the bloody business at the bar on Ovon corner.

"The hell you say!" grunted McGuire. But he hurried with John back to the

scene, telling him over his burly shoulder as he ran, what he thought of such a fantastic story as drunks carrying a corpse around with them, and what stern rebuke lay in store for John in the event that this fantasy of his turned out to be a gag.

WHEN the two burst into the bar, a surprise awaited Garland. The barman was back behind his counter, calmly wiping his glasses. He looked up sourly at the arrivals, and showed some surprise at seeing the policeman.

"Well, gents?" he demanded.

Something in the tone of his voice caused John to look through into the alcove, where, on the table, he had left a dead body. The body was gone.

The table was made up with a crisp white paper tablecloth, salt, pepper, sugar and a small jar of pretzels.

"Where's that poor devil?" demanded John. "Did your doctor come down?"

The barman frowned and looked blank.

"Whaddya mean, poor devil? What doc? I aint seen nobody in here fer half an hour. What's this, a gag? What's the matter with this lad, officer? He screwy?"

Garland grew red with anger.

"Wait a minute, now; I was here myself, as you damn' well know, only a few minutes ago. I left a dead man on that table in there. A whole lot of people saw him besides me. A couple of drunks came here in a car, and brought him in, pretending he was just passed out. And when I left here, you were calling a doctor who lives upstairs."

The barman cursed, and grinned maliciously.

"Now, whaddya think of that, copper? I heard some good ones in my time, but I never heard nothin' like that one. No, by God! Listen, copper, I been here on this corner for more'n a year, now. Everybody knows me around here. I tell you, this guy is nuts. I never seen him before in my life. He aint been here—nobody aint been here since six-forty-five, when Jo and Bill Statz was here for a couple beers. You can ask 'em—they run a little shop across the square. And if you wanna believe I got a stiff in here some place, well, you can look around all you want. That bird is bughouse, like I said."

Now, it was true that Officer McGuire had seen John Garland almost daily for several years; yet when he was confronted by such a situation, he could hardly fail to be skeptical.

"Sorry, Mr. Garland," he said, "but for my money it looks like this barman is right. You say there was a stiff on that table? Come show me."

John did. There remained no trace of it.

"You say there was blood? I don't see any."

John replied that there had not been enough to make any stain other than on the clothing of the dead man.

The officer pointed to a pile of magazines in a dusty jumble on the seat.

"Did he sit on them papers?"

"There were no papers here, so far as I know," said John. "But look, that seat is wiped clean."

The barman laughed ironically.

"D'ya think I let this place get filthy? D'ya think I don't clean them seats a dozen times a day?"

The officer came to a sudden decision.

"I'll tell you what I think," he said. "I think I'm taking this boy right back to Headquarters with me now. Come along, Mr. Garland. Don't make it tough for me, or it'll get tough for you. This aint an arrest, but when anybody comes to me with a lot of chatter about dead bodies, it's my job to bring him in where they can find out what's what."

John Garland knew full well what had happened. He knew also that he had no way of proving it, though he made one last futile protest as he was led away. And then abruptly he quieted down, for he had finally remembered the face of the man he had just now seen dead on that table. It was the face of a man who did an obscure business under the still more obscure title of "Human Relations Counsel." It was the face of Mr. Anthony (Tony) da Cappo.

FOUR truckloads of newspapers departed from the lower-than-street-level platform behind the Firmingham *Record* building as early as four-thirty o'clock next morning. By six o'clock two entire editions were on the news-stands; and on almost every corner, during the business rush hour, newsboys stood hawking the papers to the cry of:

"Get your *Record! Record! Record!* Old Man Harlan dies after the big fire! Read all about it! Get your *Record!*"

Inside the offices of the *Record* itself, there was another cry. It started in the city room just as the day staff took over from the night side. City-editor Hurley, looking through the early paper, looked up, glowered at the city room, and roared:

"Where in hell is Garland?"

No one, however, had seen John Garland that morning.

At nine, a call came through the communicator-box from the desk of Mr. J. Selzer Hurd, owner and publisher. Mr. Hurd had been reading his paper and suddenly his thoughts had taken a shape which required the services of his most competent reporter. He had pressed a button and called into the box:

"Send John Garland up here at once." And when he was informed that John Garland was not available, Mr. Hurd quite pardonably exploded: "Where the hell is Garland?"

AT last, however, John Garland came—came like a portable cyclone, wild-eyed, winded, and wound up to a high tension.

"Hey, chief! Hey, boss!" he called out. "Are you going to let them get away with that? Look at that story, boss—" And he waved the front page of the morning edition in his employer's face.

Despite his natural resentment at such an unwonted intrusion, Mr. Hurd stared at the page thrust before him. He knew what Garland meant. He himself had pored over that front-page story that morning with both alarm and misgiving.

DAVID HARLAN DIES: SHOCK OF FIRE IMPLIED AS CAUSE OF HEART-FAILURE

This city today will mourn the sudden death of David G. Harlan, owner of the great store which bears his name and which was severely damaged by fire yesterday afternoon.

The prominent church-worker and sponsor of many local charities was stricken at his home in Carlson Street last evening at six-thirty and was dead before medical aid could be brought.

In an official statement given to the press by Dr. Barry, city medical examiner, Mr. Harlan's death was due to shock, no doubt caused by the disastrous fire which gutted his store. It is a coincidence that the department-store magnate was found in a dying condition by a servant who had gone to summon him when a representative from the district attorney's office called in connection with the fire investigation. All efforts to save him were futile, although Dr. Barry was called at once.

A resident of Firmingham for many years, Mr. Harlan was born in the nearby town of Endora, thirty miles to the west of this city. . . . Mr. Harlan was well known for his activities in social welfare work and—

Mr. Hurd turned an unsmiling face toward his star reporter and said:

"Pull yourself together, John. Take a seat. Stop shouting, and tell me where the devil you've been."

"I've been," said John Garland, "in the city jail. That damned fool of a—but never mind that now. I just saw that story on Harlan this morning when I got out. Who wrote it? What's the matter with whoever did it? How come the D.A.'s office is mixed in the Harlan fire? How come such a report should come from the city medical examiner? Since when does the criminal prosecutor interest himself in a fire? Since when does the coroner's office hand us reports of a death by heart-failure? Can't anybody see a story when it spits in their face? Listen, chief, I've got a hunch—"

"Just a minute, John. One thing at a time. . . . What's this about your being in jail?"

"I was, that's all. Last night I stumbled onto a weird set-up. I was on my way home after covering the fire and doing my story, and I stopped at a bar on Murdoch Square—"

He recited the oddity of the dead man he had seen at the bar, and the incredible business of the corpse having vanished while he was calling the police.

"So this fool McGuire drags me back to Headquarters," he concluded. "And they slapped me into a cell. Wouldn't let me phone you. Wouldn't even let me call a lawyer. I'd like to have that cop's stripes off him, by God—"

"Yes, yes, I can picture your—ah—resentment. Go on."

"Well, about six in the morning they let me out. When I got into the front office, the first thing I saw was Lovelle from Homicide sitting there waiting for me. He started handing me a lot of questions about that bar and what I saw there. He started giving me some descriptions of people and asking me did they fit any of those men. Well, one of them did—the one with the droopy eyelids. And then he let the cat out of the bag and—hell, boss, we've got us a wow of a story if we can only fit the pieces together right."

"Presumably. But be good enough to tell me just what cat came out of what bag, John."

"That barman—the hard-boiled egg who claimed there wasn't any corpse and that he had never seen me before—well, he's dead."

"Dead?"

"That's right. Some dick went down there at closing-time to check back on that story of mine, and they found the place in a stew. The barman lives in back of the saloon, and he had gone back for something and didn't come out again. Somebody went in after him, and found him dead. Defunct as a doornail, with a knife-wound over his heart just like the man who was dragged in there by those two gents playing drunk. Now how do you like that, boss?"

"I—I confess I am a little amazed."

"Well, wait till you hear the rest: When they let me out of jail, they held me in that front office of Headquarters until friend Russell Boyd himself came down and tried to get me into a corner—"

"The District Attorney!"

"Himself altogether. He wanted information. He had a hunch I might have recognized that dead man who is missing, and he worked on me for more than an hour to try and make me tell him who. Me, I was a clam."

"Did you—recognize him?"

Garland grinned. "What do you think? Sure I did. But I want to trade that information with the D.A. for something—something we can use. We'll need it!"

"Why? And who was the dead man you recognized?"

"Let's go back a minute, boss. It's pretty clear, isn't it, that the D.A. was in on the fire-investigation? Well, that isn't regularly his job, and so it must mean a *criminal* angle."

"I dislike to think that David Harlan would—"

"He didn't have that fire set, if that's what you mean. He lost money. He wasn't covered by enough insurance to pay half the damages. No, that rules Harlan out. But if he didn't, *somebody* did. Nothing else in the world could pull the District Attorney into a fire-investigation but the discovery of evidence proving a professional job. And if that's true, there's where our story begins."

"Yes?"

"Yes—I'm sure of it. Somebody hated Harlan's guts and was out to get him, no matter what. Somebody hired that professional firebug, chief. He was imported, and that's where the horizon gets bigger. Also it's where I begin to tie in that murdered man in the bar—and likely the bartender too."

"Too fast for me, John. Just how do you—"

"I don't. I'm only playing a hunch. But why would Boyd and Lovelle show me pictures and give me descriptions of a lot of people if they didn't already have somebody in mind? So it ties in. That's where I've got the D. A. on the hip."

Never before had Mr. da Cappo been out-faced by a woman.

"How?"

"Because I do know that dead man."

MR. HURD stared at his reporter. "You knew all the time? That's bad business, John. That's dangerous—withholding information which might—"

"I know all that; but how can they know I withheld anything? Maybe I just remembered *after* I left the D.A. Besides, I'm going to trade that information for some more. I'm going to give you a story that will shake this town!"

"Ah? What story?"

"The story of who wanted to injure Harlan. The story of somebody who hated him. The story of a vengeance. And if you'll let me off general assignments and give me a chance, I'll lay that story in your lap, Mr. Hurd."

Mr. Hurd disliked instantaneous decisions. Presently, however, confidence in the young reporter won.

"Very well, John," he said. "How long do you want?"

"Things are hot right now, boss, and if I can't work it out in a few days the story's no good. Call it a week at most. And listen, boss, who did you say wrote that Harlan story?"

"I do not recall replying to that question yet," said the publisher. "As a matter of fact, young Fassett actually wrote it. Most of it he lifted from the obit files. Why?"

"That explains it, then. Remember that paragraph about Harlan's charities and good deeds? That's the bunk. Harlan's charities were a smoke-screen to cover the meanest little soul in town. I'll bet there were dozens of people who would have done him a bad turn if they could."

"Any ideas?"

"Maybe. If you were to look for a long-time hate in anybody's skeleton closet, where would you start, boss? I'll tell you: you'd go back to origins. Well, I'm going back to Endora. And it isn't just a theory, either. It ties right in with that murdered man who vanished, and with that barman who got killed after playing funny about the body."

"How?"

"Because I did recognize that body."

"Who?"

"A mysterious little rat who called himself a human relations counsel—"

"Good Lord! You don't mean that Da Cappo, the one who—"

"I do that. The one who made a business of getting divorce evidence and other similar unlovelies. Anthony da Cappo, if you please, boss, is the disappearing stiff. I've checked it."

"How?"

"I went up there to his office this morning at quarter to ten. He wasn't there. His poor little secretary broke down on my shirt-front and admitted she was scared because he had a flock of appointments and hadn't shown up yet this morning."

"Which proves?"

"Maybe nothing at all. But just the same the man I saw dragged into that bar was Da Cappo, so it fits. And here is where Endora comes in again: Da Cappo's secretary told me that last night he sent her home just after a client called. It was a woman. Her name was Brown."

"Not Jones or Smith?"

"Don't kid me, boss. Maybe her name was a fake—probably was; but the important thing is she came from Endora."

"Indeed?"

"Well, it looks as if she does, because she has been to Da Cappo's twice before, and each time she had a newspaper published in Endora with her—Da Cappo's gal noticed that much. So that's a lot of Endora, boss, considering it's the home town of our late defunct friend Harlan."

"Thin, John. Coincidence—"

"Not quite. Not with Da Cappo dead. Da Cappo comes from New York, a city where crime runs to specialties. If the D. A. is looking for a professional firebug somebody brought into town, I'd give an arm to know if Da Cappo brought one. I want to look into that, boss. I want to go to Endora. And while I'm gone, you can do the other job right here."

"I? What job?"

"Boyd. You know now who it was I saw in that bar. He wants to know—bad. And he knows something about that fire that we want to know. So trade with him. He'll buy, and you can handle that better than anybody. He'll talk to you. He's afraid of you—as editor of the *Record*. You can swing it if you will."

The publisher made a wry face.

"I hardly fancy the rôle of a benevolent blackmailer, John." He hesitated. "But I have confidence in your hunches. Yes, I'll see you through with it."

IT was not yet seven o'clock of that very evening when John Garland, having arrived in Endora by the six-eighteen train and having found himself lodgings

at a hostelry hopefully and wonderfully called the Hotel Desirable, entered a barber-shop in the center of town. And while the barber snipped and scraped, John began his campaign.

"Say," he murmured between soapy lips, "I'm sort of trying to locate an old feller named Harlan—Charles E., I think his name is. Used to know him a long time ago. Happen to know if he's still in town?"

The barber stopped scraping to reply.

"Old Charley Harlan? Lord, yes—what's left of him is still here. It aint much, stranger. Them Harlans has had plenty trouble in recent years."

"Trouble? What kind?"

"Well now, jest take old Charley himself. He was a good farmer. He had him about three hundred acres of good land down by Nevins Falls—until one day he gets a notice from the State capital that he don't own nothin'. Somebody done made a search of his titles and snatched that land right out under him."

"Somebody? Who?"

"Dunno. All we know here is it was some damn' Yankee lawyers done it. Nacherly they was actin' for somebody else, but nobody don't know who. After a while the land was sold at auction. That's when Miss Tuck bought it. Small chance old Charley Harlan would have of gettin' it back now."

"Miss Tuck? Who's she?"

The barber looked at John amazedly.

"Miss Tuck? Say, you aint been in Endora for quite a spell, have ye, stranger? Don't know Aimée Tuck? Smartest woman in all the State. Maybe in America. You'll find out plenty if you stay here awhile."

Satisfied with this as a beginning, John pursued his questioning elsewhere; and with the adroitness of long newspaper experience, he picked up and pieced together the story of the Harlans, a family with whom Fates seemed to have dealt very harshly.

Charles, aged seventy now, he learned, was penniless and in a home for the aged. His grandchildren were on the town, save only one, who was a sort of janitor in a public-school building. Mrs. Mary Harlan Snowden, daughter of Charles, had married a respected gentleman who was a deacon in the local church. Only a year ago scandal had touched her name. Her own cousin, Harlan Connor, a teller in the local bank, had been revealed as having stolen several thousand dollars of depositors' funds and was taken to the State capital, where, in a closed trial, he was found guilty and imprisoned. The theft of banking funds, of all things, had been revealed by an anonymous letter to the bank's president. In that same letter Mrs. Snowden's name was associated with her cousin as being the cause of the man's weakness and the object of his lavish attentions.

"It made an ugly business here about the middle of last year," said one informant. "Poor Deacon Snowden had to resign, and folks treated Mary Snowden pretty shabby, although nobody never proved anything."

BUT that was not all of the Harlan saga of disaster. It extended to a remote second cousin, one Roger Free, who owned a dairy farm just outside the town. The farm had been the pride and admiration of the community until one day a Government inspector had appeared, had made special tests and had discovered evidences of incipient anthrax in his prize herd. The State law required that the entire herd be killed, and that was done. Roger Harlan Free was a ruined man. He died of it.

"Funny thing about that," said John's informant—this time it was the owner of a small late-night restaurant. "They say the State bureau over at the capital never would have found that anthrax bug if it wasn't for somebody sending them a letter."

"A letter? Who did that?"

"Dunno. But there was a letter. Somebody was mean enough to write 'em and tell 'em that one of Rog Free's best milkers looked mighty sick. Wasn't true, either. Anthrax don't act like that."

John went away from that restaurant full of thoughts. Early in the morning he had acted upon those thoughts. He had taken himself straight to the little brick shack which houses the Endora *Gazette*, and had found the editor, Mr. James Gade, bending over his forms.

"Just how much of a story would it make in your paper, Gade," he asked after a little preliminary talk, "if you could print an advance statement of who would profit by the will of the late David Harlan of Firmingham—the department-store man, I mean. He came from this town."

The small, baldish editor looked up quickly from under his eye visor.

"God a'mighty!" he exclaimed. "Did you say you've got a story about *that* you want to hand me? You come right

over to my desk and sit down. Have a cigar. Have several cigars. You can have practically anything I've got for a story like that—not excluding that dirty old flat-bed press."

"Not so fast," said John. "I didn't say I actually can prognosticate the heirs. I asked you if it would be a big story for you. I take it that it would."

"You take it right, brother. It would be the biggest—and maybe the funniest story in this town."

"Funniest? Why?"

"That's right. You don't know about the Harlans."

"I gather they've all had trouble."

"Trouble! Maybe Job was the first Harlan, for all I know—though come to think of it, the first of the tribe in these parts was an immigrant named Harlanovitch or something like that. He got it changed so's to be more American. He was the father of Charles and David—"

"You know David Harlan died the other day?" Garland interrupted.

"Sure. We get news here, sooner or later, mostly later. But I know that much. Bad fire—big losses. Heart-failure, eh? Well, old David couldn't escape the curse either, so it seems."

"You mean—something else?"

"You can take any meaning you please, Garland. This is a queer town. Any town is queer when it's run by a woman."

"What woman?"

THE *Gazette* editor hesitated; then he said slowly:

"Her name is Tuck—Aimée Tuck. She owns this town, lock, stock and barrel, and everybody in it. That is, everybody except me; and sometimes I'm not so damned sure about that."

"That's pretty—fantastic, isn't it?"

"Fantastic? You just don't know how fantastic Aimée Tuck is, brother! She's a super-woman. There never was anybody like her, and there never will be. For which thank God."

"You—don't seem to like this Mrs. Tuck."

"Miss, not Mrs. And it isn't dislike. I'm scared pink of her. So is everybody else. And mind you, she started off as a poor girl—an orphan over in the asylum. She was just nothing and nobody, until all of a sudden she comes up from no place and takes over the town."

This Aimée Tuck, he went on, was the daughter of a town selectman, a respected, well-liked man. When she was only a child of eleven it was discovered that her father had diverted a considerable sum of town money to his own private uses, chiefly to building new and imposing structures on his farm and to the purchase of farming equipment. He confessed it, was tried, convicted and sent to St. Jude prison, where after a year he died. The town, behaving as small towns often do, virtually ostracized the Tucks. In the words of Mr. Gade:

"There's no explaining what gets into a community of folks that makes 'em do things like that, but they did, and it killed Minnie Tuck. Which, of course, left Aimée an orphan at the age of fourteen."

Aimée had been sent by the town to an orphanage, where she remained in obscurity for several years until her maturity. Released, she left Endora and labored here and there as a housemaid and general servant. In the year 1929, however, she returned to Endora a very noticeably changed woman. She was employed by a real-estate office at the time of the land boom. Apparently she had saved a little money. This, claimed Gade, she used to fight a lawsuit by which she regained control of her dead and disgraced father's former farm, which almost immediately she sold at a considerable profit.

"And from that minute on," said Gade, "she was a latter-day miracle. Everything she touched turned to money. She stuck to the real-estate business. She had learned all the tricks of the trade and used 'em all, making coin hand over fist. Right now she's the chairman of the board at the bank, owns the land of practically all the stores or else has a mortgage on 'em. She's a regular local Hetty Green, only worse. She never married. She lives alone in a big house with only her servants. As far as the rest of the State knows, she's just a smart rich woman. But I tell you, Garland, she trades in souls—and in Harlan souls, especially. Did you hear about old Charles Harlan losing his land to some Yankee corporation that nobody ever saw or heard of?"

"I got that story."

"Well, who owns it now? I'll tell you: Aimée Tuck."

"So I heard, but—"

"And Roger Free's dairy outfit, after his cattle were killed? Aimée Tuck is the answer. She bought it at auction, anthrax bugs and all, I guess. And right now she's dickering for a sale of it to a condensed milk company that wants to build a plant here. She'll clean up a fifty-thousand-

dollar profit out of poor Free's hypothetical anthrax."

"Hypothetical?"

"That's the word I used. I can't prove the implication, but I can think what I damn' please."

"Then you think this Tuck lady is behind all the Harlan trouble, that she—"

"Brother," said James Gade, "I've plumb run out of answers to your questions. In fact I never said a word, and I'll lie you black in the face if any of this ever comes back to me again. But if you'll give me a lead on the Harlan will, I'll consider it's a fair bargain. Well, sorry you've got to be going now."

"Wait a minute, Gade," said Garland. "Is there a woman in this town whose name is Brown—Miss Brown, is all I know. She'll be tall and strong and hard-boiled, and has a voice like a man, and she reads the *Gazette*. She has business of some kind in Firmingham. Know such a party?"

Gade shook his head. "Not me," he said. "I don't know all the Browns and Smiths and Joneses in town. Sorry."

Garland's next stop was the orphanage, which turned out to be a large, sprawling brownstone building. Inside, there was an atmosphere of business.

"I represent the firm of Hurd, Hurd and Garland," John explained to the woman in charge. "We are interested in the identity of one of your inmates who was a resident here several years ago. It is a legacy matter. We are tracing an heir. The name is—er—Tucker—John Kenneth Tucker. He should have been here sometime earlier than 1920. The truth is, also, that even the name may be false. We are very anxious that no mistake shall be made. Now if I could see the record of your—er—inmates for those early years, I think—"

The magic word *legacy* won the day; and a moment later, the matron was leaning enthusiastically over Garland's shoulder as he opened the several index volumes. There were, by a fortunate miracle, several entries of the name "Tucker." More good luck came as he ran his finger down the *Tuckers* while his eye ran along the T's above them, for the matron pounced upon one name, saying:

"Oh, but you must know about our most illustrious graduate. See? The name is Tuck—Aimée Tuck. We're all so proud of her here. Please let me interrupt your search to show you the record of Miss Tuck. She's really the most wonderful example of what schools like ours can do. See? She was only a child of fourteen when she entered—that was 1915. And she stayed here until 1922. Of course then she *must* have been quite —well, different from the other girls; but I guess the staff hardly expected that she would turn out to be the richest woman in the State."

"Did she," inquired John, his tongue far in his teeth, "get a legacy?"

"Oh, dear no! She made all her money herself—just imagine! And after all, she was only a housemaid at first. Today she's the largest landholder in Endora or in the whole county; and what do you think, of all things? She's one of the trustees of this very institution! Isn't it just like a fairy tale?"

"Yes," agreed John Garland. "Just like a fairy tale."

But he was not thinking of his words nor hers. He was thinking of an entry in that record-book against the name of *Tuck, Aimée M.*

Ex. 7/10 Medlow Firm. Prob. 12/31 do. Dis. 1/12.

To the woman, he said:

"What's all that jargon mean? You're pretty safe in making these books public when they're written in Chinese."

The woman giggled.

"It's really very simple. Right there we have a history of everything that happened to Miss Tuck during her last year here and the year after. The *'Ex.'* means *'Externate,'* which indicates that although she was still under the school's jurisdiction, she was working outside. In this case it was a family named Medlow in Firmingham. She worked for them from July tenth to the end of the year, and she was given her discharge in January. Apparently she was working for the Medlows all that time, because there isn't any other entry showing change. You see how very simple it is."

"Huh? Oh, yes," said John, "very interesting, very interesting."

"Now about this Tucker boy—"

"Eh? Who? Tucker? Ah, yes, little Tommy Tucker, he sang for his supper, didn't he? Well, thank you—thank you very much indeed, madam. Just hold that page for me, will you, please? I'll be back in a week or so."

And he dashed out of the record-room door, into the worn marble hall and out to his waiting car.

IT had been a trying day for Mr. Hurd, and the District Attorney's words lingered painfully in his mind.

"I didn't think," Russell Boyd had said, "that you would stoop to that kind of chicanery, Hurd." And as the publisher paced his study, he was not stirred with eagerness when his telephone rang. He merely lifted the instrument and said patiently: "Yes? Who is it?"

A voice replied: "That you, boss? Garland, here. Listen, this case is as good as in your lap—and unless I'm wrong, it's ten times as big as you ever thought. Did you see—you know? Did you get the dope?"

"Yes, John," he said in his tired voice, "I did your blackmailing for you. It worked. The answer is that you were entirely right in your guess about—the conflagration."

"Huh? Talk English, boss. You mean that was a professional job? Well, that does it. That makes it all fit—that is, it will fit after I come back from Sleepersville.

"Why Sleepersville?"

"Don't you remember who lives in Sleepersville, boss? Remember the Cavendies business—and that Dr. Medlow who could make supermen to order? How'd you like it if I turned up a superwoman, a freak, a hybrid daisy gone bad? Well, that's what we've got in our trap, unless I'm way off, and that's why I'm on my way to Sleepersville. So long, boss. Between us, you and I will take some beating as a newspaper man. See you tomorrow."

The publisher of the *Record* began to pace his floor with a more alert step, his eyes focused in thoughtful reverie. Presently he called his newspaper on the telephone.

"Give me," he told the desk operator, "the night editor." And when a new voice came over the wire, he said:

"This is Hurd speaking. I want you to hold open the front-page forms until it is just time to run the three o'clock edition. Then I want you to set up an extra on new forms—duplicate everything if you must. Make new plates. Have everything ready either for a remake on Page One in the three o'clock, or an extra any time during the morning. The *Record* is just about to make newspaper history."

BUT John Garland did not get to Sleepersville that night.

Chief among the reasons was the fact that Medlow, the name of the family for whom Aimée Tuck had first worked, was indelibly stamped upon John's memory.

Dr. Medlow was a European, possibly Hungarian, possibly Italian. Just when he had come to Firmingham was obscure. A specialist in the then less-known endocrine glands, Dr. Medlow had made discoveries far in advance of his times. And he had achieved miracles. He transformed animals into super-animals. To poor, undernourished, broken-down men and women he gave new life, making them strong, stimulating them to physical and mental abilities which normally would never have been their lot. But tragedy came in 1929 when in an experiment upon the misborn daughter of a serving-woman, he had the misfortune either to cause the infant's death or else not to prevent it. The mother brought the case into the courts. In one of the greatest trials of the city, Medlow was found guilty of manslaughter, sentenced. imprisoned, deprived of his license to practice medicine.

On his release from prison he retired to Sleepersville, where in obscurity he continued his experiments. Nothing was heard of him until a double tragedy shook Firmingham, with the death—a murder and a suicide—of two prominent citizens.

IT was shown then—and John Garland himself was most active in producing the evidence—that this same Dr. Medlow had discovered a process by which the most basic human functions are speeded up to a super-normal level. Those two citizens, a Mr. Cavendies and a Mr. Mason, it was revealed, were the products of Medlow's greatest experiment. By this chemical process he had literally made them, elevated them from the obscurity of being merely human and gifted them with higher-than-normal powers of energy and understanding until they had lifted themselves by these gifts far above their fellow-citizens.

But the miracle was also an uncontrollable danger, for that the bad or evil *instincts* were accelerated equally with the good. Tragedy ensued, therefore.

Dr. Medlow! Could it be that this "super-woman" Aimée Tuck had once been hired out to Dr. Medlow? And if so—

And so John Garland may be pardoned for his precipitate departure from the orphanage. It was already nine o'clock at night, before he could get a train to Firmingham. Then he went into action and the complexities began to pile up on him.

His first act, very naturally, was to enter a telephone-booth at the Firmingham

"Come along, Mr. Garland. Don't make it tough for me, or it'll get tough for you."

station and put in a long-distance call through "information" for this same Dr. Medlow, who, when last heard of, lived a retired life on a farm just outside of Sleepersville. After an hour's effort, he learned that Dr. Medlow's phone had been discontinued. But many years as a newspaper reporter are productive of ingenuity. After a bad quarter of an hour or so, John Garland's face lighted up with the glow of an idea.

"That's it!" he cried aloud. "That's the only chance!" And then to himself: "I'll call the little Gainsway. Ought to have called her up long ago, anyhow. If anybody in the world knows where Medlow is, she'll be the one."

And so he dashed for the telephone directory once more....

Phyllis Gainsway was a young woman of considerable accomplishment, a trained nurse who had herself been, at one time, in the service of Dr. Medlow, and who, during the Cavendies-Mason case, had been instrumental in guiding John Garland to the complex truth behind those two tragedies.

Getting Phyllis Gainsway on the phone at that hour was not a simple matter, but finally a sleepy voice came through:

"This is Phyllis Gainsway. Who—"

He cut her off. "Phyllis? This is John Garland, your pal."

"No pal of mine would wake a girl up at this hour of night on her only chance to catch up on a week's loss of sleep. And whatever it is you want, I'm not going to—"

"Oh, yes," said John, "you are. I've got the magic word. Listen carefully. I won't repeat it. The magic word is Medlow—*M-e-d-l-o-w*—and I need your advice, your help and your abilities. In short, darling, I need you. And I apologize for calling—"

She did not respond to his jocular tone. She did not react to his terms of mock-endearment. She merely said:

"Where are you, John? I can be out of here in a matter of minutes."

"Good gal," he said. "I'll be outside of your hospital entrance in that same matter of minutes. But let me ask you one quick question. Do you know where *he* is?"

"I'll be there," she said; that was all.

WHEN Mr. J. Selzer Hurd reached his office that next morning, a man of heavy build who had been standing idly by the door stopped him on the first step.

"Mr. Hurd? Here, this is for you," said the fellow, thrusting a piece of printed paper into the publisher's hand. When he read it:

"Good God!" he said. "A summons? What in the—"

"That's right, Mister. I'm a special officer from the D. A.'s office. He wants you, and he wants you now. Better drive right over. Mind if I come along? I'm supposed to bring you in."

And so Mr. Hurd did not learn that morning whether or not his instructions to his night editor had been followed. That old sense of humiliation came back to him. Nor was this feeling abated when he entered the D. A.'s offices.

"Good morning, Hurd." Again that disrespectful omission of the *Mr.* "Sit down, please. I'm afraid you and your newspaper are in some trouble."

"Trouble?"

"It looks that way. Now, there is one thing I want to make clear once and for all, and that is that this office will not tolerate any finagling from the press which can in any way interfere with the prosecution of justice in this town."

"But really—see here, Mr. Boyd, I resent—"

"I'm not interested in your resentments, Hurd," snapped the District Attorney. "I told you last night that I was surprised to find a man of your caliber and position stooping—that's the word for it—stooping to cheap journalism. I tell you that your reporter Garland literally broke the law when he didn't turn in the name of Da Cappo in the first place. And well you know it. And now by the fact that you and that smart-aleck Garland held that bit out on me, I know you've held out a lot more. And I'm not going to stand for it."

"Believe me, Mr. Boyd, your attitude is—"

"Well, that's my attitude, right or wrong. And I know it is right. We have spent the entire night piecing out this Harlan fire case. We've picked up the incendiary. We know who hired him. We also know that he murdered Da Cappo, and we have a full confession. That firebug is known all over the East—he is 'Smoke' Berkmann, with a record as long as the transatlantic cable. Not only that, but when I showed your reporter pictures of him, he didn't identify him. That's obstruction! We've pieced out the entire story—so far as the fire itself goes. We know Berkmann came here to do the incendiary job, and did it. We know Da Cappo himself had a prison record, and that he was in the penitentiary with this same Smoke Berkmann, and that he hired that devil to pull the job. We also know that he was killed because he tried to hold back on the payments for the job, and that Berkmann and another thug named Hertz dragged Da Cappo, dead, into that barroom and left him there; and that the barman got killed by Berkmann later when he tried to blackmail him. The barman was an ex-con., and he knew what was what all the time. We know all that, Hurd; but we also know that that isn't half the story. The real story is who hired Da Cappo to hire Berkmann."

Mr. Hurd was regaining his poise.

"I fail to see," he said quietly, "just how this involves myself, my reporter or my newspaper, Boyd. As I recall it, young Garland made a considerable effort to tell the police that a murder had been committed, and when, due to a trick on the part of that barman, he failed to convince the officer he actually called to the spot, the police found it expedient to detain my reporter in jail overnight—incommunicado. If there is any breakage of the law, it lies right there!"

"All right, those cops were wrong. I admit it, but I can understand a sergeant's reaction to being consigned to hell by a lippy young newspaper man. And I still say your paper is holding out on this department—and on the people of this city."

"My paper? Just how can you—"

"Because you yourself ordered your men to hold up the front-page forms last night. Which means that you are expecting to run a big story. Also, I happen to know that John Garland, your fancy reporter, spent yesterday in Endora. And before he went, he crowded Tony da Cappo's secretary for information without telling her that he had seen her boss—dead. Do you think we don't know what goes on in this town?

"When that Clews woman gave it out that Da Cappo hadn't shown up for two days, it was easy to identify him as the missing body. And when my men went over that bar after finding the bartender killed, they picked up Berkmann's fingerprints all over the place. They also found Da Cappo's body in the electric refrigerator—the bottle-cooler. And so it still all comes back to your damned reporter, Hurd—and to you and your paper. Just what is this big story you planned to run as a special edition?"

"Very frankly, Boyd, and very honestly, I don't know."

"You don't know!"

"No. As to Garland's being in Endora, that is correct. I did not learn it until he telephoned me last night—late. He did not tell me what story it is he thinks he will be ready to break. I suspected that it would be associated with the Harlan case, but I honestly do not know. I have considerable confidence in the talents of Garland. He has never yet failed to come through with a story."

"Then where is he right now?"

"I don't know that. He—"

The door opened and a secretary appeared, holding a torn yellow envelope in one hand.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Boyd," she said, "but this telegram just arrived, and it seems urgent."

Frowning at the interruption, Mr. Boyd took the yellow paper.

"Good God in heaven!"

The District Attorney was staring at the telegram with a look of stark incredulity. Then, turning to Mr. Hurd, he said:

"This is from Endora. Do you remember that Gainsway girl who figured in the Cavendies business, Hurd? Well, she sent it. Your Garland seems to have tumbled onto the answers to this Harlan business—and it appears he's got himself hurt doing it. Here—see if you can make any better sense of it, Mr. Hurd."

"THERE'S one thing I want you to understand, John Garland," said Phyllis Gainsway, almost as soon as the reporter had greeted her, "and that is that I won't be a party to anything that would harm Dr. Medlow. None of your wild newspaper stories. He's a dear, sweet old man and a wonderful scientist, whatever they say, and I won't let you do him any harm."

John walked beside her in the dark for half a block before he found his reply.

"I just," said John, "want to ask him a question. Offhand, I can't quite see how any harm could come of it."

"What question?"

"I want to ask him if he employed a certain servant-girl for a certain period of time. If he did, I have another question—but that is only for him."

"Well," she countered, "why rout me out of bed? Why did you need me?"

Presumably Garland had his answer ready, but he did not give it verbally. A prowling cab skirted the curb close to them; and the driver, a hearty fellow with a broad grin, leaned out toward them, saying:

"What's the matter, sister—is he kinda tight with the folding money, or are you two love-birds economizing?"

The absurdity of it brought a laugh from Miss Gainsway and a growl from John. But he led her toward the cab.

"The lady," he said to the driver, "will give you the address."

Miss Gainsway looked at him, a little resentful. Then she instructed:

"Go the whole length of Willow, turn on Charleston, go south to Vreeman and make a right turn on a little street called Adam Bede. There is a very small brick house with a half wall and a grill. That's it. And hurry, please."

It was a curiously silent ride. It was not until long after they had come to Vreeman Street that John said:

"Thanks, Phyllis. You're a pal and a good sport, and I promise you we'll keep the old boy out of this."

Dr. Medlow was, in appearance, equal to his reputation. He was bearded. His nose was hooked like an Arab's. His eyes were nervous, rapid, penetrating. If a machine could speak, its voice would be like Dr. Medlow's.

"*Ach,* the little Gainsway! And for what reasons am I so honored at such a time of night, my little friend?"

"I am not alone, Doctor," said the girl. "You will remember Mr. Garland? It seems he has a question to ask you which will not wait. He has promised me that he will give you no publicity. He says it is terribly important."

"So? Well, young man?"

John asked his first question. The small, frail, bearded man bent his head in reflection; then he said:

"You ask me if sixteen or seventeen years ago I was employing a servant-girl from the Endora orphanage? I will say yes, young man. I was so. And why?"

"Her name was Tuck—Aimée Tuck?"

"Yes. That is, I believe, her name. It was long ago."

John came to the point.

"Something has happened, Doctor—a tragedy. I did not come here to discuss with you the success or the failure of your scientific theories. I came simply to discover if it is possible that Aimée Tuck was at any time or is today the subject of one of your—experiments."

DR. MEDLOW'S sharp eyes penetrated deep into John's. Miss Gainsway gave a little gasp. And then the Doctor replied clearly and distinctly:

"Yes. That is the fact. She is a very sick woman, that Aimée Tuck. In her brain there is much sickness. Already I have told her. Already I am refusing to give her more treatment. But already I think it is too late. Tell me, young man, what has this poor woman done?"

"She has done nothing that I can prove —yet, Doctor," he said at length. "But now that you have told me that she is one of your—"

"She is wonderful," commented Medlow, interrupting, "just the same. What was she then when she is a girl? Nothing. A lump of clay. A vine which is too weak to be clinging. But from such clay I have made—a woman, yes. Much of a woman. . . . Excuse me. What is it that you are saying, young man?"

"I was saying that now that I know she is one of your—cures, I am pretty sure that she has been the cause of the most pitiful bunch of tragedies that ever happened in one small town. I can't prove it. The only thing that will prove it is a confession. And I'm going to get one, too. But first I want to know why she could spend years and years trying to practically wipe out a family—the Harlan family. She has money; she has power; she has everything she wants. What in God's name could she gain by hurting so many people? Why would a woman like that hire a firebug to burn a store full of people she never even knew—just because the store has the name of Harlan? Why, Doctor?"

The little scientist shook his head.

"Ah, but I cannot know all that. Once more now I am in what you call the dismay—that which I am wanting to do for the good it is turn' for the bad. But of this woman I can say this: When she is come to work here, what do I find her? Weak, sentimental, unstable, crushed. There is behind her some tragedy. To me she is no good. To herself she is no good. And so I make the experiment which will make her into some different thing. That which is shut up in her—such hate, such hurt, such tragedy, it is sublimated. It lies in the unconscious. And now when she is grown to be a woman of much power, of much strength, who is it can say that the subconscious life of her is not to be accelerated with the conscious? Who is it can say that when she is able to make her dreams fulfill', she will not also fulfill those which are bad? Like I am telling you, she is sick . . . . it is the soul, the psyche which is sick. I am not a metaphysician. I do not treat the soul. I treat only that which is physical. And if, for such treatment I am to be laughed at, to be put in the prison, to be called the quack, the charlatan, then what is it they will call me when I am trying to treat the soul? I ask you that, young man."

"No," said John, "I can't answer that one, Doc. And if it's any good to you, Doc, let me tell you here and now that I begin to think you're all right. You've got a fine friend in Miss Gainsway, Doc. Maybe if I see a whole lot of her, you'll have a pretty good one in me. . . . Well, thanks. I've got a job to do. So long, Phyllis. I've got to catch a cab and take it all the way to Endora. Be seeing you. Good night, Doctor Medlow."

But when he reached the street-level, Phyllis Gainsway was beside him.

"You don't think, do you, that I'm going to miss the rest of this?"

THE morning air was cool even for the season. It was seven o'clock. The Tuck household, however, had been astir since five, for Miss Aimée Tuck was not a woman to lie abed nor to tolerate such sloth in her servants.

Miss Tuck and her secretary Bruges were at work in her office. She sat stiffly, erect, forceful. In front of her was a considerable array of papers, letters, bills, documents but among them all was the very essence of military order. She was not beautiful. Her hair was thin, though not from age. Her face was thin, though not from disease, fatigue nor ill-nourishment. Her lips also were thin, and carried a sucked-in expression which accentuated the line of her short, positive chin.

A tap came at the door. Miss Tuck did not turn her head as she said:

"Yes, Dodham. Ready."

The elderly Dodham entered on tiptoe, set a breakfast-tray beside the woman,

"I think, Mr. Garland, that you are mistaken. . . . It is most unfortunate."

then retreated toward the door. A single word, spoken like the breaking of a metal bar, arrested him there:

"Wait!"

Dodham waited.

Miss Tuck, writing in a notebook with her pencil, spoke again:

"I wish you and Horban and the cook to be here together at precisely seven-thirty. I have something to say. You may go."

And Dodham, after risking one brief widening of the eyes to reveal mild surprise at this irregularity, departed. Miss Tuck returned to her work. Presently she addressed the statue called Bruges.

"Take a letter," she said, and began straightway: 'To whom it may concern: On this the twentieth day of April, I, Aimée M. Tuck of Endora, being in my right mind and—'" But she broke off, saying:

"No. I prefer to write that myself. You may go, Bruges. I want to be alone." And as the automaton Bruges rose to go, she stopped him again.

"You have forgotten nothing, Bruges? Train tickets? Passport? Airplane connections? Baggage?"

"Nothing, Miss Tuck."

"Very well. Come back here at seven-thirty with the others."

And so Bruges was dismissed.

At exactly seven-thirty—such exactness had become, by training, instinctive in the Tuck household—the four servants assembled outside Miss Tuck's office door. It was Dodham who tapped, and when the stern voice called, "Come in," they did so, all on tiptoes, all subdued, all obviously puzzled. Had they been attentive to the details of the room they would have been mildly surprised at the change which had taken place on Miss Tuck's desk. Instead of the neat piles of papers, were four new piles of crisp, green, oblong bank-notes, each weighted down with a silver dollar.

"This is to tell you that after today your services will no longer be required. I am going away."

The gasp of surprise was a quartet.

"I have no complaint to make of you. I have been satisfied, in general, with you all. And now, in place of the usual notice which is due to employees, I am giving each of you a sum of money. Please accept each share as I call you. Horban—"

The groom in black livery stepped out. Miss Tuck placed a sheaf of bank-notes in his hands.

"There are five thousand dollars in that packet, Horban," she said evenly. "Five thousand and one, to be exact. There is no need to display emotion. It is your own. I do not pretend that you have earned it. It merely gives me a certain satisfaction on going away to feel that I have paid my obligations—with interest."

She stopped there, and that curl came back to her lip. She repeated, "Yes—with interest," but it was clear even to the servants that she did not refer again to the bills in Horban's hands.

SUDDENLY there was the sound of a bell ringing downstairs. Miss Tuck glanced at her watch, saw that it was not yet seven-forty-five and frowned in mild surprise.

"Very well, Dodham. Attend to the door." Dodham left. The ceremony of distributing packets of bills continued while he was gone. Just as it was finished, Dodham came to the door.

"A young man and a young woman are asking to see you, miss. The young man insists that it is most urgent. I was not able to—"

"Their names?"

"A Miss Gainsway and a Mr. Garland. We—that is, I—do not know them, miss."

She frowned.

"Very well. I will give them five minutes, Dodham. But first take your money. For the rest of you, that is all. You will complete your day. After that you will go where you please. Good-by."

THE servants filed out. Miss Tuck returned to her work. Presently, however, Dodham opened her door to admit John Garland and Phyllis Gainsway.

"Well?" she greeted them. "Sit down. What can I do for you? If you have come for some charity I am not already supporting, you are wasting your time."

It was John Garland who replied.

"We have not come from any charity organization, Miss Tuck. We were informed in town that you often receive business callers this early and so—"

"Well? What is it you want?"

"I want to ask you a single question."

"Ask it."

John spoke like a man choosing his words with extreme care.

"Did you know, Miss Tuck, that a certain man with whom you have recently done some business under the assumed name of Miss Brown was murdered the day before yesterday?"

Her chin lifted abruptly. She caught her breath, but she was able to say:

"What man?"

"His name is Da Cappo."

"I do not," she said very slowly, "know the name. What is it you want? Who are you? Is this some kind of blackmail?"

The pace of John's speaking became even slower.

"No, Miss Tuck," he said, "this is not blackmail. I am a newspaper reporter for the Firmingham *Record*. And what I want of you is a full confession."

She sat there, stiff, motionless; a slow, gradual whitening crept over her face like a descending veil.

"A confession?" she said evenly. "Of what?"

"Shall I," said Garland, "try to put it in a single expression? A confession of the slow, relentless extermination of the name *Harlan*. A confession, Miss Tuck, of vengeance, of merciless persecution, of plunder, of theft, and indirectly, of murder. A confession, in particular, of hiring through that man Da Cappo a professional incendiary to set fire to the Harlan department store in Firmingham, in which the lives of hundreds of innocent people might have been lost. Shall I go on, Miss Tuck?"

She was a figure carved from granite. She said, with an evenness that was an amazing example of control:

"I do not—know what you are talking about." And then with still greater strength: "And I warn you that any further—"

John interrupted her:

"Then let me warn you too, Miss Tuck, that both Miss Gainsway and myself are acquainted with Dr. Medlow—a man for whom you once worked, and with whom you have had contact for several years. Let me repeat the name again, Miss Tuck. It is Medlow—Medlow."

To say that the woman shrank within herself visibly would be not altogether accurate. And yet she sagged perceptibly. One hand outstretched on her desk contracted, and there was a whiteness about her knuckles. Her eyes changed their light and meaning. It was as though a spiritual strength departed from her.

"You—know!" she whispered. "You—know—"

"Yes," said Garland, "we know, Miss Tuck. We know the facts. We do not know the reasons. Why, Miss Tuck? Why did you so hate all the family of Harlan? Why?"

PHYLLIS GAINSWAY, sitting beside John, had produced a small notebook and was rapidly marking in shorthand with her pencil.

She paused now, as the expression upon Miss Tuck's face took on another change, became something eerie, something remote from the human. And yet this change did not penetrate her voice. Her voice was still her own, hard, strong, no longer a whisper. She said:

"Yes—I will tell you that. I must tell you that. It is too late now. Too late. Too bad. In a few hours I should have—gone. But it is too late now. So I will tell you. Listen to me. Listen."

Her eyes had gone remote as though looking into another existence. She spoke slowly, distinctly:

"You know," she said, "what I am—how I became what I am—a guinea pig—an experiment—Dr. Medlow's living laboratory, but you do not know—what I was. . . . Listen."

She told of early memories of her childhood, a farmer's daughter, a selectman's daughter, the daughter of a decent, respected man who had been wrongfully accused and convicted of a crime which

he did not commit—imprisoned, dead. She told of her mother, a simple good woman living in a small rural community. She told of disgrace, of scorn, of humiliation, of children in the streets making mock of her, torturing her, sneering, laughing. She told of neighbors passing her mother by with scorn in their faces, of tradesmen refusing to sell merchandise, of prayers spoken in church publicly asking God to purge the community of the stain brought by one of its members—her father. She told of her mother's wasting away, of her frailty, her sickness, her death brought on by sorrow and humiliation.

SHE told of the orphanage, her experiences there, her humiliation. And then she said the name—the name of the man who, as she and her mother knew through all, had done this thing to them, had taken funds from the town accounts and had altered the records to place the blame irrevocably upon her father; of the man who, young then, was old in greed and evil; of the man who, as head of the very orphanage to which she was sent, had starved a hundred boys and girls in order that he might gain capital out of which to prosper. She told that name with a bitterness, a hatred, a very curse in her voice. And that name was Harlan—David Harlan.

And when she had finished, she sat up stiff and straight in her chair again.

"Yes, Mr. Garland," she said, "and yes, Miss Gainsway. There is my confession. David Harlan is dead. My debt is paid. Dr. Medlow has refused to let me go on—being what I am. And I shall go back to what I was—a flimsy, unstable thing, a mere body with bodily functions but without—force, without the power to be. Dust to dust. Clay to clay. Mud and loam to mud and loam. It will come. It will come slowly, but it will come. I shall leave Endora today, and by plane I shall go away—away from this town and from this country, away to a place where I can become—myself. Where there shall be no more—humiliation. There, perhaps, will be peace."

"I am sorry, Miss Tuck—" It was very hard to say it. "I am very sorry, but I'm afraid that now—it will be a little different from that. I'm afraid that you can't quite make it—going away, I mean. And I am very sorry, too."

"No?" said Miss Tuck's voice, and it was once more hard and strong and metallic. "I think, Mr. Garland, that you are mistaken there. I have seen that Miss Gainsway has been taking down my —ah—confession. I am very sorry too, but I cannot let that confession leave this room. Nor can I allow either of you to leave. It is most unfortunate."

Neither of them had noticed the movement of her hand, and yet now it was extended on her desk and in it was a blue-black automatic revolver.

Miss Gainsway gave a little cry. Garland shouted and flung himself in the line of fire between the woman and the girl. There was a report—another, and another and another. John Garland was somehow across the few feet that separated them from Miss Tuck's desk. He had his fingers upon her arm. He was strong. He felt her hand yield, and felt the weapon loosen in her grasp, felt the struggle and the writhing and the violence of her. He saw her eyes, suddenly dilated, suddenly mad. He saw her little teeth bared with the struggle, almost wolfishly. He was ready for that one last wrench which would pluck that deadly thing out of her hand. . . .

And then he felt a sudden pain in his middle, a weakness, a sickness plucking at him. And just as darkness came over him, there came another shot.

IT was a most unreal scene in Miss Tuck's office. Two big country-looking men had come running up the stairs and had forced themselves into the room at the sound of firearms, and were standing there, blinking, unbelieving, staring at Miss Gainsway. The servants, too, were crowding pale-faced in the doorway; but Miss Tuck's face was invisible to them because it was flat upon her desk. From under it came a little red stream which was moistening the neatly piled papers. John Garland lay stretched out on the floor quite close to the desk. There was a small hole in his coat, just above the belt-line.

Miss Gainsway looked up from bending over John Garland, at the two men who came bursting in.

"Thank you," she said. "Thank you for standing by, constable. And just to clear this up quickly, will you please send a telegram for me to Mr. Russell Boyd, the District Attorney of Firmingham County? And get a doctor and an ambulance quickly. Mr. Garland has been shot. I'm a nurse. I can take care of him until the ambulance comes."

"The Man Who Couldn't Lose" is the next novelette in this series by Fulton Grant.

High Lights

"Westward from Vinland"

The story of the Vikings in our Northwest, as attested by the Kensington Rune Stone (which records the death of ten members of a Scandinavian party in Minnesota in 1362) and much other significant evidence.

By HJALMAR R. HOLAND

of the New Books

Chapter X

DISCOVERY AND LATER HISTORY OF THE KENSINGTON STONE

IN the summer of 1898 a farmer in western Minnesota named Olof Ohman made a strange discovery. He was engaged in grubbing stumps in a rough and timbered section of his farm, near the village of Kensington in Douglas County. In the course of this work he encountered one tree which gave him considerable trouble. Upon digging away the soil around the roots, he found that a large flat stone lay immediately under the tree. This stone was firmly clasped in the grip of two of its largest roots. He therefore had much trouble in cutting these roots without damaging his axe against the stone.

A little later his attention was again called to the vexatious stone. His ten-year-old son found a large number of regular marks or scratches upon the surface, and he called his father's attention to them. The father could make nothing out of these marks, but assumed that they were made by some human agent.

This discovery was much more than a nine days' wonder, and as the stone was on exhibition in one of the bank windows of Kensington, it was inspected by thousands. The discussion concerning it finally resulted in the conclusion that the stone contained a runic inscription, several persons recalling that they had seen illustrations of similar inscriptions in Scandinavian books.

Late in the fall of 1898 a careful copy of the inscription was sent to O. J. Breda, professor of Scandinavian languages in the University of Minnesota. He studied the inscription for a couple of months and made a translation of most of it, which reads as follows, the words not understood being indicated by dashes:

——— Swedes and ——— Norwegians on a discovery-journey from Vinland west ——— we had camp ——— ——— ——— one day's journey north from this stone. We ——— ——— fished one day. A. V. M. save from ——— have ——— men by the ocean to look after our ships ——— day's journey from this island. Year ———.

This reading was given to the newspapers, accompanied by a lengthy interview in which Professor Breda stated that he did not believe the inscription was genuine for a number of reasons.* The chief of these were: (1) The mixture of Swedes and Norwegians which, he said, was "contrary to all accounts of the Vinland voyages," and (2) the language of the inscription was not Old Norse but a mixture of Swedish, Norwegian and English, which was unthinkable in an inscription dealing with the Vinland voyages of the Eleventh Century. . .

These objections of Professor Breda, who was the first to give some interpretation of these strange signs, had a far-reaching influence. They were repeated by others who gained their opinions on the subject from the newspaper accounts, and thus a general belief grew up that the inscription was the product of some Scandinavian immigrant who spoke a mixed English-Norwegian dialect.

In the meantime the stone had been shipped to Northwestern University in Evanston, where it came to the attention of the philologist, Professor George O. Curme. He had photographs taken of the inscription, and sent to several scholars in Europe. Presumably these scholars were of the opinion that a pre-Columbian expedition into the very heart of America was not only improbable but impossible, and that an alleged runic inscription recording such a fact was a fantastic absurdity.

This verdict was generally accepted as final, and the stone was sent back to the finder branded as a forgery. Apparently disgusted with having had so much trouble about a "lying runestone," the owner threw it down in front of his granary (fortunately with the inscribed side down), where it lay for nine years esteemed only as a fair doorstep and a tolerable place to straighten nails and rivet harness-straps.

Nine years later the present writer chanced to visit the neighborhood for the purpose of gathering material for a history of the Norwegian immigration. He found that the most vivid memory of

*Minneapolis Journal, Feb. 22, 1899; Skandinaven, Chicago, Feb. 22, 1899.

former days which the people there had to relate was the discovery of this runic stone. As I had spent much time while in college in the study of runes and Old Norse, the story of this find interested me greatly. It was therefore with eager expectancy that I hunted up the owner of the stone and asked to see it.

Out in the farmyard he showed me a large, dark-colored stone lying near the granary door, half sunken in the ground. It was thirty-one inches (78.7 cm.) long, sixteen inches (40.6 cm.) wide, and six inches (15.2 cm.) thick. The weight was two hundred and two pounds (91 kg.). There was no inscription on the upper side, but the farmer turned the stone over. This under side presented on the whole a very smooth appearance with but few fractures, and the inscription which there appeared was technically a most excellent piece of work. Most of the lines were evenly spaced and the characters were of almost uniform height—about one inch. The neat inscription continued for about three-fifths of the length of the stone. Although the characters were dark and weathered, they were quite distinct except in the lower left-hand corner of the inscription. Here the characters were almost worn away. The inscription continued on the flat edge, which did not have the natural smoothness of the face of the stone and showed evidence of having been trimmed smooth with a cold-chisel. Here too the inscription covered three-fifths of the length of the stone. Evidently the lower uninscribed part of the stone was intended to be placed in the ground.

My wonder increased when I saw the length of the inscription. It is one of the longest of all runic inscriptions. I counted 220 characters, besides 62 double dots which were used to separate the words. Evidently the writer of this strange inscription was an artist in paleography who had a long story to tell. Although I assumed that the inscription was spurious, inasmuch as it had been condemned by several scholars, I persuaded the owner to let me take it home with me, thinking it would be an interesting souvenir and exemplification of my favorite subject of study.

Sometime later I began the study of the inscription. . . . The following translation has since received general acceptance. The words in brackets are omitted in the inscription; those in parentheses are explanatory. Nine lines appear on the face of the stone as follows:

1. [We are] 8 Goths (Swedes) and 22 Norwegians on
2. [an] exploration-journey from
3. Vinland through (or across) the West (i.e., round about the West) We
4. had camp by [a lake with] 2 skerries one
5. days-journey north from this stone
6. We were [out] and fished one day After
7. we came home [we] found 10 [of our] men red
8. with blood and dead AV[e] M[aria]
9. Save [us] from evil

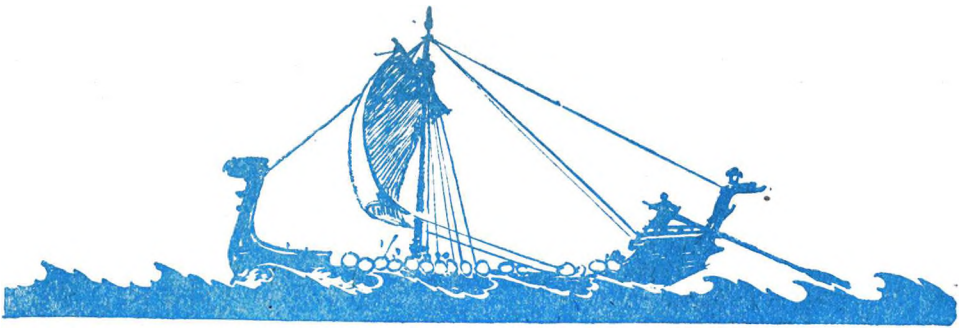
The following lines appear on the edge of the stone:

10. [We] have 10 of (our party) by the sea to look
11. after our ships (or ship) 14 days-journey
12. from this island [in the] year [of our Lord] 1362.

My study of the inscription soon convinced me that, regardless of whether the inscription was true or false, it had been condemned largely on erroneous premises. For instance, the most common objection, that its language was not Old Norse and therefore the inscription must be a forgery, was manifestly a misconception, for Old Norse had ceased to be the language of Sweden and the greater part of Norway long before 1362. In presenting my translation of the inscription, I therefore called attention to some of these misconceptions and urged that the inscription be given a new and more thorough consideration. This article, which revived the subject after it had lain dead and almost forgotten for nine years, was printed in *Skandinaven*, one of the leading Scandinavian newspapers of America, January 17, 1908.

My request that the inscription be given a new hearing was not in vain, for a very lively discussion of its faults and merits followed. Every word and character on the stone was subjected to a most searching scrutiny, and hundreds of articles for and against its genuineness were written and printed. It has been exhibited in France and Norway, as well as in numerous places in America. Geologists and chemists have made microscopic examinations of its surface and substance, and philologists and historians have made minute studies of its text and message. Very few inscriptions have received such keen study by people of all classes.

Among the first to give the Rune Stone serious attention was the Norwegian So-



ciety of Minneapolis—a literary club of the more prominent Norwegians of the city. . . . A more important contribution to a thorough understanding of this inscribed stone is the report published by the Minnesota Historical Society. In January, 1909, the Society felt called upon to take official notice of the stone and requested its museum committee to investigate the authenticity of the inscription. . . . This committee had the stone in its keeping for about two years and gave it a searching physical examination. . . . After all arguments on both sides seemed to have been presented, and finding no reason for changing its conclusions, the committee added as its final verdict that "after carefully considering all the opposing arguments, the Museum Committee of this Society believe that its (the Kensington Stone's) inscription is a true historic record."

It is thirty years since the Minnesota Historical Society published its committee's report, and since that time the study of this runic inscription has made important advances.

This long discussion and wide publicity has served another important end. It has brought to light a number of ancient arms and implements which have been unearthed by pioneer farmers in tilling their soil. These archaic finds dating from the Middle Ages have all been discovered in the general region where the stone was found. In 1911 and again in 1928 the present writer made a study of such arms and implements in a large number of museums in six European countries. It is believed that these finds will be found to have great significance in the question of the authenticity of the Kensington Rune Stone.

IN addition to the runic inscription of Kensington and a number of Fourteenth Century war implements, there have also been found no less than five other landmarks of an unexpected kind which show that white men visited this part of Minnesota hundreds of years before the arrival of the earliest settlers.

The stone has now been returned to the county where it was found and is on exhibition in Alexandria, the county seat.

WE know that a Norse expedition was sent to Greenland about the time of this date [1354]. The object of this expedition is unique in the history of Greenland. Its purpose was not trade or taxes, but, as expressly stated in the letter of King Magnus, to reëstablish Christianity in Greenland. As suggested by Storm, Gjessing, Nansen and other writers, this purpose probably included "an exploration of the lands farther west." Let us now see what points of agreement or disagreement there are between the Kensington inscription and the holy crusade led by Paul Knutson.

I. The date. The Paul Knutson expedition took place in the years 1355-1364. The Kensington inscription is dated 1362.

II. The personnel. It has been shown above that the Knutson expedition was made up partly of Norwegians and partly of Goths. The Kensington inscription mentions eight Goths and twenty-two Norwegians.

III. The presence of priests. The Knutson expedition, being an enterprise for the maintenance of Christianity, would count among its members one or more priests. The presence of a priest is indicated in the Kensington inscription by the pious character of the inscription, and by the knowledge of Latin words and characters as shown in the letters *A V M*, and also by the fact that the explorers were able to leave an inscription in writing—an accomplishment almost unknown to all but the clergy.

IV. Headquarters in Vinland. Nothing was known of the apostate Greenlanders except that they had moved away, leaving no signs of warfare behind them. It was therefore a voluntary, orderly emigration whose only object could have been to better their conditions. Their destination must have been somewhere in the West or Southwest, as there was no other place to go. Paul Knutson knew by reports, both written and oral, of these

lands in the West. One was Helluland, a region of desolation. Another was Markland, the land of forests. The third was Vinland, which, according to all reports was a good land with a mild climate and abundant products. Acting on the reasonable assumption that people, when driven by hardships to emigrate, would go to the best land within reach, Paul Knutson would presumably first seek these exiles in Vinland. The Kensington inscription definitely states that its people came from Vinland.

V. A protracted stay in Vinland. The location of Vinland must necessarily have been somewhat hazy to Paul Knutson and his men. However, all accounts agree that Vinland lay beyond Markland. . . . The first region beyond Markland would therefore be the southern shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. . . . This long gulf and the St. Lawrence River, up which they could sail for 500 miles, must have seemed an ideal region to Paul Knutson and his men, being so much like the more favored parts of southern Norway and Sweden. They would therefore presumably search its shores carefully. This search, including that of all the other bays and islands in this region, would take several seasons which they must have spent in what they supposed was Vinland.

This long sojourn in Vinland, which incidentally explains the long absence of the Knutson expedition, is clearly implied in the Kensington inscription when it speaks of "8 Goths and 22 Norwegians on a discovery-journey *from Vinland*." Unless their stay in Vinland had been of long duration, the inscription would have read "from Norway."

VI. The route. Eventually Paul Knutson would be convinced that the emigrants were not in those parts. But that would not terminate his efforts. To him as to other people of his times this new land was a large island, and somewhere on the shore of this island these apostates whom he was seeking must be found unless God had struck them down in their iniquity. The thing to do therefore was to follow the shore until he found them. Eventually he would reach Hudson Bay, and then he would have reason to believe that he had gotten to the other side of the "island," for here the coast runs due south for many hundred miles. But when he finally reached the southwestern corner of Hudson Bay, he would learn that he was not skirting the fringe of an island, for here the Nelson River pours a flood of waters of continental dimensions into the sea.

Assuming that the expedition reached the Nelson River, the commander by this time would have had ample reason for realizing that his quest for the Greenland apostates was hopeless. But with the conclusion of this mission he would conceivably see the beginning of another enterprise which, while it promised less of celestial glory, held more interest for this world. This great continent the coasts of which he had been skirting so long—what did it look like in the interior?

Chapter XX

The Verendrye Stone

IT may be that the Kensington Stone is not the only runic inscription left by the Paul Knutson expedition. Two hundred years ago Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye, the first white man known to have visited western Minnesota and the Dakota plains since 1362, found in that region a stone inscribed with unknown characters of a description which indicates that this also was a runic inscription. . . . As he was unable to decipher the inscription and had seen nothing like it before, he brought it with him when he in 1743 made a trip to Que-

bec. He submitted the inscribed stone to the scrutiny of the Jesuit scholars there. They were likewise unable to read the inscription; but on comparing it with illustrations of Tatarian inscriptions which they found in books in their college library, they found the characters "perfectly alike." Esteeming this discovery a matter of state importance, the stone with its mystic inscription was sent to Paris to Count de Maurepas, who then was one of the king's ministers.

The record of this remarkable discovery is preserved to us by Professor Peter Kalm, a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, who about that time was sojourning in America. While here he kept a diary of his keen and interesting observations, which later was published in three volumes. In 1749 he visited Quebec where he not only heard the story of the discovery of this inscribed stone from the Jesuit scholars in the city, but also received an account of it from La Verendrye himself, who happened to be there. The account that he gives of it is therefore practically firsthand.

"When they came far to the west," he states, "where, to the best of their knowledge, no Frenchman, or European, had ever been, they found in one place in the woods, and again on a large plain, great pillars of stone, leaning upon each other. These pillars consisted of but one stone each, and the Frenchmen could not but suppose that they had been erected by human hands. Sometimes they have found such stones laid upon one another, and, as it were, formed into a wall. . . . At last they met with a large stone, like a pillar, and in it a smaller stone was fixed, which was covered on both sides with unknown characters. This stone, which was about a foot of French measure in length, and between four or five inches broad, they broke loose, and carried to Canada with them, from whence it was sent to France, to the secretary of State, the Count of Maurepas. What became of it afterwards is unknown to them, but they think it is yet (1749) preserved in his collection."

Of course, it could not have been a Tatarian inscription, for the Tatars, living east of the Caspian Sea with no known interest in seafaring and exploration, would be among the last peoples on earth to have found their way into the interior of North America. It happens, however, that Tatarian inscriptions and runic inscriptions have a remarkable superficial resemblance. This has already been noted by Sir Charles Eliot who in his article in the Encyclopedia Britannica on Turks calls attention to this resemblance. . . . If a thorough search of Paris archives could be made, it is possible that the stone could be found. And if found it is more than probable that its message would not only throw further light on the Paul Knutson expedition, but would also give an important clew to the origin of that strangest of all Indian tribes, the Mandans.

Chapter XXII

The End of the Trail

IT may be of interest and perhaps of importance to try to answer a question which is very often asked: What became of the survivors?

The inscription states that there were thirty members of this expedition into the western interior of the continent. It is almost certain that these men never reached their headquarters in Vinland; for not only is it highly improbable that they would be able to traverse in safety the fifteen hundred miles of wilderness which separated them from the Atlantic coast, but no reference to their adventures is found in existing records, although these indicate that a part of the original expedition returned to Norway in 1364. The probability is therefore that these thirty men were either killed by the Indians or captured and adopted by them. If the latter was the case, it is not unlikely that they, because of their superior intelligence and ability, would rise to positions of importance in the tribe and leave some evidence of their presence and influence behind them. Now it happens that in this very part of America there was until recent times a tribe of mixed white and Indian origin of such superior civilization and peaceful disposition that it seemed like an oasis of comfort and gentleness in a desert of savage and warring Indians. These strange and pleasing people were the Mandan Indians, who occupied stationary villages on the upper Missouri in central North Dakota.

The Mandans are probably the greatest ethnological enigma in the study of the North American Indians. Unlike other Indian tribes in their region who were nomadic hunters, the Mandans lived in large and well-fortified towns in roomy dwellings of relatively permanent construction, and subsisted largely by agri-

culture. They were a peaceable people with much skill in domestic arts. Most remarkable of all is the fact that they were of mixed origin, many individuals among them being almost white in color. They are reported as showing many physiognomies unlike the typical Indian features, and individuals with blue eyes and fair hair were not uncommon among them. Finally their traditions, customs and religious beliefs showed influences of a different sort from those found among other northern Indians.

The widespread reports of the advanced culture of the Mandans and their strange physical characteristics early caused many travelers of both high and low degree to visit them. Captain Pierre la Verendrye, the first Frenchman known to have penetrated into the region west of the upper Mississippi in Minnesota, was the first of these. . . . In 1738 he found the Mandans, comfortably settled in six large villages on the Missouri some distance southwest of the present city of Minot, N. D. His hope of meeting countrymen was quickly dispelled when he arrived in the first village, but he was nevertheless deeply impressed with the fact that he had here reached a tribe very different from those he had previously seen in his lifetime among the Indians. The following is a part of his description of this Mandan village.

"M. de la Marque and I walked about to observe the size of their fort and their fortifications. I decided to have the huts counted. It was found that there were 130 of them. All the streets, squares and huts resembled each other. Several of our Frenchmen wandered about; they found the streets and squares very clean, the ramparts very level and broad; the palisades supported on cross-pieces morticed into posts of fifteen feet to twice fifteen feet. There are green skins which are put for sheathing where required, fastened only above in the places needed, as in the bastion there are four at each curtain well flanked. The fort is built on a height in the open prairie with a ditch upwards of fifteen feet deep by fifteen or eighteen feet wide. Their fort can only be gained by steps or posts which can be removed when threatened by an enemy. If all their forts are alike, they may be called impregnable to Indians. Their fortifications are not Indian. This nation is mixed white and black. The women are fairly good-looking, especially the white, many with blond and fair hair. Both men and women of this nation are very laborious; their huts are large and spacious, separated into several apartments by thick planks; nothing is left lying about; all their baggage is in large bags hung on posts; their beds made like tombs surrounded by skins. . . . Their fort is full of caves (caches) in which are stored such articles as grain, food, fat, dressed robes, bearskins. They are well supplied with these; it is the money of the country. . . . The men are stout and tall, generally very active, fairly good-looking, with a good physiognomy. The women have not the Indian physiognomy. The men indulge in a sort of ball-play on the squares and ramparts."

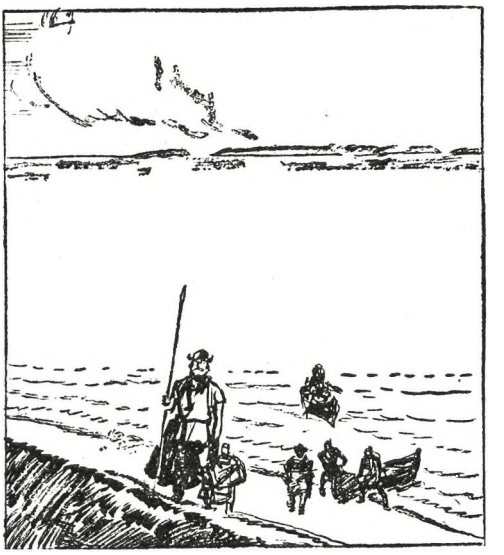
UNFORTUNATELY Verendrye lost his interpreter the day after he arrived among the Mandans. He was therefore unable to converse with these strange people and missed a unique opportunity of learning something about their history, traditions and beliefs.

In 1832-1834 the Mandans were visited by two eminent observers, who did much to retrieve for us the information about the Mandans which was lost to La Verendrye one hundred years earlier by the disappearance of his interpreter. These explorers were George Catlin, who in 1832 spent several months in the Mandan village, and A. P. Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, who spent the winter of 1833-1834 in Fort Clark a few hundred feet away. Mr. Catlin in particular has rendered unsurpassed service with his pen and brush in preserving the memory of the early Indians in the days when their life and character were still largely uncontaminated by the white man's whis-

ky and guile. In 1832 the Mandans were still living their primitive life hundreds of miles beyond the western frontier. But he found there in the central North Dakota wilderness . . . "the hospitable and gentlemanly Mandans." Of their physical and mental characteristics he tells the following:

"The Mandans are certainly a very interesting and pleasing people in their personal appearance and manners, differing in many respects, both in looks and customs, from all other tribes which I have seen . . . I have been struck with the peculiar ease and elegance of these people, together with the diversity of complexions, the various colours of their hair and eyes; the singularity of their language, and their peculiar and unaccountable customs. . . . I am fully convinced that they have sprung from some other origin than that of other North American tribes, or that they are an amalgam of natives with some civilized race."

It is not only in personal characteristics that the Mandans show indications of an ancient mixture with white people, but also in their traditions. In the main the religious traditions and superstitions of the Mandans were the same as those of other Indian tribes, but blended with these are many legends which reflect a contact with white people and Christian beliefs. Like other tribes they had traditions of an early culture hero, but unlike other tribes they represented this early ancestor as being a white man who had come from the west in a big canoe. This tradition was in Catlin's time still so vivid that each year was enacted the arrival of this mysterious and powerful white man who likewise in the annual festival is represented as instructing their medicine-men in their religious practices. Many other traditions embodying a more or less confused memory of Christian beliefs also indicate that the Mandans at some remote time in the past have been in touch with white people of Christian practices. Among these are strange stories of a virgin giving birth to a child who later became a savior of the people; his miracles and particularly his feeding the multitude with a small amount of food, leaving fragments of food in as great a quantity as when the feeding began; his persecutions and untimely death at the hands of his enemies; a personal devil, the transgression of Mother Eve, and Biblical details of the story of the Deluge. While most Indian tribes in their creation myths have a distorted account of a vast flood which covered all things before the earth was created, only the Mandans have any tradition of a later flood which is similar to the account in the Book of Genesis. According to the Mandan tradition, a dove was sent out from the ark to search for dry land when the water began to subside; after a time it returned with a green twig of willow in its beak. This is just like the account in the Book of Genesis except that there the dove returns with an olive leaf. As the olive was unknown in the Mandan country, popular rendering of the story substituted a twig of willow.



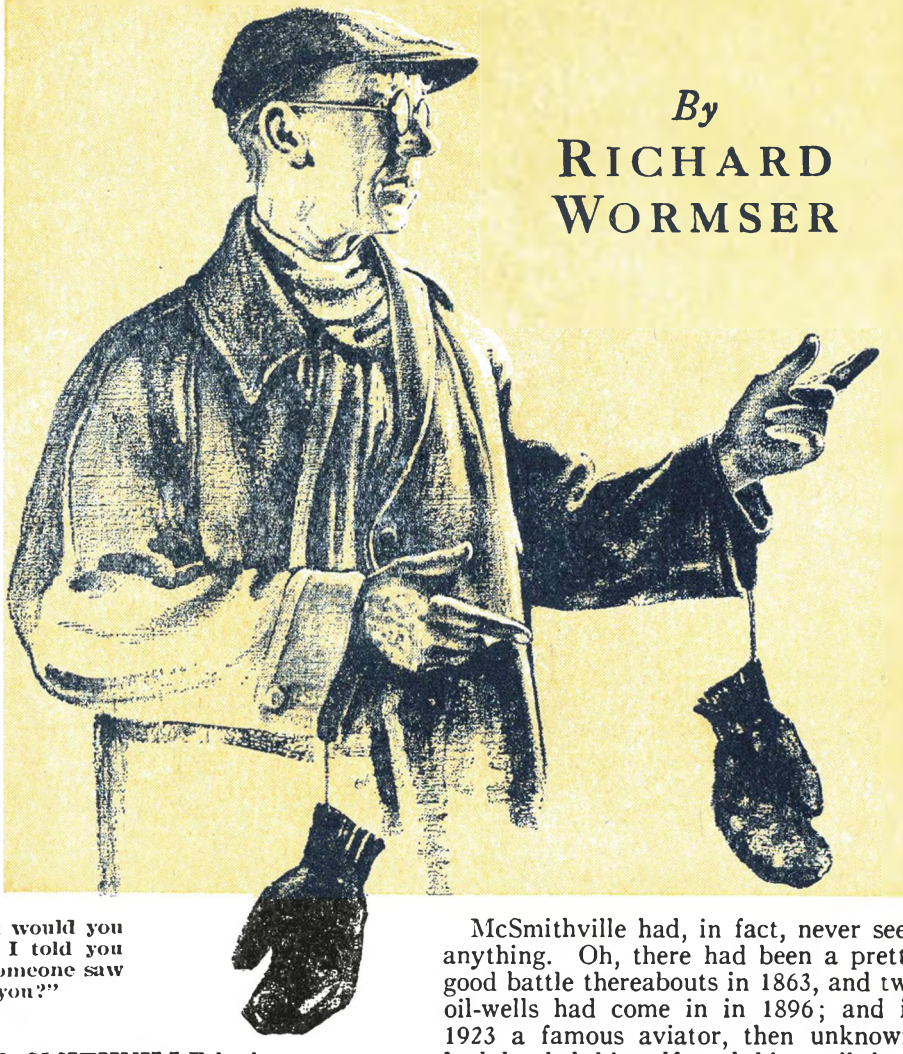
CATLIN concludes his survey of characteristics and customs of the Mandans with the following words: "From these very numerous and striking peculiarities in their personal appearance, their customs, traditions and language, I have been led conclusively to believe that they are a people of decidedly different origin from that of any other tribe in these regions." With this opinion the reader will no doubt fully agree.

Thus it may have been that although Paul Knutson and his men failed to find the Greenland apostates whom they were seeking, they found here in the Middle West another people just as deserving of their good works. By the introduction of agriculture and the arts of peace, Christianity and its nobler ethics, they here laid the foundation for a prosperous community which for centuries seems to have lived happily. Perhaps, after all, their expedition was more successful than they had hoped.

McSmith

A stranded hockey team, a strange murder mystery and a still stranger detective.

By
RICHARD WORMSER



"What would you say if I told you that someone saw you?"

McSMITHVILLE had never seen a more beautiful woman than Corina Bartleyne, the movie star. McSmithville had never seen anyone as famous as Canuck Jordwin, one of the five finest ice hockey players in the world, or as famous as the radio commentator Nick Magee, or the sports columnist Lafewell Quinn, or the movie columnist Barbara Burke. McSmithville had never seen five hundred strangers in town at one time before.

McSmithville had, in fact, never seen anything. Oh, there had been a pretty good battle thereabouts in 1863, and two oil-wells had come in in 1896; and in 1923 a famous aviator, then unknown, had landed himself and his mail in a cornfield outside of town, while the mail plane burned up over toward Centerview, the county seat.

But the Union general had been a German, and the Confederate a New Orleans Frenchman, and both had spelled the name so wrong that you will find McSmithville unmentioned in your history books. The oil-wells had gone dry almost immediately, and anyway, the day they gushed, Oil City had brought

Was Right

in eight new wells, and no one had noticed McSmithville. And as for the aviator, on finding himself unhurt, he had lugged his mail-sacks over to Centerview and turned them into the post office there—so it was Centerview got the credit.

But now all kinds of things had happened. The private bus carrying the Los Angeles Silvers from Pittsburgh up to Montreal to play a game of ice hockey had turned over right smack in the middle of Main Street, killing two players and injuring a dozen. Miss Corina Bartleyne, who owned the team, had flown in from Hollywood to do whatever it is owners do when their hockey team cracks up in a bus. Mr. Emanuel B. Emanual of Best Pictures had flown in too, to sue Miss Bartleyne if she didn't return to Hollywood and a picture now in production. Owners of all the other big-league hockey teams had come in on the trains to sign up Canuck Jordwin, since his team was obviously off the ice for the winter. Lawyers had followed Mr. Emanual and Miss Bartleyne, fan writers had followed the players, other players had followed the hockey-team owners, sports writers had followed them, and radio announcers and camera-men had followed everyone.

Fans had flocked into town to see the actress and the athlete, and the State police had followed the fans, lest they take McSmithville apart.

THINGS were at their worst when a small man turned out the lights—it was seven in the evening—in his office just off Main Street. He put a greenish cloth cap on his somewhat thin hair, pulled his heavy overcoat collar up around his scrawny neck, and stepped out onto the snow-covered pavement. Before he left, he tried the door of the office, to make sure it was locked. Then hunching his shoulders against the cold, he walked thirty feet to Main Street, turned to the right, walked a hundred and twenty feet to the door of the Reynolds Hotel, and was stopped by a State trooper.

The trooper towered over him. "You can't go in there."

The little man shook his head. "The law," he said in a squeaky voice, "allows free passage to the lobby or entrance way of a public inn."

The trooper said, "Another lawyer," in a disgusted way.

"No sir, I am not a member of the bar. But as a citizen and taxpayer—and therefore a member of the commonwealth of which you are a servant—it is my duty to instruct you in the laws, ordinances and regulations which you are paid to uphold and enforce. You will please stand aside, Officer. It was eight and three quarters degrees above zero when I left my office three minutes ago."

"Was it, now?" The red in the trooper's face was not all caused by the cold. "Little man, listen: The law also says that an officer of the State police can set aside any part of the State he wants, in an emergency, and keep the sucker out. There are about five thousand laws in force, and maybe I don't know 'em all. But I know that one."

"Seventeen hundred and forty-six."

"Huh?"

"The last State law passed was number 1746. You—"

"Scram! Willya please scram? Nobody but officers and people with passes get in here."

The little man sighed. He laboriously unbuttoned his overcoat, first removing the woolen mitten from his right hand. He unwound a tremendous woolen scarf. He reached into his upper vest pocket, and produced a badge. "I am a deputy sheriff of this county, and—"

"Aw, g'wan in. But keep away from the Lootenant. I'm a patient man, but he aint."

The little man went on in. He walked over to the desk of the hotel, elbowing his way through the mobs and hordes of attorneys and executives and sportsmen and members of the Fourth Estate. He smiled bleakly at the fat desk-clerk, and proceeded to disrobe. He handed over a pair of galoshes. He handed over the overcoat, the mittens dangling on the inside from a piece of string run through the armpits. He handed over the muffler and cap. "Keep these for me, Floyd."

Floyd said: "Where you been, Henry?"

"In my office."

"You sure dressed up, to come around the corner."

"It was eight and three quarters degrees above zero when I left my office. With the wind northeast by a half north, it should fall to zero before midnight. The chances are twenty to eleven that I will not finish my business here in the hotel till that time. Zero temperature, even if endured for only a short time, may cause serious derangements of the stomach, including an almost complete stoppage of the gastric secretion. This, in turn—"

A tall, blond man with a hawk nose turned. "You a doctor? Listen, I been trying to get hold of a doctor for two hours. I got nervous indigestion something awful. Litigation always brings it on, Doc, and—"

"I am not, sir, a physician. Floyd, will you announce me to Miss Bartleyne? Miss Corina Bartleyne, or, legally, Miss Anna Barjak. I believe she is staying here."

"Yeah, but Henry, I'm not supposed to let anyone up. She—"

"This is on business, Floyd."

BUT the blond man had caught Henry's shoulder. "How'd you know that Bartleyne's name was Barjak? You a process-server?"

"I am not."

"Well, what are you, a scandal-sheet writer or—"

"Please, sir, this will get you nowhere. Floyd, if you will phone—"

Henry leaned on the desk while Floyd picked up the old-fashioned house-phone. "Hello. . . . Mr. Henry McSmith is downstairs to see Miss Bartleyne. Henry McSmith. Well, he says it's important, and when he says that—I think Miss Bartleyne had better see him."

The phone exploded in Floyd's hands, and the tall hawk-nosed man laughed. "That's Max McManus, the press-agent I left up there to argue with Bartleyne. You got the same chancet of getting up there as a rabbit has of—"

Floyd held the phone away from his ear. "Mebbe, Henry, if you was to tell me your business, and I was to tell the gentleman—"

"Now, Floyd! I am an intellectual, and the stock-in-trade of an intellectual is information. I cannot afford to give away information, willy-nilly, any more than a coal-dealer can afford to throw away coal. Hang up the phone, Floyd." He turned to the hawk-nosed man. "You seem to have some influence with Miss Barjak, Mr.—"

"I wish I had. And call her Bartleyne, willya? I'm Manny Emanual, her producer. And I gotta bellyache, and the food in this town is awful, and—"

"If you will wait here, Mr. Emanual, I will get something to end your gastric disturbances." Henry McSmith walked across the lobby, elbowing larger men out of his way.

Emanual stared after him. "Who is he?"

"Henry McSmith," the desk-clerk said. "I guess the town was named after his folks. Why, sir, when Henry says something, people around here do it."

"Big shot, huh? Big frog in a little puddle?"

"Naw, Henry aint got much money, or anything. It's just that he's always right. He *knows* more than anybody else."

"What's he do fer a living?"

"Here he comes," Floyd said. "Why, Henry does everything that's too unimportant for anybody else. Like being deputy sheriff, when there's only about three papers a year to be served at seventy-five cents each. And he represents all the insurance companies that don't have any policies in force in town, and he's consul for twenty-thirty countries—"

"What?"

"Sure. He wrote letters to the heads of all the countries in the world, offering to be consul for McSmithville, and a lotta them give him the job. I don't know what he gets out of it."

Mr. McSmith returned with a glass full of bluish liquid.

Mr. Emanual grunted: "Ten to one it just makes things worse."

"The proper bet is ninety-seven to a hundred," Mr. McSmith said.

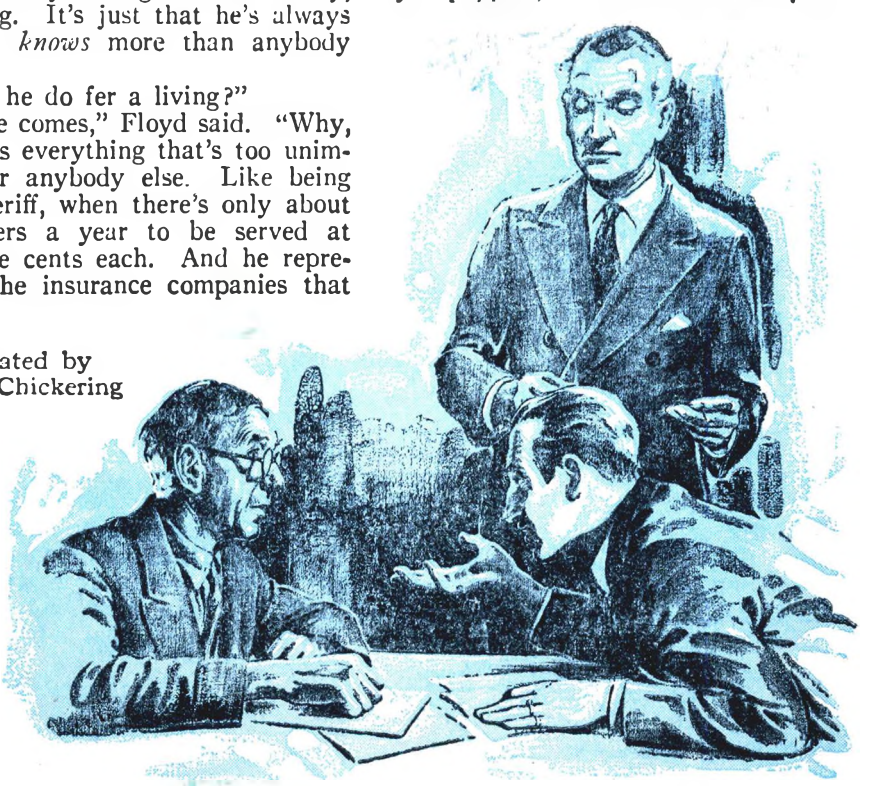
"Huh?"

"In tests in Manhattan General Hospital, that was the proportion of cures obtained in the treatment of functional stomach disorders with this method. I will wager ninety-seven cents to a dollar you are cured."

"Done," Emanual snapped. He pulled out a wadded hunk of green money and extracted a dollar. His wolfish eyes gleamed as the local man took out a leather purse, unhooked it and carefully counted out a fifty-cent piece, a quarter, two dimes and two pennies.

Mr. Emanual drank the liquid. His eyes popped; he started to howl, then

Illustrated by
Charles Chickering



"I've got the information I want—now! What position does Miss Barjak's brother play?"

abruptly stopped. He swallowed twice. He tapped his stomach with hairy fingers. He said: "It stopped."

"Of course," said Mr. McSmith, and put his change and the dollar into his pocket.

"I presumed that the male attendant on anyone as glamorous as Miss Barjak would be armed. I prepared myself with this."

Mr. Emanual said: "If you'd like to come to Hollywood—"

"No, thank you. I am doing quite well here and both commodity prices and rent—as well as taxes—are eighteen per cent more expensive in Los Angeles County than here. But I would like to see Miss Barj—Bartleyne."

"What about? No, no, I mean, I'll pay you five bucks to tell me what about."

Henry McSmith said: "Write me a note to your Mr. McManus, and put five dollars with it. Now hold both of them in your right hand. . . . That's right." He stood on tiptoe and put his thin lips close to Mr. Emanual's ear. He whispered something.

Mr. Emanual's face got white. He gasped. Henry McSmith took the note and money out of the hairy fingers and walked to the stairs.

As he disappeared, Mr. Emanual turned to Floyd. "He said, *'Murder,'*" the magnate shrieked. Then he popped his hand over his mouth. "Get my general counsel. Get those lawyers of mine. Get Max McManus. Get me another glass of that stuff."

Miss Corina Bartleyne said: "You can go tell that horrible Manny Emanual I'll never make another picture for him." Her beautiful voice dropped to a deep, throbbing note of appeal: "Oh, Max, can't you see? A girl loses her hockey team—the hockey team that she'd spent the whole year planning and building up—and her own producer comes to see her and doesn't even say he's sorry. Max, how can men be so heartless? Don't they know what it is to be a woman, to suffer?"

"I dunno," MacManus said, tousling his smooth red hair. "I'm not a man; I'm a press-agent. Look, Corina, come home. There's about twenty thousand dollars a day being wasted on the Farwell set, even shooting around you."

"No. Never. Not again as long as I—" There was a scratching on the hall door. "Oh, Max, see who that is and send them away. I'm exhausted, exhausted!"

Max McManus lounged toward the door. He reached for the knob, bracing his weight against the door to shut it in the face of any undesirable; but a slip of white paper slid through on the sill. McManus pulled it into the room with the toe of his shoe, and picked it up. He read it. Then he opened the door.

A little wispy man walked in: he said: "Thank you, Mr. McManus. My name is Henry McSmith."

McManus gaped. McSmith said: "Am I addressing Miss Anna Barjak?"

The beautiful lady screamed: "Throw him out! He's crazy."

"Remember what Beaumont told you, Corina," Max said. "Keep your voice away from the upper register. Yeah, her name is Barjak, or was till I renamed her. What of it?"

"There was a family of Barjaks who used to live on the Centerview road," Henry said. "The name is Croatian, isn't it? They were farmers. Biggest barn, smallest house in the country. Are you an American citizen, Miss Barjak? I am the Croatian consul here. If—"

"Throw him out. Max, I order you!"

"Well, at that I think he's screwy. But Manny didn't give him a note to me so he could bring you good wishes from your Croatian-American fans. By the way, Corina, where *are* you from?"

"I insist that you throw—"

"I am, indeed, not here to represent any organization of movie enthusiasts. In fact, I represent the Colonial Assurance and Insurance Company. But first, I must insist on knowing whether Miss Barjak is a citizen."

"I was born in—in this country, Mr. McSmith."

"That is fine, since, as consul, I would be forced to represent you in my territory if you were still a Croatian, whereas this way I can represent the insurance company, my primary client. The law—"

Max McManus said: "Buddy, you may know Croats and you may know the law, but you don't know Corina, here. She's got the look she gets when she's about to throw something at someone. My guess would be, that bottle of smelling-salts, at you. Get to the point."

Henry said: "Thank you. I will admit that my experience with the more glamorous types of females is limited. . . . Now, Miss Barjak, you probably realize"—Henry stepped forward and removed the smelling-salts from the lady's reach—"that you will be accused of murder of those three hockey players who were killed in the bus accident."

Max McManus yelled: "What?"

"Oh, but it is inevitable," Henry said. "You see, like many athletes, the Silvers were insured, with their employer named as beneficiary. This, alone, is always sufficient to cause an insurance company to be suspicious. But when the accident occurs in the beneficiary's home town—the one place in the world Miss Barjak could get accomplices without fear of later exposure—the case looks grave."

HENRY stepped back, and brought his hand up, and down. Mr. McManus hopped back with a snarl, nursing his wrist. "Please leave that gun alone. I presumed that the male attendant on anyone as famous and—er—glamorous as Miss Barjak would be armed. I prepared myself with this—er—blackjack."

Henry dangled the object before them. "I must further admit," he said, "that I came up here with a view to accusing Miss Barjak. I am glad to say, now, that I imagine my duty will not be to arrest—or have arrested—Miss Barjak, but to discover the real culprit. More scope for the imagination, which I shall find pleasant, and—also, no man likes to annoy a

Henry said: "I will admit that my experience with the more glamorous types of females is limited."

lady with as regular features as Miss Barjak possesses."

"Regular features?" wailed the press-agent. "She's beautiful, magnificent!"

"Merely, I assure you, a matter of regularity of features."

"And because she has regular features, she couldn't have killed a hockey team?"

"You misunderstand me," Henry McSmith said. "The reason I doubt her guilt is her reaction to my accusation. Glandularly,—using the eyes, respiration, circulation, secretion of the salivary glands, and so on,—she betrayed surprise, interest, but not fear. The odds are seventy-two to seventy-one—based on one hundred and forty-three cases studied by the Viennese police in 1923—that fear would be betrayed in the guilty party at the first discovery of the crime. It is true, however, that some small percentage—approximately four out of ten thousand, a percentage of point 0 four—of all people, because of glandular disarrangement, do not give the symptoms one would expect. But invariably—and here science may err, because of the unavailability of cases to be studied—these fall into two classes, the goitrous and the gigantic. Since Miss Barjak is not goitrous, and since her hands and chin and feet are of normal size for a woman her weight, we can eliminate this possibility."

The beauty said: "What's he talking about, Max? And make him stop calling me Barjak."

"He's saying the insurance company'll pay off. —Call her Bartleyne, Mister."

"When will the insurance be paid?"

Henry McSmith apparently disregarded the dirty look which Corina Bartleyne's press-agent gave her. He replied, "Within twenty-four hours, Miss Bartleyne," and bowed his way to the door.

Outside in the corridor, he waited only long enough to hear Max McManus bark: "Don't you know enough never to ask a dick when the insurance money will be paid? Won't you ever learn to be a lady about money?"

HENRY MCSMITH took his ear away from the panel, and unsmiling, went downstairs to the crowded lobby, again elbowing aside the important attorneys, journalists and celebrities who crowed at each other about the accident, about its effect on the world of sports, on Hollywood and on the European situation.

He went up to the desk: "Where's this Canuck Jordwin?" he asked Floyd.

The fat desk-clerk pointed. "In the middle of that gang there." He pointed at a mob of men in the center of the lobby.

Henry McSmith shook his head. "I'll talk to him when he's alone. Give me my clothes, Floyd."

Completely attired, he went around the corner to a car that would have baffled the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers. Its hub-caps said Buick, but its radiator had started life in a Chrysler. The Studebaker hood was adjusted with baling-wire so as to rest on the radiator without falling on the Ford V Eight motor. But the big Packard starter turned the motor over despite the bitter cold, after Henry had turned the ignition switch that said—rather surprisingly—Rolls-Royce.

The car pulled away from the curb and headed past the hotel. Mr. McManus and Mr. Emanual came running out, bareheaded and without overcoats, and waved. Henry pulled around in a semi-circle to avoid stopping while headed the wrong way. The State trooper at the door watched him cynically.

Mr. McManus said: "Look, Mac, we want to talk to you. We—"

"You gentlemen oughtn't to be out without overcoats. It must be four above zero," said McSmith.

"All right, all right, so we die of ammonia," Mr. Emanual said. "Is that your worry?"

"Maybe he represents our insurance companies," McManus said.

"Shut up, Max. Listen, Doc: come back to the hotel a minute."

"Too noisy in there," Henry McSmith said. "Come around to my office." He switched off the motor and took a buffalo robe from beside him, draped it over the hood of the McSmith '39, and led the way around the corner. He unlocked his office door and let them into the little store. Then he switched on the light,—disclosing a desk, a chair, and a showcase full of odds and ends,—lit the kerosene stove, and sat down in the lone chair. He began unbuckling his galoshes.

"Don't bother to undress," McManus said. "We just want to talk to you."

"The way to get cold is to wear your outdoor clothes indoors," Henry said.

"Leave him alone, Max," Mr. Emanual said. "He's a genius, see, and you gotta let geniuses do things their own way."

Henry put the galoshes in the lower drawer of his desk, and rose. "If you want something to do," he said, "that's a mighty fine exhibit in that showcase. It's the products of a couple of the countries I'm consul for. The dish on this end is coffee-beans."

McManus made a low noise in his throat. Henry took off the coat and put it on a hanger. He unwound the muffler. He put his hat on the hatrack. He sat down behind the desk.

"Now, gentlemen."

McMANUS started to speak, but Mr. Emanual stopped him. "Let me talk. Now, look, Mr. McSmith: I'm a business man. I'm the head of a big business. Miss Bartleyne is costing us money. See? This picture she's supposed to be working in is a super-special. Twenty thousand dollars a day, besides the rent of the skating rink, which, luckily, we placed with a convention of—"

Henry sat up straight. "Skating rink? Did you say skating rink? Does Miss Barjak skate?"

"Sure! That's how she met this guy Jordwin. So nothing would do but she must buy him a hockey team to—"

"Mac wouldn't be interested in all that," McManus said.

"No," Henry said. "I don't see how it concerns me. I've got the information I want, now—of course. One always thinks of hockey players as Canadians, doesn't one, but they're not. We have developed. What position does Miss Barjak's brother play on the team?"

"She aint got no brothers. She's an English girl what was orphaned in the last war when her papa was killed leading the Bengal Lancers, and—"

"Skip it, Manny. Mr. McSmith knows all about her. —He plays right wing, Mac," McManus said.

"So! Henry McSmith stood up again. "What was it you wanted to see me about?"

"My company'll pay off the insurance, or something," Mr. Emanual said. "If you'll help get Miss Bartleyne out of town tonight, we'll see the insurance company aint out a cent. And for you, twenty thousand dollars, see, for your own—"

Henry McSmith said: "What with one thing and another, the insurance will come to about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Add twenty thousand to me, and Miss Barjak could stay in town another eight and a half days for the money you want to pay. I thought you said you were a business man, Mr. Emanual?"

"Well—"

Henry McSmith said: "I am an honest man. When I told Mr. McManus that Miss Barjak had no hand in the murdering of those three boys, I meant it." He smiled. "Knowing Miss Barjak as you gentlemen do, you can hardly believe that she would hesitate to kill a whole hockey team for money, eh?"

McManus said: "She likes the money, and that's a fact."

Mr. Emanual said: "You seem to know a lot about her, Mr. McSmith."

Henry said: "If I clear her, then, and do it before"—he consulted a watch—"midnight, I can expect twenty thousand dollars?"

McManus said: "Who said that?"

"I did."

Mr. Emanual said: "Yes, Mr. McSmith, me, I'm beginning to see why you rate so AA1 in your home town. You want to come to Hollywood?"

"No," Henry McSmith said. "But I can see why you are the employer and Mr. McManus is the employee. You will excuse me, gentlemen."

He began wrapping himself in his cocoon again.

AN hour later the Pierce-Arrow headlights of his car picked out a tin mailbox with *Barjak* stenciled on the

side. Henry left the motor running while he opened the gate; he ran the car through, closed the gate, went bumping up the rutty lane. All his movements were unhurried.

He parked the car in front of a tiny little farmhouse built of board and batten. Although the moon was bright on the snowy ground, the house was gloomy from the deep shadow of the huge barn that stood behind it.

SOME place back near the barn a chained dog barked and howled, lunging at his tether. A horse whinnied uncertainly; there was the noise of stock getting to its feet. Henry McSmith shook his head, and pounded the door of the farmhouse. When he heard feet coming toward the door, he slipped his hands out of their mittens, flexing and unflexing his fingers.

The man who opened the door held a candle high in gnarled fingers.

"I'm the deputy sheriff," Henry said, and walked in. "You're Alois Barjak," he added.

The man put the candle down on the mantelpiece, surveyed Henry in its uncertain light. "Yaah, I been Barjak. What you want?" He did not look old, merely gnarled and rheumatic.

Henry said: "I've come to arrest you for the murder of three hockey players named Acon, De Vrieux and Nason. I hereby charge that, at nine o'clock last night, February eighth, on the highway east of McSmithville, you did, maliciously and with malice aforethought, cause a bus owned by the Los Angeles Silver Hockey Team, Miss Anna Barjak, proprietor, to go off the road and overturn, thus causing the death of the aforementioned men, and the loss and destruction of property which will be later listed and appraised."

"What you t'ink? You crazy!"

"Come on, Barjak."

"You crazy." The man's eyes went sidewise to where metal glinted near the stove. "I no go."

"What would you say if I told you someone saw you? The road was slippery,—I suppose you watered it,—and then you shot out suddenly and waved, and the driver hit the ice getting away from you, and wrecked the bus. It's a trick any countryman would know how to do."

"Someone seen me? Someone crazy! Where you hear this?"

"I met a man in town who told me."

"Who you tell? I sue you, you spread Barjak's name around."

"I didn't tell anyone," Henry said, smiling a little.

The old man leaped for the shining metal. It was a shotgun. He brought it up. "What you t'ink? You put your hands up, yaah, and I take you back. T'row you to hogs. You fool, you, you make good hog-feed, yaaah?"

Henry McSmith knocked the shotgun aside. It did not go off. He struck the man on the side of the head, went to the car, got the buffalo robe. He tied Barjak's hands together and lugged the man to the car.

At the gate he got out, opened the stock gate, drove through, closed it. He was smiling slightly. . . .

Halfway into town, old Barjak came to. He turned the ropes on his wrists but they wouldn't come off. "I t'ink you fool," he said. "I t'ink you crazy. How you know that shotgun no loaded?"

HENRY McSMITH was driving with every muscle of his little body. The McSmith Special demanded it. But he said: "If the gun had been loaded, I would have had the wrong man. A man who'll try and kill twenty men to get his son's insurance, wouldn't leave a good shell in a shotgun to deteriorate. I knew all along you were mean. Big barn, small house. Your daughter is so money-crazy her employers thought she would kill her own hockey team for the business insurance. And she makes several thousand dollars a week. I know you haven't come into any money lately; I'd hear that. Yet your son must get good money, a pro hockey player."

"Bad children, yaah. They make money, tell the old man to go to hell."

"Results of your upbringing," Henry said. "You're mean; your kids will turn out mean. Anna would have killed those men. I thought she had. But when I accused her, she showed she hadn't. Still, it was too much of a coincidence that the accident that benefited a Barjak would happen near the Barjak home town. When I saw what her boss and her press agent thought of Anna's attitude toward money, I knew it was born in her. So why not her father? And when there was no shell in the shotgun, I got my proof."

"Mebbe there was shell in shotgun. Then you dead cop."

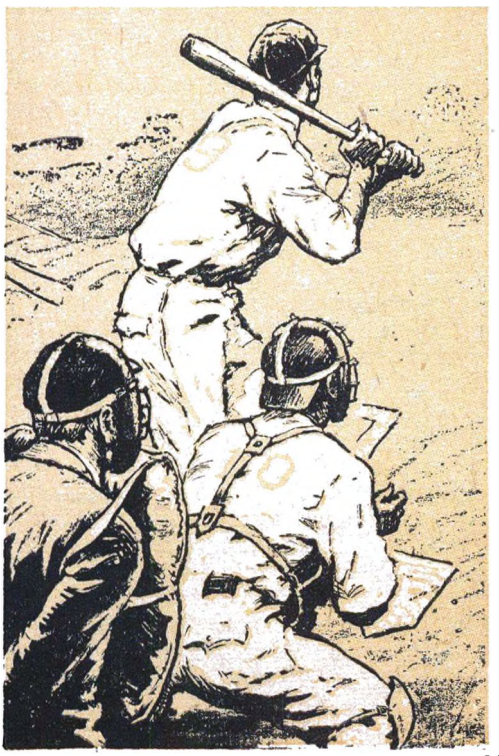
"I'd rather be dead than wrong," said Henry McSmith—and kept on driving.

The Old Arn

By EUSTACE COCKRELL

HE had been sitting there, ha dreaming, half an eye on t ball-game, not thinking; ar when Artie nodded to him, still didn't think, but walked on out the bull-pen trying to let the old excit ment build up in him; knowing if l looked up he would lose it, and knowir that he needed it.

Because there was that trouble—tha chipped bone, a little cartilage that had taken an unusual strain too many years. It was there; he couldn't go out there and throw. He had to get out there and think, and remember he was Jack Lebaron, once the best pitcher in baseball.



el
took
ded a
score-card,
out. He passed the
ing, a nice-looking kid, w
bling his glove in his hand, h
rage in his eyes. "He walks in a r
Jack Lebaron thought, "and gets nicked for a single, and he cries!"

None down, a man on first, a man on third. And he had to go to work. The excitement was there a little bit, the old excitement, the old tightening in his stomach. It might be an important game; it might be a great hitter up there, and a cut of that World Series dough riding every pitch.

Maybe they were screaming in the stands. Maybe this wasn't a fourth-place club in a little league. Maybe it meant something. It was, Jack thought for an instant, as important as any other game; for after all, what difference did it make who won a baseball game?

He shook his head at the catcher's signal, got another, nodded and threw side-arm, a nothing ball, inside at the knees.

It was a ball. Well, no breaks today. The umpire could have called it either

›," Jack Lebaron said. "No. Am I
sed to? If I stay lucky, we may
ne. Is that what I should notice?"
d you see that Roper out there at
ı juggle away a double play?" Artie

›'s young," Jack Lebaron said, "and
›us. It happens to the best of 'em."
›aused. "He held the guy on third,"
dded.
tie waved his hand back to the
ds. "I guess it's the crowd," he said
astically, "that's makin' him nervous.
corporal's guard come in, it would
›le the attendance."
We aint exactly fightin' for the pen-
ıt," Jack pointed out.
Well," Artie said, "I'll tell you why
se kids are nervous." He paused im-
ssively. "And it aint the crowd, and
int the pennant. It's Mike Grogan
ittin' right up there behind the plate."

OR a minute Jack Lebaron didn't get
it. "Mike Grogan," he repeated, the
me not meaning anything to him.
ıen when he realized who Mike Grogan
as, he didn't look at Artie because his
ıeart had started beating too fast, and
the excitement was real now. Mike Grogan, scout for a big-league club. Scout for a big-league club that might make it if they had somebody that could get in there and save a few games for them. A big-league club that needed a smart, cool head. That needed, worse than anything else, a relief pitcher!

"Who's he lookin' at?" Jack Lebaron asked, keeping his voice casual.

"I don't know," Artie said. "I never knew he was there until a minute ago. He's got on dark glasses."

Jack Lebaron moved his right arm a little closer to his side. Nobody else knew about that catch, that little pop, that came in that arm when he tried to wheel one through there. He was the only one who knew. Nobody else would ever know it, now. He would get out there and act as if it weren't there, take a beating. He'd have a lot of rest before he had to pitch again. Because Jack Lebaron was going back to the big time, and maybe a cut in that World Series money, and then next year a job coaching in the big leagues, or managing one of their farm teams; and he wouldn't need that arm, ever, ever again.

But he would need it now. For four more innings, he would need it as it used to be in the old days. Mike was sitting right behind the plate, and if he threw

ı
as
man
ı-up hitter
clean-up hitter was

ıaron tried him with a low
ve inside. Keep 'em low, that was it. If the batter was hitting with the wind, you had to keep 'em low; and he had a wind with him, and a long fly might blow out of this bandbox for a home run.

Jack Lebaron made him reach for a bad one; and Roper, the second baseman, stepped on his sack as he fielded the ball; and he threw that batter out at first by a mile, for the double play.

Jack Lebaron walked back to the dugout and sat down beside Artie, and Artie grinned at him. Artie had been under the big top too in the old days, and now he was down in the bushes, managing, doing a job that didn't take anything but thinking, waiting for a break.

"Four balls," Artie said. "Four balls you throw, and you set 'em down. Nothin' wrong with the gray-matter, Jack."

Jack Lebaron smiled. "I was a little lucky," he said.

Artie said casually: "Notice anything at all about this ball-game?"

'em up there with nothing but a prayer on 'em, Mike could see that too. He had shown Mike some stuff. For four innings he had to show Mike some stuff the way he used to in the old days, and Mike would take him back to the big time; and maybe as a relief pitcher he would be the margin that got Mike's club in on that World Series melon, and even maybe he would be in there in the series for a couple of innings. He could see the stories now. "Grand Old Man." Didn't old Pete Alexander do it for the Cards in '26?

Roper, the second baseman, was up, fanning out, and Artie turned to Jack Lebaron. "Their guy is very hot," Artie said. "That youngster pitching for them is very hot. Maybe Mike is looking at him."

"Maybe," Jack Lebaron said. "But hot or no, we got 'em beat four and one."

"Yes," Artie said. "But it should be two and one; we aint earned but two runs."

Jack Lebaron picked up three bats and walked out and started swinging them around. And that was a little funny. He couldn't hit the size of his hat. Mike knew that. Jack Lebaron yelled a taunt at the other pitcher working out there, and the other pitcher grinned; and Weston, an outfielder up there hitting lined a solid blow to the center; but their center-fielder came in beautifully and took it on a dead run. Then Jack was up there.

He let a strike go by, and then two balls, then a strike. Then the kid served him up one right in the groove, but it was fast, and it had a hop, and Jack Lebaron went down swinging.

But that didn't matter. He never could hit. Mike wasn't looking for hitters. He was sitting up there to see if Jack Lebaron could come back for half a season and save his club some games as a relief pitcher. In his heart Jack Lebaron made himself believe that.

LAST half of the sixth inning of the first game of a three-game series between the Waterville Tigers and the St. Anne Braves. Jack Lebaron has relieved Mark Bellows and is now pitching for the Tigers. Hugh Harper is pitching for the Braves. The league is almost the smallest in organized baseball, and the Braves are in first place, and the Tigers are in fourth place, and it's Monday. The stands are almost deserted. But up behind the plate sits Mike Grogan, wearing sunglasses; and Mike Grogan is the ace scout for a big-league club. And that makes all the difference. The club Mike Grogan scouts for could maybe win the National League pennant if they had a great relief pitcher—get somebody who could get in there and save some games.

Jack Lebaron is walking out to the mound, and he can feel a tiny lump in his right elbow, even with his arm relaxed. It's been there for a couple or three years. It and old age moved him out of the big leagues; and he couldn't get a job coaching or scouting, so he's down here, pitching for Artie Meehan, another ex-big-leaguer who is managing the Waterville Tigers. The regular catcher on the Waterville Tigers, the kid that is back there now, is a great big strapping youngster, a three-fifty hitter, with a good arm and some brains. He's twenty-two and his name is Herbert Hale. He is a swell catcher. The boy, Roper, that juggled the ball and messed up the double play, is a swell ball-player too. But he is very nervous, for he knows that Mike Grogan is in the stands.

JACK LEBARON walks up and talks a minute to Herbie Hale. "Kid," Lebaron says, "don't signal me what to throw. Lemme throw what I want to. I'll use the same signals you been using with me. I'll do it like this." And Jack shows him. "I know these hitters, kid."

(The year Herbert Hale was seven, Jack Lebaron won twenty-eight and lost seven for Connie Mack. Herbert Hale is still something of a hero-worshiper.) Herbert Hale says: "Okay."

Jack Lebaron takes a long time out there with the first hitter. He fools with the ball for what seems an interminable time, nods to Herbie, and swinging his arm as far out as he can, he turns loose the ball, a slow curve, low outside, coming from as near third base as Jack Lebaron can reach his long right arm. The hitter swings and misses.

Jack Lebaron feels a little nervous sweat trickle down his stomach and stop, and move out wet and cool where it hits his belt. That one hadn't hurt, but he couldn't throw them like that all day. He couldn't fool them with that kind of pitches for four more innings.

"Let him hit it," Roper screams from behind him, and Jack Lebaron grins. ("I'll let him hit it," he thinks, "but I want him to hit it in that infield. A long fly will maybe blow out of this bandbox for a home run.")

Jack Lebaron throws another side-arm curve, low and inside. The batter fouls it off, and Jack Lebaron has him in the hole. Two strikes, no balls. Jack throws thrice more trying to make him reach for a bad one, but the hitter grins at him; and then Jack Lebaron leans back and lets him have a high hard one, inside. It is risky. But he's out-thought the batter, who watches it for a third strike, then throws his bat down hard and stamps back to the bench—and Lebaron lifts his right arm slowly to see if cutting loose a little has done anything to it. . . . His arm feels all right. He grins up at Mike Grogan, but Mike just sits there, his face as blank as a clock without its hands.

ONE down, two to go. Their shortstop is up there now—a grand fielder but a short hitter, a slight kid without the *umph* to slap one out of even this park. The first ball Jack throws him is a high one, outside. Nothing on it. The shortstop slaps a towering Texas Leaguer, and Roper goes back for it and makes the catch. It's two out in the last half of the sixth; and Grogan is sitting up there, not moving a muscle. And their pitcher is coming up.

Jack Lebaron, toying with him, fans him with five pitched balls, then does a little dance-step going back to the dugout. A twinge goes up his right arm, starting at the elbow, and he stops his dance-step and walks on into the dugout.

"Nice, Methuselah," Artie comments. "How's the arm?"

Jack Lebaron grins. "It's still there," he says. And he holds his arm up.

But the high hard one had done it. The smart pitch, now that it had worked. The sucker pitch if it had been knocked out of the park. It had done it, because even holding his arm in to his side, he feels little twinges of pain running in a throbbing even cadence up and down from his elbow.

He bundles the heavy sweater more closely around his arm and feels the sweat come out, loosening it a little more and making it hurt a little more too. "You know," Jack Lebaron says, turning to Artie, "I remember when I was a kid I always thought that the seventh inning only left you two to go, seven from nine being two. But I came to learn in my old age that it's seven, eight, nine; that's three."

"Well," Artie says, "I reckon you figure very right. We got three more to go; and I give you six to five that it's more'n a hundred right down in the shade of this dugout."

Jack Lebaron gets up and walks over to Herbert Hale, the catcher, and sits down beside him. "Kid," he says, "they can't see signals, can they?"

Herbert Hale looks up at him. "No," he says, "they can't see them. They might see them if they were expecting to see them, but who expects a pitcher to be tellin' the catcher what he's gonna throw?"

"You've got two for three so far today, aint you?" Jack Lebaron asks.

"A double and a triple," Herbert Hale says proudly. "But boy, when you threw that high one through there, I admired your guts."

"That," Jack Lebaron says, "was the one thing he knew I wouldn't throw him. He never had time to adjust his mind to the fact that there was a ball comin' up there that he could hit!"

Herbert Hale looks down at the ground so that Jack can't see his face. "I heard there was a big-league scout in the stands today," he says, and his voice trembles just a little.

"Yeah," Jack says. "That's what I heard. Mike Grogan."

"I wonder who he's lookin' at?"

"I don't know," Jack says. "But kid, you got no worry. You'll be in that big show sure as ever Cochrane was. Just keep on like you are. Study the game all the time. Study the hitters, take care of yourself, and you can't miss."

"You really mean that?" Herbie asks. "You aren't kidding me, are you?"

"I mean it," Jack Lebaron says. "You may need a little seasoning, but you're sure as death and taxes."

"Are they," Herbie asks, "—are they much better in the big leagues?"

Before Jack Lebaron has time to answer, there is a yell from the small crowd, and they look up to watch the center-fielder for the Braves go far back for a fly ball for the third out. "We gotta get out there, kid," Jack Lebaron says, and he tucks his chew of tobacco back in his cheek and hitches up his pants.

THREE more innings; and now the top of their batting order is coming up; and as Jack Lebaron moves his arm up, hitching at his pants, he can feel the pain, sharper, more insistent, running from his elbow a little farther each way.

The boy up there can't hit a curve, low inside. But he hits the one Jack Lebaron

Mike Grogan just sits there, his face as blank as a clock without its hands.

throws him, for a clean single between first and second; and he perches on first base, calling the hitter at the plate to bring him in.

Jack Lebaron works slowly, taking no wind-up; and wheeling, he whips the ball to first base. There is the slightest pause before the base umpire signals the runner safely back. ("No breaks today. No breaks today; he could have called that one either way, but it's all right; that Mike sitting up there will see I can hold a man on base. He knows they steal on the pitcher and not the catcher.")

He works on the batter slowly, works him to two and two, throwing him a knuckle-ball for the last strike, swinging; and the catcher can read the trademark when that one floated up there, not turning over, creating an illusion of slowness too utter to be believed.

But they get a run on Jack; they get a run the last half of the eighth, because Jack Lebaron can't throw what he wants to. Not quite; for the pain has gone clear up his arm now. His arm is a big piece of fire, and he has to hold his head down and hold a handkerchief in front of his face, as he sits in the dugout mopping the sweat from his forehead, to keep Artie from getting a look at his face and taking him out of there.

"Pain," Jack Lebaron thinks, "is an easy thing to beat. Sure. Just sit here

and think of something else. Guys fight ten rounds with a busted hand; and sometimes they really hit with the busted hand, and that must hurt 'em bad as me throwing a baseball sixty feet and six inches. Sure it does. The arm? It's somebody else's arm. To hell with the arm. That catch in there; I tore the hell out of something in there, I guess, or maybe I just got it sore; maybe I never really tore anything, because I can still throw. I couldn't throw at all if I had really pulled something that I needed. To hell with those nerves! The nerves are just a bunch of wires telephonin' the old head. Just tell your head they're gettin' the wrong number, and then maybe she won't hurt. . . .

"But I'm out here now, and all over again I got the head of the battin' order comin' up. That's the way it goes. I remember tryin' to find what the hell that Hornsby couldn't hit for ten years and never findin' out. I kind of know what these kids can't hit, but can I throw it up there?

"Jump, little arm. Jump, little arm, but don't jump enough so that Artie can see you, or Mike can see you. Every time your heart beats, Jack, a man rides that arm with a hot pitchfork, and he's a tough little guy, and he makes your arm jump.

"Low outside, a slow curve low outside. Don't bite your tobacco clear in two like that. Don't take it serious, Jack, my hearty. See, he took a called strike, and we're off for the races. Last inning, a two-run lead. In the old days they would be leaving the park. Jack Lebaron never loses games like that. Mike is sitting up there, and he's sitting up straight now. I'd like to see his eyes behind those glasses. I'll bet he's countin' his World-Series cut right now, because if I aint turning in a dream job as a relief pitcher, I'm not Jack Lebaron."

Herbert Hale is crouched down, and he's talking all the time; a steady flow of encouraging remarks come from his masked lips, because Herbert Hale is the only one that knows for sure. The only one that knows.

"All right, Jack. Like shootin' fish in a tub. He couldn't hit a watermelon with a bass fiddle, Jack. Deal him some more of the same. Some more of the same."

A high sharp-breaking curve. "Come back, arm. I don't mean to throw you up there too. And he hit it. He hit himself a Texas Leaguer; and if that outfielder drops it, I'll scalp him tonight in his sleep." And he didn't drop it.

Jack Lebaron feels the sweat rolling down under his jersey on his right arm now, and it feels as cold as ice; and his head is throbbing, and it seems that his right side is all pain.

But he's got one man out, and he needs to get two more men out; and now —watching Mike Grogan up there—he knows he's going back to the big leagues if it doesn't allow another run. He's got that in his mind, and the little red line that ran across his vision when he threw that last ball is gone now, leaving only a pink mist in its wake.

"Okay, Jack," Herbert Hale's voice comes to him. "Okay, Jack, it's a kick in the pants. This guy is in a trance. He aint got over the last time you struck him out. Let him hit this one for fun. Let him have a little exercise."

Jack Lebaron places his fingers on the ball and lets the catcher see them, lets Herbie have the signal; then he hides the ball in his glove, and with his head down, waits. He throws a low curve, outside. The shortstop throws the batter out. If you throw them low, they can't lift 'em; mostly they can't lift 'em; and if they hit 'em on the ground, they are liable to get thrown out.

(But this ape—the clean-up hitter!—is good; he rapped me for a triple and got sacrificed in last time up, and he rapped me for a triple off of a low one outside. He, maybe, is a ball-player. Maybe he hasn't got a weakness. Herbie wants me to walk him. . . .)

Jack Lebaron takes the tobacco out of his mouth and puts it on the ground. His

mind is colored thinly pink, and he doesn't think very clearly; but he's mad now; he's mad at Herbie because Herbie wants this big lug passed because last time up he got a triple.

Jack Lebaron cuts loose. Overhand.

Herbie traps the ball and starts yelling —yelling at the batter. Herbie is very excited. "You never saw anything like that, did you, you big plow-jockey! You missed that one fifty feet. Do you know who's out there pitchin' to you? I'll tell you: Jack Lebaron! The best pitcher in baseball, and he aint even gonna let you get a foul."

Mike Grogan takes off his glasses, and Jack Lebaron waves at him now, the smile set on his face, and holds up two fingers. He's telling Mike Grogan that he is going to fan this boy with two more pitched balls, and the manager of the Braves boils up the third base coaching-line, yelling at his hitter. The hitter stands there, and his face is a little pale.

Jack Lebaron throws. The ball comes in riding on the wind, sailing; and then it's breaking down and out like a string is on it, and Herbie is fumbling for it in the dirt, and it's a strike! Herbie never tried to catch two balls like that in all his life. He never caught Mathewson, nor Hubbel, nor Dean; and he doesn't know that balls can do those things.

The hitter beats his bat on the plate and says something out of the side of his mouth that brings the umpire up from behind the plate shaking his finger at him, talking fast.

The grin on Jack Lebaron's face is frozen now, and Artie is waving with his score-card, because Jack Lebaron thinks he's grinning but he's not; really he has a sort of grimace on his face that has got everyone in the stands very quiet.

All right, all right! Jack Lebaron is thinking through a little redder mist, and he holds his hand out on the ball and lets Herbert Hale see the signal as that has been, these last four innings, their system; then he makes a gesture familiar to baseball fans for twenty years, and hitches up his pants. He's taking a long wind-up—very long; and his left leg is coming up quite high; he looks for a moment grotesque—and then he throws.

IT'S the high hard one, inside. It's at the plate; the hitter has a toe-hold, swinging from his hips; and the ball leaves the line of Herbert Hale's vision for a moment as it builds up too solid air ahead of it, and *jumps*.

Five inches over its previous course, and that clears the whistling bat. . . .

Herbert Hale threw down his mask and climbed out of his shin-guards and protector, and got there, to him, at the same time Roper did, and Artie running from the bench. They got him one on each side, and the crowd watched him walk off, not cheering him, but watching him silently, a little awed; and then he was in the clubhouse and he was undressing, hiding the pain in his arm by holding it down—undressing with his left arm.

Jack Lebaron looked up, when some one spoke to him, sitting there in the little dressing-room.

"Hello, Mike," he said.

Mike Grogan looked down at him. "Hello, Jack," he said. "Nice game."

"All right," Jack Lebaron said guardedly. "I can't go the route, but I never felt better for a few innin's."

"I talked to the kid," Mike Grogan said. "The kid I was lookin' over."

JACK LEBARON felt his heart stop. He tried to say something, but he couldn't speak. It wasn't Jack Lebaron, then, that Grogan had been watching!

"He's a free agent," Mike said. "He says he don't want no bonus, but he won't sign."

"What kid?" Jack asked hoarsely.

"That Hale. The best young prospect I've seen in twenty years. We need a catcher, bad."

"Yeah?"

"He won't go up, he says. He's a stubborn kid. He won't sign, unless—"

"Unless?"

"He said you taught him all he knows. He says you aint got anything but a head. He says you ought to go up too, as a coach."

"Tell him, thanks," Jack Lebaron said. "And tell him I threw him three out there today to put the seal on him. I threw 'em so you could see he could handle the best pitcher of 'em all, throwin' three like he never threw before."

"Yeah," Mike Grogan said. "I figured you was cuttin' loose to let me see that the kid was good. He says you're the best damn' guy he ever knew."

"All right," Jack Lebaron said. "I'll go up as a coach—have you talked to your office?"

"Just off the phone," Mike Grogan said. "It's set."

"Then listen, Mike, help me with my clothes. I can't move my arm," Jack Lebaron said.

Anything Might Happen

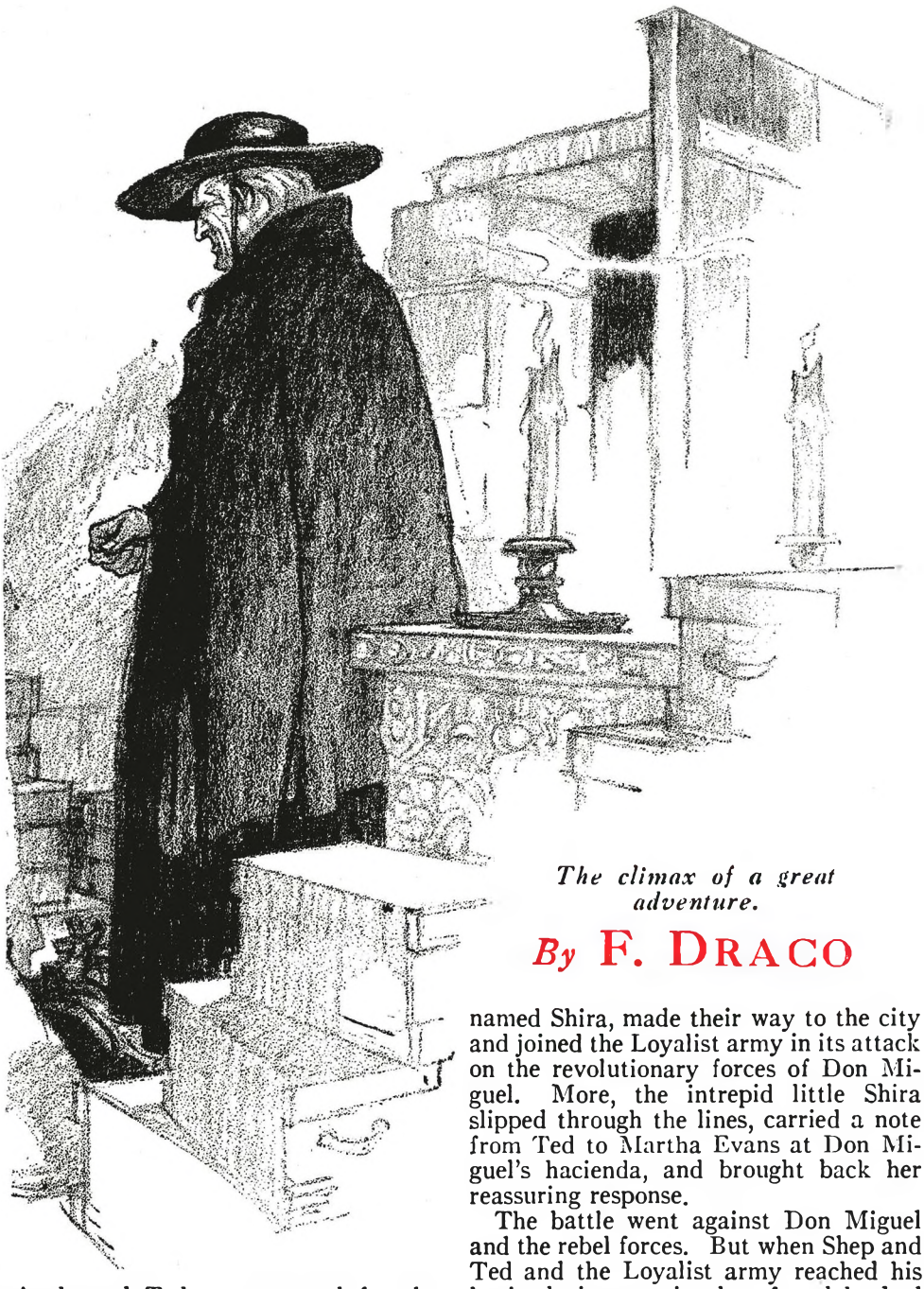
They stood over the body of Doño Adela, horrified. Martha gasped: "Do you mean Pedro did *that?*"

The Story Thus Far:

SHEP REEVES and his partner Ted, in Colón on vacation from the banana plantation under their direction, had a fateful interview with the company manager. In brief, he asked them to undertake a job of intelligence work on behalf of the government as well as the fruit company; though neither would acknowledge it—or help them out if they got into trouble. For foreign agents, presumably Nazi, were developing banana plantations in the neighboring country of Parador; and there was strong evidence that their investment was more political than commercial. Ted and Shep were to pose as entomologists making museum collections, and find out just what was happening in Parador.

They found out, though there was a delay while Ted recovered from a fever in the hospital—and fell in love with his pretty American nurse Martha Evans. She too came to be interested in Parador, for her next patient was wealthy old Don Miguel Ferrara, a leader of the anti-government faction in Parador. And when thanks to insulin he got on his feet again, he engaged her to instruct those who were to care for him on his big hacienda.

Soon after Ted and Shep arrived on their mission in Parador, a German named Reiser questioned them all too curiously about their bug-hunting activities. And one evening soon afterward as they were sitting in a little rural tavern, a fight started and the lights went out. When they came on again, the police had



The climax of a great adventure.

By F. DRACO

arrived—and Ted was arrested for the murder of a man who lay dead on the floor. Obviously "framed," Ted and Shep presently found themselves in a chain-gang working on the roads. . . .

So it happened that Martha Evans, driving up a mountain road with Don Miguel and his party, was horrified to recognize a convict in a road-gang.

Ted and Shep contrived to escape, and aided by a little old Indian woman named Shira, made their way to the city and joined the Loyalist army in its attack on the revolutionary forces of Don Miguel. More, the intrepid little Shira slipped through the lines, carried a note from Ted to Martha Evans at Don Miguel's hacienda, and brought back her reassuring response.

The battle went against Don Miguel and the rebel forces. But when Shep and Ted and the Loyalist army reached his hacienda in pursuit, they found he had abandoned it and retreated across the mountains to a remote and fortified ranch-house. The Loyalists followed and laid siege. Shep and Ted strove for a plan to rescue Martha Evans. *(The story continues in detail:)*

ON the opposite mountain peak, inactivity was as wearing to the attack as to the defense. Colonel Corotizo knew

only too well that time was not on his side. He was in the embarrassing position of conducting a siege in which the beleaguered party had all the food. His men were hungry and had been hungry for three days, and the countryside offered no subsistence. He ordered some more mules to be killed, and told his men that next day they should feast beyond the river on the Ferrara cattle. The men cheered as though they had no idea how difficult it would be to get there.

After dark the four officers held a conference. Frontal attack would be suicide, surprise by night equally hard to carry out. They talked over one plan after another, and at last decided on a very complicated strategy. Each officer would take a quarter of the men. One division would go down into the cañon and prevent any escape by the bridge or by the river. Another would go across and try to get up the mountain under cover of darkness. The third would look for a ford, farther downstream, so that they could approach the ranch along the level crest. The fourth would go upstream, around the horseshoe bend, and try to find a crossing beyond the cliff.

IF this plan succeeded, the defending force, which Corotizo suspected was none too strong, would have to look out for themselves on three sides at once, and would, he hoped, waste a lot of ammunition, of which they inevitably had a limited supply. They would certainly have to come out to meet and ward off these attacks, for their defense lay in their position rather than in powerful fortifications once the hacienda had been reached. Everything depended upon timing, for to succeed all these approaches must become apparent to the enemy at the same time. It would take some daylight reconnoitering to find the places where the river could be forded. No matter how energetically they acted, they could not hope to make their effort before the following night.

"It is obvious," said Corotizo, "that the division which has to make the frontal attack up the mountain will have the more dangerous position. I therefore will command that one."

Shep's drawl broke the long and pregnant silence which succeeded this remark.

"I'd kind of like to do that myself."

"Why?"

"Well, looks like that party would have to take the machine-guns. You wouldn't want to risk losing them in the river. I like to be where the guns are, because I set a lot of store by them."

The Colonel considered. "That makes sense. I then will go down the river, Capitán Valdez around the bend; Teniente Phillips will cover our rear."

Ted was beginning to take offense at being assigned always to the easiest work.

"Why can't I go upstream?"

"Because he knows more about this kind of country, and you know more about the guns."

Ted subsided, but the beginning of a plot was hatching itself in his mind.

The two flanking parties had to be out of sight of the ranch-house before dawn, so they were to start as soon as possible. The men who remained were redistributed so as to look as if their numbers had not been diminished. Signals were arranged. When the Colonel reached the ridge opposite he would send up a flare. Valdez, who would be waiting on a lower level if he had been successful, would respond with three shots. Shep would wait for these signals, and then would begin the ascent. Ted would not move until the others had more or less gained their objective, the level ground at the top of the mountain; then he would come up quickly as reinforcement.

Corotizo shook hands solemnly with each of his officers.

"It ought to work," said Ted; then, well aware that he was speaking out of turn: "What will happen to those people over there when we take the place?"

The Colonel gave him an unfriendly stare. He had learned to have confidence in the Teniente's courage and staying power—even, allowing for inexperience, on his judgment, but he did not find him entirely *simpatico*. He suspected him of that Anglo-Saxon sentimentality so abhorrent to the logical Latin temperament—the sort of thing which idealizes animals and cannot bear to see a calf killed, yet enjoys meat more than any other article of diet.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"TENIENTE, we are here to smoke out a nest of rebels."

"There will probably be some women among them."

"The men must have some recompense for their trouble," said Corotizo coldly.

Ted waited until he had vanished into the darkness, then approached Shep with his plan.

"Listen: We have to wait around here all day tomorrow. What about you

"I have been a slave all my life." Pedro defied the whip. "I am not one any longer."

spraining your ankle? You could still hold the rear, all right, and I could go up the mountain."

In the darkness Shep's voice sounded coldly amused:

"Look, son. This is a war, and we are in it. I know how you feel, but no amateur is going to fight my guns up that slope."

The day dragged. They kept themselves active, moving back and forth in an effort to look as though their numbers had not been diminished. When darkness had fallen, Shep started his men in a cautious descent of the mountain, moving as stealthily as dislodged stones permitted. The light was ideal, a new quarter moon which helped them, yet allowed no distant visibility. They did not realize that the strange acoustics of the place threw sound across the river with the utmost distinctness.

Inside the old ranch, Don Miguel sat in the watch-tower at the corner of the wall. It was a stone room made by the Incas, who had known so well how to handle stone, barely large enough for a sentry, a small chair, and a table. Everything had been done that he could do; now he sat immobile and impassive, waiting. A soldier came in from one of the lower terraces.

"*Patrón,* they are moving down the mountain."

"Good. We are ready."

In the still air the candle threw Don Miguel's shadow coin-clear on the massive walls. So had the Inca captains waited for the wild enemy, or for the terrible bearded men who rode like gods. So had the earlier Ferraras, here in Hacienda Ultima, withstood attack after attack until the land was quiet and they could move down to the greener valleys.

One of his Indians ran in, excited.

"*Patróncito,* some of them are crossing the ford on the sunrise side of the mountain."

This was serious news. Around the bend of the river there was only one ford, and from it the terrain sloped up gradually to the crest. No terraces gave a marked advantage to the defenders. The Indian realized all this. He stared trustingly at the man who had always represented authority, certain that he could find a way to save the situation. The Don felt no excitement, only an immense calm. He was in his own place, fulfilling his destiny in the way that belonged to him. . . . "They must be fought with guns," he said.

HE called Captain Alvarez, his most dependable subordinate, and ordered him to take fifty men and a third of the ammunition to a spot which Pedro would show him.

Another scout ran in to report that there was activity down-river on the opposite side. Don Miguel laughed. The current downstream ran swift and deep. There was no way to cross it except by swimming, and only the strongest could do that. The attackers did not know all this, but they would find it out. It would not be possible for the men who had gone downstream to make contact with the others. He sat on, waiting for the sound of firing to tell him that Alvarez had taken up a position.

In the river gorge, Shep got his men across the bridge, and assembled his guns. Above him the black mountain soared steeply into the sky. He measured it with doubtful eyes.

"The damn' thing's impossible," he muttered, "and nobody knows it better than I do."

The men waited, huddled together, shivering slightly from cold and from excitement. The chill damp rose from the river and drained downstream as if the gorge had been a chimney. They waited a long while, but no flare came from the mountainside where Corotizo had said that he would set it off.

Suddenly they heard a distant crackling, muffled by the mountain. Another replied. It stopped, then started again.

"Valdez is fighting," said Shep. "We better get up there."

They had found the path before; now they started up it. The Southern Cross sat on the crest above. In another moment it would disappear and dawn would be coming. They had climbed not more than twenty feet when a blasting rain of rocks poured down on their heads. Fully half who started were knocked down. One or two lay still, but most scrambled to their feet in the darkness. Shep, who had not been struck, ordered them to get their rifles ready but to hold their fire. No use wasting ammunition in a wild effort to retaliate. They climbed on.

This time they were let alone for several minutes. Then through the darkness the rain of rocks again. The old walls of the terraces made a perfect supply of this sort of weapon. When one lot was used up the defenders had only to retire silently to the one above. Some of the men who fell now rolled all the way down to smash against the boulders on the river bank. A rock caught Shep on the shoulder and threw him off balance, but he dragged himself to the path again by a mesquite bush. There was something terrifying, something atavistic, in these primitive assaults coming silently out of the darkness. The men felt it. Shep sensed that they were wavering and shouted encouragement. They climbed on; the shooting on the other side sounded clearer now, as though the attacking party had approached the top.

DAY dawned. At last Ted, who had been fuming at his end of the bridge, straining his eyes in the darkness, could see what was going on. The light which came before the sun showed him Shep's party, about halfway up the cliff, struggling slowly and desperately onward. A third of the men were strewn on the lower reaches of the hillside, some crawling feebly, some lying in contorted positions from which they would not rise again. He could see too that the defenders at this point were not more than thirty Indians, who ran like ants over the terraces, seizing upon piles of stone which had evidently been prepared in advance. They were so well protected by the terrain that they moved freely without the slightest attempt at concealment. Ted realized that they were out of reach of his guns. The firing on the other side was still audible, at perhaps more frequent intervals. Of Corotizo there was no sign. Evidently something had gone wrong.

The light put new heart into Shep's men, who had been moving like snails, uncertain of their footing and in great dread. For a few minutes, they climbed faster. The defenders were evidently prepared for this. Twenty men with rifles

ran out from the fort, took places on the terraces and began shooting, slowly, deliberately, and with deadly effect. Shep and a handful of soldiers, who had got far ahead of the rest, found a bit of overhanging wall which gave them a temporary shelter, and lay under it. The men below wavered uncertainly. One or two tried to return the fire, one or two broke and leaped down the mountainside. Most flung themselves on their faces and sought protection in the earth itself. Ted could hear Shep shouting orders and encouragement.

Just then there was a diversion. The cattle, pastured on the gentle western slopes, had taken fright and stampeded. For a moment on the crest of the mountain their horns tossed wildly against the sky. Then they were pouring, falling, scrambling down toward the river. It was as much of a surprise to the defense as to the attack. The sharpshooters felt it first. They ran madly for shelter, but some went down under the hoofs. The Indians who were throwing rocks found themselves caught and turned their ammunition on the new enemy. Half of them were trampled before the others succeeded in deflecting the herd. It thundered on to the right of Shep and his men and left them untouched.

In the confusion Ted made up his mind. He had had enough of inactively watching this scene of destruction. Since the attack was not being carried out as planned, he decided that his orders no longer held good. He moved his company at the double across the bridge and up the mountain.

Shep too made the most of the situation. In the split second of the surprise, the peons who escaped the herd found the government soldiers swarming over them. Only one got away. The sharpshooters were afraid to fire for fear of killing their own men. Then it was too late. Shep had gained two terraces. Better than that, he had gained a little wall behind which he could reform his men and set up his guns. There were only two more between him and the crest.

TED clambered until his lungs were bursting. His men needed no encouragement. Like him, they had seen enough. Their brothers and cousins and friends wanted help and they were going to give it.

New men ran out of the fort above. Sharpshooters began again, but this time the defenders could not select their positions as they wished and their fire was not so deadly. One of Shep's guns, hastily made ready, raked the grassy level in front of him. He was on a little spur which could not be flanked. His practiced eye had selected it as soon as dawn broke and he was silently elated at having reached it. The blow on his shoulder had broken his collar-bone, and when he moved his arm the pain made him sweat, but he felt encouraged.

Ted was able to give his company more protection by deserting the path and climbing straight up behind Shep's position. They literally pulled themselves hand over hand for about two hundred feet, and those for whom there was no room on the spur flattened against the projecting rock below. From the gorge came the hideous bellowing of injured cattle, the shrieks of wounded men. Ted and Shep looked at each other and smiled wordlessly.

"The question is," said Shep, "where do we go from here?"

AN answer came sooner than expected. The fighting to which they had listened all morning, burst suddenly over the crest of the mountain, in indescribable confusion. Alvarez had fallen, and Pedro had not held the men together. They were falling back in a completely individualistic manner, each man making some sort of a stand for himself, without concerted effort. Pushing them hard were the hot and weary remnants of Valdez' company.

The defenders gained the outside wall of the hacienda and piled over it, not waiting for the gate to open. Fire poured through the loopholes. The attackers wavered a little, then withdrew out of range and flung themselves down to wait. All this Ted and Shep saw out of the corners of their eyes in the moments they could spare from their own show. They did not see Valdez, but obviously some one was in command, for the men were still acting in unison.

Shep jerked his head in that direction. "We've got to establish contact up there."

Ted nodded. A small ravine cut them off from the crest, but as long as Shep stayed on the spur the ravine was fairly sheltered.

"You go," said Shep. "Your boys are fresher than mine. I can hold this place till Kingdom Come."

Ted went, and went quickly. The sharpshooters got only one or two on the way. He found Valdez, pale but calm,

setting the men he had left to digging themselves a sort of trench behind which they could lie. They expected a counter-attack from the hacienda at any moment.

The sortie, however, did not come. All the energies of the defenders seemed concentrated on dislodging Shep from his position. Ted had gone to assist the weaker party, and now Shep was the more vulnerable. Furthermore, the gun inside the hacienda now covered the ravine, and return was impossible without more loss than they could afford.

SHEP and his company fought like demons, until their guns were smoking hot and they emptied their canteens on the breeches because it was too far to bring water from the river, even if they could have reached it. Slender serious Tomas and some others performed prodigies of valor bringing up boxes of ammunition and rifles which had been dropped below by wounded men. Time and again as the defenders fell silent, the men on the spur thought that it was a reprieve, but each time an assault broke out with new fury. Shep found himself reinforced by wounded men who, instead of seeking safety, had used their remnant of strength and will-power to drag themselves back into the thick of the fighting. They loaded and fired until they fainted where they lay and when consciousness returned their first request was for a rifle.

Shep kept glancing from time to time at the sun. To his bloodshot eyes it seemed to stand still in the heavens. It would never go down. The day would never end.

The men fought on unflinchingly.

The fatalism of both Indian and Spaniard had taken command of their souls and precluded any possibility of flight or surrender.

Although Shep did not think so, the sun had moved. The interminable day was ending. Inside the fort Don Miguel realized it and determined on a last drive against the weak spot. Fortunately for the exhausted machine-gun company, just then a new body of men poured over the crest of the mountain.

Colonel Corotizo was arriving at last, and arriving in good order, with a flag flying at the head of his column. He had found out the night before that the river could not be forded and could not be swum, and he had lost a man attempting it. He had gone far down to a narrow spot where the water was broken by many rocks, and by felling some trees and wedging the logs into place had made a sort of bridge, and finally got over. The noon sun was high and hot by the time he finished, but he assumed that no fighting would be started until he gave the signal, and that his other divisions would wait in comparative safety for his arrival. It was not until he came near enough to hear the firing that he realized his mistake.

He ordered his men to run, and to shout as loudly as possible, so that all should hear that assistance was on the way. His first glance showed him the nature of the situation. He at once ordered a direct attack in full force on the fort. As he rushed across the uneven crest the soldiers of Valdez and Ted joined him and the men who had been attacking the spur retired in haste.

For the moment he contented himself with having driven the enemy inside, and fell back under a withering fire which poured from the walls. Shep made good use of the time to move across the ravine and up to the crest. Now the wounded men who had come so valiantly to help him became a problem, for there were a number who could not walk, and the irreplaceable guns must be carried first. Shep looked at the ones who had to be left behind. For nearly twenty years he had lived without emotion, scoffed at it, denied its validity. Now he was wracked by a wave of it, all the more hard and bitter for having been shut out so long.

"Keep your heads down," he said in a voice harshly unlike his usual sleepy tones. "I'll be back for you guys."

The men nodded in uncomplaining acceptance.

"Buen viaje, Capitán," one said cheerfully.

DURING the confusion Shep installed his guns where they could prevent exit from the south side of the hacienda, cutting the defenders off from the path down to the bridge. He left men in charge of them and started back. With him were Tomas and five others. By the time they got the first installment of wounded across, the attack was over, and Corotizo, now in full command, was superintending the consolidation of his position.

Shep laid his men down and started back without a word. The sun had dropped behind the mountain but it was still light—plenty light enough to see and be seen. The Colonel called to

Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley

"Look here, Pedro," said Martha. "If you don't let go of me, I'll scream."

him but Shep put on speed and pretended not to hear. Tomas ran beside him. The boy's shoulders had dropped, his mouth had tightened, and his pale face was whiter than ever, but he was still his unflagging courteous self. Shep looked at him and felt a surge of paternal love tighten his throat.

"When we get out of here, Tomas," he said roughly, "you stick to me. See? I'll take care of you the rest of your life."

"Sure, *Capitán mio,*" Tomas replied cheerfully.

Two of the men on the spur had conveniently died, leaving more than enough helpers to go around. Shep got the heaviest over his shoulders, and Tomas the lightest, a boy no more than thirteen, who had been a mascot and errand-runner for the regiment. They were the last to leave the spur.

The revolutionists saw them and the big gun swept the ravine. Shep, bent under his burden, heard a shell pass harmlessly over him. Another hit the ground in front of Tomas, and exploded. It knocked Shep to his knees. He got up again and looked back but could see nothing. A few more strides, and he rolled his man to the ground in a safe place and started back. Someone yelled behind him but he ignored it.

There was just enough light to show that he had been right the first time. He saw a hole in the ground, and a few rags and lumps of bleeding flesh. He turned and went back slowly. There did not seem to be any reason to hurry. Night fell, a merciful curtain blotting out the fighting.

He heard too many people shouting at him. He came up to them and stood, swaying slightly.

"Damn you, you've no right to be alive," Ted said, hitting him jovially on the shoulder. The broken ends of bone grated together in the inflamed flesh.

Shep heard someone yell. Without volition his left fist shot out and caught Ted on the point of the jaw; and Ted, taken completely by surprise, dropped like a stone. He got up, rubbing his chin and looked at Shep queerly.

"What's wrong in that shoulder?" he asked. "Take it easy. I'm going to look at it." He felt it gingerly. "The bone's broken."

"Of course it is," said Shep.

"I'm going to strap it up."

Shep sat down and let Ted do whatever he wanted to.

Chapter Twenty-four

INSIDE the ranch the defenders too welcomed the dark. They had lost in the cattle stampede, in the fighting with Valdez, nearly one hundred men. They had about fifty more who were wounded. Most of the wounds were superficial ones. Those who had been more seriously injured had not been able to get back. If Martha had had any mental pictures of parties going around the darkened battlefield under flags of truce collecting the wounded, she was soon disillusioned. No one even thought of it. She had turned the shed where the rancheros had been sleeping into a hospital and dressing-station, scrubbing the walls and floors herself. She had fallen back on saline solution as a disinfectant, and, having used up all her own bandages, was now working her way through the stock of linen sheets which they had brought from Hacienda Tranquilla. Pepita was her loyal assistant. No one interfered with her. Doña Adela was lost in her prayers and everyone else was too busy.

If Martha had not been absorbed in what she was doing and the effort to find some sort of substitute for the supplies she lacked, she might have known more about what happened between Don Miguel and Pedro. . . .

Don Miguel was not pleased with the way things were going. He considered that the division of Valdez should have been exterminated and he blamed Pedro for the failure to hold the men together after Alvarez fell. He told him so in the candlelit blockhouse where he had established his headquarters, and called him a coward in an icy voice which should have cut like steel, but Pedro did not seem affected by it.

"What did you expect?" he asked. "You have treated me like a servant. Do you think now the men will accept me as an officer?"

Don Miguel looked at him in surprise. He had long ago decided that Pedro had no more spirit than his mother, and secretly despised him for it. Now he wondered if he could have been mistaken. The two profiles thrown on the wall by the candlelight might have been stamped by the same die. Only the coloring of the faces was different—the old one waxy white, the young one saddle-colored from long exposure. For once they faced each other with an equal pride, but in the father there was less than his usual assurance, and in the son a long-suppressed bitterness at last boiling to the surface.

"You may be right," said Don Miguel with astonishing mildness. "I shall give you another chance. I shall acknowledge you to the men. I shall see that they obey you."

Pedro's thin lips twisted sardonically.

"You are too late, my father who has not been my father. For thirty-five years I have served you, since I learned as a child of five to run your errands. I have kept silent while you denied me my rightful place in the world. I have watched you drive my mother slowly out of her mind. Now I have seen you gamble away the patrimony that should have been mine, seen you lose everything because of your crazy ambition."

DON MIGUEL positively smiled. "You are more Ferrara than I thought, *hijo mio*. Together we will beat off this swarm yet. They are badly shattered. They cannot take this place if we choose to hold it, and they cannot stay out there indefinitely."

"Neither can we stay here. They are between us and what is left of the herds."

"We have plenty of pigs and sheep inside the walls. Good luck has reduced us to exactly the ideal size for a garrison. Not too many to feed, but enough to maintain effective fire."

"Without ammunition?"

"There is more than you think. The cellars are full. I had prepared for this."

"There are no shells left for the big gun."

"The enemy does not know that."

But since Pedro had at last begun to speak he could not check himself.

"Your conceit has made you crazy. You think you cannot be conquered. But you are just a bag of blood and water like everyone else."

"You have a crude way of expressing yourself," said Don Miguel.

"I am not an educated man. You have seen to that."

Don Miguel's eyebrows lifted slightly. It was a danger signal but Pedro was too disturbed to notice it.

"There is only one thing left to do. You know the secret stairway down the cliff. You and I could escape and make our way to the Colombian frontier before we were missed. There are enough jewels here to keep us."

For a moment Don Miguel did not answer, but when he spoke his voice was a whip of scorn:

"And what should I do with my people?"

"They will have a better chance of survival if they surrender without you."

"There are many things you do not appear to have learned. I am their *Patrón*."

"You have not been so tender of them always."

"It is their place to work for me. It is my place to protect them."

"You are living in a fairy tale."

There was another ominous pause. Don Miguel's eyes went to a silver-mounted riding-whip which lay upon the table. He spoke again quietly.

"I was correct in my opinion of you, after all. You are no Ferrara."

"I am not a blind fool."

As quickly as a snake, Don Miguel picked up the whip and struck Pedro savagely across the face.

Pedro's wiry fists clenched and unclenched. It was obvious that he was far superior to the old man in physical strength, and obvious that he realized it for the first time. He did nothing however, except wipe the blood from his nose with the back of his hand.

"I have been a slave all my life," he said. "I am not one any longer."

The whip hissed through the air again, but Pedro had sprung out of the doorway.

ALTHOUGH Martha had no desperately serious cases in her hospital, there were enough to keep her very busy. A wounded leg had got infected and looked to her very much as though it required an amputation. At least for the night, however, she had decided to keep the wound open, irrigating it constantly with saline solution. There was a head case which had become delirious and to whom, in order to get sleep for her other patients, she had given grudgingly one of her few shots of morphine. She felt she must be on hand when he woke up in case he should be violent again. There were two or three others running a high fever and making unsatisfactory progress although nothing acute had developed. She sent Pepita to bed and decided to remain on duty all night, snatching a nap now and then when things were quiet, in a chair by the doorway.

She woke out of a doze to see Pedro bending over her. There was an angry weal across his face and dried blood on his lips and his hand. At first she thought he wanted medical attention, but he brushed her offers aside almost angrily. He seemed excited and had a look in his eyes which she had never noticed there before and which made her definitely uncomfortable.

"Señorita Evans," he said, "you must come with me."

"Has Don Miguel been taken ill?"

"No. He is well. But he wants you to leave the ranch at once. Tonight. With me."

"To leave the ranch? But how? That is impossible."

"THERE is a stairway down the cliff below the Virgin's temple. I will show you. Hurry. There is no time to lose."

"But these men need attention," Martha objected. "I can't leave them. Is Don Miguel going too?"

"Not yet. He wants us to go ahead. Come. Hurry."

"Take me to him. He will have to tell me himself before I budge. I will explain to him that I can't leave my post here."

"No. He is busy. You come."

Pedro seized her wrist in an iron grasp and started to drag her after him.

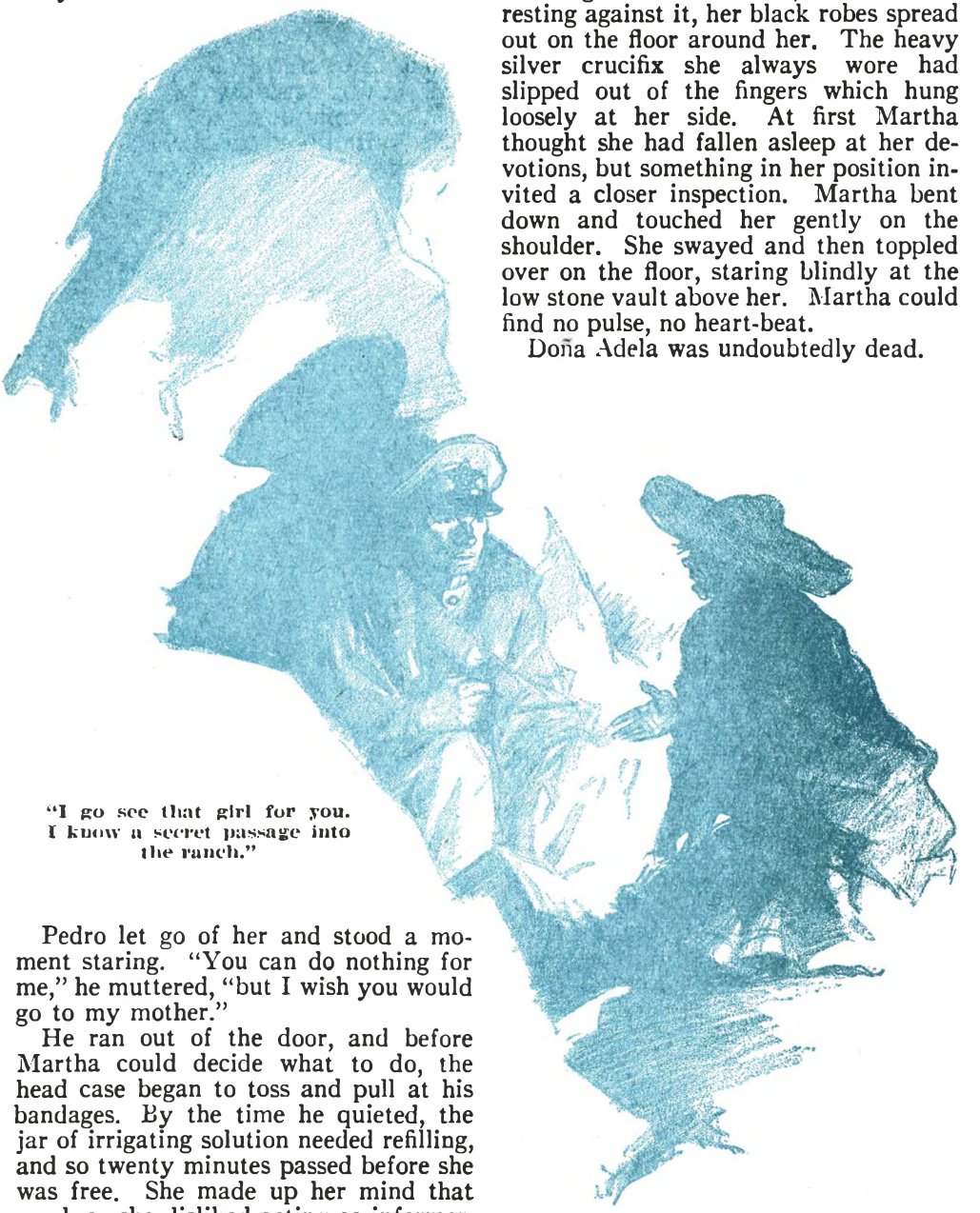
"Look here, Pedro," said Martha. "If you don't let go of me I'll scream the place down. I promise you that."

"You must come. You are in terrible danger. This place is going to fall into the hands of the enemy. You've no idea what will happen to you when it does."

"Well, it hasn't fallen yet, and I'm busy. Now take me to the Don."

"I want to look after you. I want to save you." His dark face came close to hers and its expression was unmistakable.

"Pedro! I don't believe Don Miguel sent you at all! You get out of here and let me work, or I'll go straight to him and find out what's going on. You've an awful-looking face. Shall I bathe it for you?"



"I go see that girl for you. I know a secret passage into the ranch."

Pedro let go of her and stood a moment staring. "You can do nothing for me," he muttered, "but I wish you would go to my mother."

He ran out of the door, and before Martha could decide what to do, the head case began to toss and pull at his bandages. By the time he quieted, the jar of irrigating solution needed refilling, and so twenty minutes passed before she was free. She made up her mind that much as she disliked acting as informer, she would report the whole incident to Don Miguel as soon as she had been to see if she could really help Doña Adela. She asked one of the men to keep an eye on the delirious patient, and went across the yard and into the ranch-house.

When she did not find Doña Adela in her room she went to the rough little chapel at the end of the corridor. Here two candles were burning on the stone altar over which the housekeeper had hung a richly embroidered cloth brought from Hacienda Tranquilla. She was kneeling before the altar, her forehead resting against it, her black robes spread out on the floor around her. The heavy silver crucifix she always wore had slipped out of the fingers which hung loosely at her side. At first Martha thought she had fallen asleep at her devotions, but something in her position invited a closer inspection. Martha bent down and touched her gently on the shoulder. She swayed and then toppled over on the floor, staring blindly at the low stone vault above her. Martha could find no pulse, no heart-beat.

Doña Adela was undoubtedly dead.

Martha found Don Miguel in his room, stretched out on his bed fully dressed and so motionless that her heart stood still for a moment until she saw the faint rhythm of his shallow breathing. She woke him reluctantly and he followed her to the chapel.

As they examined the body, they made a horrifying discovery: Doña Adela had been murdered. A thin knife had been driven into her body just under the left shoulder-blade. The point had reached the heart, and death had been instantaneous. They lifted her and laid her on the long stone altar. She had been dead, thought Martha, not quite an hour. On the floor under her skirt was a scrap of paper on which had been scrawled in an illiterate hand the words: "*She would not come with me.*"

Martha picked it up and handed it to Don Miguel, who read it and crushed it in his fingers without a word. Then he went, more hurriedly than she had ever seen him move, to the wall behind the altar. He pressed on the stones in a certain fashion until one of them swung outward and showed a compartment in which stood an iron-bound chest. He opened the chest, and began to curse, in the most mellifluent and rolling Spanish Martha had ever heard.

"How long ago did Pedro talk to you?" he asked at last.

Martha consulted her watch. "Three-quarters of an hour," she said.

Don Miguel gritted his teeth. "Then he is down to the river by now and in this darkness it would be impossible to pick him out. May the weight of the gold he has taken drown him when he starts to swim!"

Martha looked at him in horror, trying to fit these impossible happenings into some pattern.

"Do you mean," she asked, and her tongue was stiff in her mouth as she looked toward the body of Doña Adela, "do you mean Pedro did *that?*"

"For that," said Don Miguel, "only for that, I do not blame him. Since she would not go with him he was right to see that she died painlessly."

Something in the way he said it, in the way he looked, sent a cold chill down Martha's intrepid spine.

Chapter Twenty-five

SOMEWHAT to the surprise of both sides, two days passed without incident. The Don had no intention of making a sortie which might be disastrous. The Colonel wished to rest his exhausted men and recuperate his shattered forces. For the moment neither side was short of food or water, though the Colonel's men had to bring theirs up the mountain from the river, and an unrelieved diet of meat had its drawbacks. The supply of cattle was not so unlimited as one might suppose, since they had scattered widely after the stampede and so many had been killed at once that the buzzards enjoyed them before the men could. Snipers accounted for about ten men on either side, but on the whole both combatants were wary, anxious to conserve ammunition, willing to wait and let the other take the initiative. Don Miguel found himself with a hundred and forty men, of whom fifty were more or less injured. Of the Colonel's regiment only two hundred and fifty had survived.

WITHIN the walls of Rancho Ultimo, they buried Doña Adela. The Don let it be understood that Pedro and Lola, who was also missing, had made love too close to the cliff and had fallen over. Whether the peons believed this or not they appeared to. No effort was made to search for the supposed corpses.

Three of Martha's patients died. Not one had seemed in a critical condition but she had experience enough to know the unaccountability of tropical illnesses. She took some satisfaction in the fact that the infected leg was clearing up, and the head case lucid. As her patients improved she extended her activities to helping Pepita in the kitchen. It was as important to keep the men fed as to help the sick get well. With encouragement from Don Miguel she turned herself into quite a martinet of a sanitation officer, enforcing standards of cleanliness which were startling to most of the men. A week ago they would not have obeyed her without resentment, but since they had seen the kindness with which she cared for the wounded they accepted her word as law.

Only Don Miguel knew the whole story of the night, and he took no one into his confidence. Alone in his blockhouse he considered evacuating the ranch by the secret passage, but decided against it. It was conceivable that his party might cross the river unnoticed but he would have no way to feed them on the trip to the Colombian border nor, since Pedro's theft, any money to take care of them after he got there.

The great stone which had covered the mouth of the secret shaft in the House of the Virgins he was obliged to leave lying to one side as Pedro had put it. It was beyond his strength to move and he did not wish to ask for help or to disclose to

anyone else the existence of the shaft. He covered it temporarily with sacks of flour, and ordered all the garrison to keep out of the House of the Virgins.

At the end of three days the attackers were rested, well fed and restless. Of the two parties they had the more uncomfortable position. They were without shelter and without ways to keep warm, and the temperature dropped forty degrees every night. Nearly everyone had taken cold, and they kept each other awake with fits of coughing. The long trips for water grew increasingly irksome, especially as they had to be made to the distant west side, for the water on the east was so polluted with corpses as to be undrinkable. In spite of hard-working burial-parties, the whole neighborhood stank, and inactivity gave men too much time to brood about fallen comrades. Waiting did not suit the Colonel any better than his men. On the third morning he gave the order to attack.

He had hoped by feinting at several sides to draw out great quantities of ammunition without losing many men, but the old fox within was too wary for that. The defenders in every case waited until the attack was almost at the wall, and then blasted it. Although Corotizo retired in good order, he lost about forty men.

The failure of these attacks would have given great encouragement to the garrison of Rancho Ultimo, but for a circumstance which the outsiders did not know. The well in the fort, hitherto considered inexhaustible, showed signs of running dry. Water for the evening meal had to be rationed carefully, and Don Miguel began to consider plans for bringing it up from the river through the shaft in the rock. Much as he disliked imparting that secret to anyone, it could be done as an alternative to dying of thirst. The soldiers and peons, however, knew no alternative, and they regarded the obvious shortage of water as extremely ominous.

SHEP and Ted sat by one of the small fires which the sparsely covered mountains afforded. Shep's shoulder, roughly immobilized by Ted, had become less painful. But he was profoundly disgruntled because his guns, the apple of his eye, were useless against the thick stone walls of Rancho Ultimo, and he despised an enemy who sniped through loopholes and from the tops of the watch-towers. "Damned guerilla warfare!" he called it. He growled on, but Ted was too profoundly depressed even to answer. It seemed to him that his life had come to a full stop, that time no longer existed, that he was living in one of those nightmares in which goals are never reached, trains are never caught, no one ever succeeds in what he wants to do, but strains on and on after a will-o'-the-wisp.

Martha was inside those walls, a few hundred feet away, and he could no more reach her than if she had been in the moon. He was desperately afraid for her if they should succeed, and desperately afraid for her if they should fail. The danger either way seemed almost equal.

"I hardly know what to hope for," he said distractedly; and until Shep answered him he was not conscious that he had spoken aloud.

"Hell's bells! *I* hope we get our man and get out quick."

TED did not reply, but went on staring into the chilly little fire. On the other side of it Valdez lay shivering. His cold seemed to be making him really ill and Ted had stripped the coats from several corpses, in order to cover him. His breathing was heavy and he kept muttering between clenched teeth. Occasionally they could understand a sentence:

"Alma de mi alma, vuelva pronto. Tu veras. Como esta el chiquito? Muy bien?"

Shep leaned over and pulled the coats more closely around him but he did not seem to notice what was being done. Shep looked at Ted and shook his head.

"The poor devil, he has pneumonia," he said, "and that's fatal at this altitude."

Ted did not answer but continued to stare morosely into the fire. Across from him sat Shira. She had come to the top of the mountain in her own mysterious way and appeared there after the first day's fighting. She had installed herself in a niche between two rocks but when there were fires she came out and sat by them, saying nothing. The men all accepted her as a matter of course and joked with her good-naturedly. Although she did not feel it worth while to make any answer except a grin, these attentions pleased her. She sat with her knees hunched up to her chin, as ageless and inscrutable as one of her own strange images. She was enjoying herself. Cold and hunger and discomfort meant very little to her. She had never known

anything else. The expression on Ted's face, however, did penetrate her detachment and disturb her. This new gringo son of hers was usually laughing. Now he was sad. She must do something about it. She hitched herself along the ground until she was next to him.

"You think about that girl," she announced.

Ted started. It was uncanny to have her divine his thoughts—but he would not bother to deny them.

"How did you know, Shira?"

"You like I go see her?"

Ted stared. "You can't get in there."

"Oh, yes. I get in."

"What are you talking about? They'll shoot you like a rabbit before you even got up to the walls."

"Is a way. My grandmother show me."

"You mean to tell me you know some kind of a secret passage into the ranch?"

"Oh, yes."

"Wait here a minute."

Ted went to the Colonel and told him what Shira had said. "She's probably nuts, but I thought you ought to know."

The Colonel, however, took it seriously. "These old Indians know lots of things. The trouble is to get them to tell. Sure she ought to go, and take some men with her who can report back if it's something we can use."

WHEN this was suggested to Shira, however, it met unexpected resistance.

"I don't go with men: too much noise."

"With just two men, then."

"No."

"With one?"

"Maybe."

"I'll go with you, Shira," suggested Ted eagerly.

"No."

Shep and the Colonel suggested themselves in turn and received the same flat negative. So did the other names which were put forward, but the Colonel had inexhaustible patience.

"With what man, then?"

Shira looked around until her eyes fell on José, who was near by as usual. He never let Ted out of his sight if he could help it, although he made himself unobtrusive. His flesh-wound had healed, and his arm was out of the sling. Hollow-eyed, with a ten-day growth of straggly beard, he was not prepossessing, but he seemed to meet Shira's requirements.

"That one," she said.

A few minutes later they had started off, and the windy darkness blotted them out.

Ted had not much time to think about the success of their mission for Valdez claimed his attention almost immediately. His condition grew much worse and shortly before dawn it became apparent to everyone that he was dying. The end was as quiet as his illness and his life had been. He merely turned over, murmured the name of his wife, Carmencita, and gave up his gentle spirit. So there was another widow in Parador, a land of widows, and another baby would never see its father's face. These things are a commonplace of revolutions, and the only comment was Shep's as they buried him: "A damn' white guy."

IN calling the roll for the burial-squad, Ted made a discovery. To the name of Porfirio Miranda, a man responded, dressed in uniform; but instead of rising, he continued to squat with his feet hidden under him. His face looked unfamiliar, and Ted made him get up, and then saw the reason for the unsoldierly behavior. His feet were bare. He had squeezed himself into a dead man's uniform, but the boots had proved impossible.

The imitation Porfirio positively gibbered with fright at being found out. He was no spy; he swore it, by the beard of Christ and the tears of the Virgin. The dead Porfirio was his cousin, his own cousin. It was true. He had stolen out of the fortress in the darkness. He had been forced to fight for Don Miguel. He had not wished to. He had been recruited secretly in Bolto. They had promised him very much money. But last week it had not been paid. Things were very bad inside. The well was running dry. There were those who said that the old Don was mad. That servant of Satan who was said to be his son had disappeared. No one knew where, and a woman had died mysteriously.

"What woman?" Ted asked sharply.

"A very pious woman. Always praying. Very virtuous. Had been stabbed in the heart with a knife."

Ted breathed a relieved sigh. This did not sound like Martha.

It was rumored that the Don had lost his money, said Porfirio. In any case the soldiers had not been paid since coming to Rancho Ultimo, and that had always been done before. He knew himself there were no shells for the big gun

since he had manned it. If the Señor Teniente would spare his life he would fight for the Government like ten men. A man had a right to die under an open sky and not like a rat in a trap.

The Colonel laughed when Ted told him about this. "That is just what he will be allowed to do," he said cheerfully. "I found nine others this morning. They are not Don Miguel's peons, but mercenaries who were picked up for him elsewhere. They are sincere enough about their change of heart. They like to win. We will get all the information from them that we can and we will put them in the front line for the next attack. They will stop some bullets for us and it will be the most honest work they ever did."

Chapter Twenty-six

THE Colonel was in high good spirits all the morning. From the deserters he learned that the force in Rancho Ultimo was reduced to less than one hundred effectives. He himself had about forty more. This made him cheerful, and the news of disorganization inside was music to his ears. The final touch was added to his optimism when José returned in the afternoon and reported that there was indeed a secret passage as Shira had said.

It consisted of a rough staircase, difficult but perfectly scalable by active men, which went up like a shaft through the very heart of the cliff and came out under the little stone hut which they called the House of the Virgins. Strangely enough it was open. Shira had promised to watch and open it again if it should be closed. The House of the Virgins was being used as a storehouse. It was full of bags of meal and ammunition. He had left Shira there and hurried back to report.

The Colonel found it difficult to contain his exultation. He called Shep and Ted at once and all but danced on his small pointed toes as he told them the news. They laid their plans immediately. They would attack just before dawn the next morning, as darkness was a definite advantage to them. This would be an attack in force, to do or die. Meanwhile Ted would during the night take twenty men guided by José, around the mountain and up into the House of the Virgins. If they arrived there early they would hide until they heard the attack begin. If fighting had started they would create a diversion in the rear. In Ted's opinion the slow sun took a year to dawdle across the sky. . . .

The Colonel selected his best scouts to accompany Ted—men chiefly Indian, trained to be resourceful, silent, independent fighters. Guided by José, they went swiftly down the east side of the mountain and along the river. The noise of the turbulent current drowned their stealthy footfalls.

It was still dark when they crawled on their hands and knees after José into a small opening in the rock, and found themselves in a narrow tunnel which slanted upward. By Ted's flashlight they could see that it was perhaps three feet high and two feet wide, apparently chiseled by hand out of the solid rock, dry, and coated with an ageless dust.

They had crawled for a good many hundred feet before it ended in a perpendicular shaft, also just large enough to hold the body of a man. The flashlight could not penetrate the blackness to reach the top of it, but they could see footholds cut into the rock on one side at two feet intervals. By bracing his back against one wall and sticking his hands and feet into these niches, a man could climb, not comfortably, but safely, as long as he did not stop to think how high he was going, or what would happen to him if he fell.

Silently, achingly, they climbed for what seemed an interminable time. The spacing of the niches was so regular that light were not necessary, and indeed would only have increased the terrors of a trip which was best taken a step at a time; but their backs and legs and arms grew almost rigid with the effort. At long last José whispered that he had reached the top.

HE was about to climb out when they heard the sound of something soft being dragged across the floor above. Their hearts and their breathing stopped as they waited. They were in a hideously vulnerable position. An enemy would have needed only to drop a rock on the first man and his fall would have carried all the others down the shaft to be shattered at the bottom. In the small stone room someone grunted, then a voice spoke and another answered. Two peons had come in for a sack of meal. Their bare feet had made no sound on the stones nor did their departure, for the house had no door, but the sound of their voices died away, and there was silence.

José climbed cautiously out. One after another, with long intervals between each one, the others followed him. The windowless room was almost as dark as the shaft had been, but there was a faint glimmer of light in the doorway. When at last they found themselves all alive and in the House of the Virgins, every man of them was drenched with clammy sweat. They hid behind the bags and boxes as well as possible, and prayed that they would not be discovered during the night. When they heard the attack they planned to separate and strike the defenders at different parts of the wall.

They did not see or hear anything of Shira. As a matter of fact, she was sitting in a dry and empty rainbarrel at a dark corner of the barracks which had been turned into a hospital. It is not hard, when one is under five feet tall and one weighs eighty pounds, to get into a rainbarrel. She had left her inseparable hat at the entrance to the passage because it impeded her too much. She had hidden in the House of the Virgins until darkness gave her a little freedom of movement. It is not hard to wait if one has spent one's life in waiting.

SHIRA had just slipped out when she saw Martha enter the lighted door of the barrack. Creeping nearer, she saw the wounded on the floor inside and Martha moving among them. She waited until Martha sat down. If the girl intended to stay there, Shira would stay, too. She looked about and soon found the rainbarrel. She felt a complete disinterest in anything else which might be going on in the old ranch. She had come to see Martha and that was all she wanted to see. . . .

In the last darkness after the moon had set and the stars not yet begun to fade, Colonel Corotizo made a speech to his men.

"My heroes! The most decisive moment in your lives is about to take place. We will capture this stronghold and seize the traitor. When we have done that we shall be famous. I will certainly become a general. From being a general, it is a short step to going higher. Once in power, you may be sure I shall not forget the little band of men who have assisted me so loyally at this beginning of my career. No. You shall have your reward, all of you. You shall be attached to my person. You shall have posts in the government. Your grateful countrymen will raise you upon their shoulders.

In a split second a miracle happened: a flash of color sprang at him from the rainbarrel.

"I do not insult you by asking you to show courage as this hour strikes. I know you. I know what you are. I go forward strong in the consciousness that you are immediately behind me, supporting me with the loyalty you have already shown. We will spread out and move quietly until we are observed. Then we will charge at double speed.

"Say nothing when I have finished speaking. We must move secretly. I do not need the reassurance of your cheers. My confidence in you is absolute.

"Remember this. We will take as many prisoners as possible. We will lead witnesses of our glory into Bolto. No one must harm the old Don."

He stepped into the darkness. Behind him the black mass moved inward as one man. . . .

Don Miguel sat alone in the watch-tower which he had made his headquarters. He had extinguished the candle the better to see into the night, and to hear. He had no doubt that the attackers would make a decisive move soon, and in fact would have been surprised that they had not already done so if he had not passed the point where anything could surprise him. He had not slept for more than thirty hours and his head was ringing with voices which his intelligence told him did not exist. He believed that he was still able to distinguish between reality and hallucination and he was determined, with all the force of his will, to let no one guess at his difficulty.

There were moments, however, when Pedro's defection seemed to belong to the realm of the unreal. It was so incredible that it made him doubt his sanity for the first time. It seemed that he must have imagined it, and then he knew that it was true and that he was insane when he doubted it. From that point the confusion increased, a confusion which he concealed behind a face more masklike than usual.

HE was aware that there had been desertions from his forces but he had difficulty in keeping the numbers clear in his mind. At one moment he believed himself at the head of a large army; at the next he felt that he was dying alone, the last of the Ferraras, on a great rock by which his ancestors had climbed to the sky. At these moments, he would go to the door, see the dark figures of the sentries along the walls, hear the little movements of the sleeping camp, and force himself back to earth with an effort which made him breathe as if he had been running.

At these times he knew that he had left about ninety men, almost all of them peons from his own estate, so accustomed to looking to him for support and for orders that it would not occur to them to do anything but die fighting at his side. The knowledge made a flood of warm confidence sweep over him. He had ninety supremely loyal men, he had plenty of food and ammunition. He could hold out for a long while yet.

Because of his reluctance to share the secret of the shaft, he had put no guard near it, for he was confident that only he and his renegade son knew where it was. Since they could not escape by it safely it would be better in the event of a last stand to die where they were, without knowledge of any alternative. If he should perish, the secret would perish with him. That would be best. But he must find a way to replace the stones. Perhaps he could do it now that he had rested. Or he could ask Martha. She had a silent tongue. He got up wearily.

A LOW whistle came from the outer wall. It was the signal they had agreed on when the enemy began moving. Don Miguel stiffened. He was Ramon de Ferrara, most Christian knight of Spain, in the fortress he had won; and the Indians were creeping up on him in the darkness. He picked up his hat and the softness of the felt startled his fingers. He had expected the steel of a helmet. It was annoying how his mind wandered, but it had not prevented him from making the most elaborate plans for the best conduct of the defense. He would see that they were carried out. Fully himself, as black and silent as the night in his long cloak, he started on his rounds.

The men were standing to their places as they had been ordered. They could see nothing, straining their eyes into the darkness ahead of them, but their ears, keen as an animal's, caught the rustle of stealthy movement. They answered to his whispered orders with murmurs of, "*Si, patrón. Si, patróncito,*" which were infinitely reassuring. They understood perfectly what they were to do.

He completed a swift inspection of the outer wall, and started on the inner one. Here, too, all was in order. His confidence mounted. They would never break through. They would wear themselves out with failure after failure, attack after attack, and at last, poorly equipped and

starving, they would have to retire. It had been madness to try impulsively to take a place so strong and so well prepared.

The inner courtyard was deserted, for at the warning whistle the men had all gone to their positions on the wall. He came around a corner of the ranch-house intending to call out those of the wounded who were able to fight. A man ran past him like a shadow, rifle in hand.

"*Holà,* you are late!" said Don Miguel.

Instead of murmuring a submissive "*Si, patrón,*" and running on, as he expected him to do, the man stopped, looked uncertainly in the direction of the voice,—for the Don was invisible in his black clothing—and did not answer.

"What is your name?" asked Don Miguel, severely. Here was a fellow who must be taught how to behave if he survived the attack.

Again there was a hesitation. Then the man replied:

"What's yours?"

Don Miguel needed nothing more. It was inconceivable that one of his men who had known him so long, who had been through so much with him, would not recognize his voice, would not expect to have him turn up anywhere, ubiquitous as Satan. This was a stranger. Where he had come from; how he had gotten here did not matter. It might be that he was a part of the hallucination with which the Don had been contending. A bullet would give the answer to that. In any case, his presence was dangerous. In fact, his presence meant defeat.

DON MIGUEL fired, and the man fell. As if the shot had been a signal the rifle-fire rattled on the walls, accompanied by a wild outcry. The man's last shout, if he gave one, was drowned in the general confusion. Ferrara did not stop to look at him but went on swiftly to the barracks.

His mind saw all the implications of that man's presence with a vivid clearness as a flash of lightning illumines a dark landscape. The enemy were inside the wall as well as out. Certainly if there were one of them there must be more. His men could not resist if attacked both from the front and rear. They would die fighting, of course, but it was only a question of time.

As he reached the barracks he saw that he had no need to tell the wounded what to do. They were pouring out, even those that could hardly hobble, and running in the direction of the fighting. The light from inside showed them and their infirmities clearly as they sprang through the doorway. What spirit they had! The old *patrón* felt tears of love for them spring into his eyes. He spoke to them encouragingly and they answered him with glad shouts as they rushed past, as a lord's men should answer. Those who could run or walk were gone, now but a few more crawled through the doorway on their hands and knees. What a pity, thought Don Miguel, that all this courage should be wasted.

LOOKING into the lighted room he saw Martha, horrified, in the middle of it. He understood that she had tried to stop the more seriously injured and had been unable to. Her presence irritated him. Her blood was alien to this blood-drenched rock on which they stood. She had no part in this new act of the age-old drama. The mountains and the old stones spoke and he and his men had understood and answered them. This golden-haired stranger did not belong.

Then he pulled himself together. He had brought her there and he had a duty to her, and to that silly little girl who crouched behind her, in terror.

"Miss Evans," he said quietly, "come here, please. Bring Pepita with you."

She knew his voice and came without a word, she and the girl.

"Please close the door behind you."

Martha obeyed him. Her tongue felt paralyzed. She too had been for many hours without sleep and without proper food, but she did not feel light-headed, she felt numb. She seemed to be moving in a dense fog, and she was past sensation. Automatically she followed his voice and he led her around the corner to the narrow blank end of the building.

The swift dawn was beginning to show. In ten minutes they would have passed from dark to daylight, for this high mountain peak caught the first rays of the sun. Already he could see her face, haggard and strained, but calm. Pepita sniveled behind her. Martha could see him too, and her first unbidden thought was that she was talking to a skeleton, a ghost with wildly glittering eyes.

"Miss Evans," he said, in his most courteous tone, "as you hear, we are again attacked."

"Yes," said Martha.

"For reasons which I will not go into because time is short, I believe that this attack will be successful."

Martha removed the barricade and opened the door,

"Oh," said Martha. She could not manage any comment.

"It is needless to say," continued Don Miguel, raising his voice so as to be heard above the din which seemed to be coming nearer, "that I regret having placed you in this predicament. It is a poor return for your unfailing kindness and care of me. But let us not waste words on apologies."

"No," said Martha, and the thought flashed through her head that he had gone mad.

"I can at least," he continued, "prevent your falling into the hands of the enemy. I will give you five minutes, if I can," (he looked toward the courtyard gate) "to confess yourself."

Pepita wailed and dropped to her knees. Between sobs she began to mutter her prayers. Martha stared at him, and at the revolver which hung loosely in his hand. For just a moment it occurred to her that it might be restful to be dead. Then her whole being was flooded by a desire to live, wild, unreasoning, shocking in its intensity. She *must* not die. Not yet.

She had had some experience with patients in violent wards. Her mind flashed over it, looking desperately for something that might help her, but this was a very different case. Here was a man who could not be turned from his purpose by some diverting remark. Her eyes measured the distance between them. It was too far for her to hope to get the gun out of his hand. If she tried to run he would certainly shoot her.

"Isn't it too soon to give up hope?" she asked. "Give me a gun. I can fight too."

shaking from head to foot. "Ted—" she began.

"Miss Evans," said Don Miguel sternly, "do not waste the time you have to make your peace with God. I am unable to provide you with a priest, but He will hear the prayers of the innocent."

Daughter of rock-ribbed Maine Protestants that she was, Martha almost smiled in spite of her desperation.

"My peace is made as much as it can be."

"I do not wish to hurry you," said Don Miguel with a soft insistence, "but I must go to my men. It is with them that I wish to die." He added in English, in a kinder tone: "I will shoot the little one first. She has less courage."

He raised his revolver and fired—and in that split second the miracle happened. A whirl of color sprang out of the rain-barrel and flung itself at him. The surprise deflected his bullet. Pepita was wounded, but not killed, for she clutched her shoulder and began to shriek. Martha did not stop to investigate the nature of her deliverer.

"Get up!" she screamed to Pepita. "Run!"

Behind her she heard a second shot, then silence. She pulled the girl with her around the corner of the house and into the barracks, slammed the heavy door and dropped the iron bar across it, pushed a chair and a stand in front of it, and stopped, panting. The candles still burned. Six or seven men, too ill to move, lay in their pallets. It astonished Martha that nothing had changed; those of the wounded who were conscious stared at her, alarmed.

Some rifles stood against the wall. Martha snatched one up and made sure it was loaded. She could fire through

the ancient keyhole, she thought. She stuck the muzzle of the rifle in it.

"Be quiet," she said savagely to Pepita. "You're only hit in the shoulder. If you don't quit yelling, I'll finish the job."

Chapter Twenty-seven

PEPITA subsided. The sound of fighting came nearer. Then suddenly, incredibly, Martha heard a voice calling:

"Martha! Martha Evans! If you are around here, for God's sake answer me!"

There were footsteps outside the door.

"Who are you?" Martha asked, resolutely. "I've a rifle here, loaded. If you touch that door, I'll shoot."

"Ted Phillips. Open it. Hurry."

Martha removed the barricade and opened the door, conscious that she was shaking from head to foot. Ted stepped in, looked at her sharply, appeared relieved and began replacing her barricade in front of the door. For a moment Martha thought she was going to have hysterics and wondered if anyone would have sense enough to slap her. Then she drew a deep breath and pulled herself together.

"Ted—" she began.

"Be quiet," said Ted, sharply. "I've got to figure a way to get you out of here."

All of the wounded but one were conscious now, and watching. One of them sat up.

"Señor, you are a friend of the Señorita's?" he asked.

"Yes," said Ted, and was astonished to hear himself adding, "I love her."

The wounded man grinned. "I am only half a man, Señor, but if you will pull me closer to the door and give me a rifle, I will fight for her."

Martha sat down weakly in her chair. Pepita crouching against the wall moaned feebly, and Martha suddenly remembered her. She got up, feeling better.

"I have a dressing to do," she said, and the thought steadied her. In this fantastic world to which she had been transplanted, where nothing except the impossible ever happened, there were still the basic realities of life and suffering and death, there were still wounds and she knew what to do for them. She got her equipment together and pulled the blouse off Pepita's shoulder. Her hands still shook, but she was better able to control them.

"So there are two of you," said Ted, "That makes it worse. Are you all right?" he added, as if he had just thought of it.

"Quite all right, thank you," Martha answered primly, but just saying it made the tears come into her eyes.

Then Ted heard Shep's voice outside. He called to him and quickly explained the situation in English. Shep began to harangue the men.

"Soldiers!" they heard him say. "Here is a surprise for you. Your success is crowned not only by glory but by romance! The *amiga* of your Teniente Phillips is here! He has found her and they will be married tonight! Who will give three cheers for the bride?"

The idea caught the fancy of the men, and they laughed and shouted lustily. There were cries of "Bring her out!" Martha and Ted looked at each other and blushed.

"You don't really have to marry me," whispered Ted.

"But I want to," said Martha, and then they were in each other's arms.

The shouts outside continued.

"Damn it," called Shep, "you'd better bring her out while I've got them in the humor."

Ted began moving the furniture away from the door. Martha's hands went to her hair in the first consciously feminine gesture she had made for days. Ted took her hand, opened the door, and led her through.

EVEN as dirty and disheveled as they were, they made a handsome couple, and caught the fancy of the regiment at once. The soldiers caught hold of them, lifted them on their shoulders, carried them to the Colonel, who was just coming into the courtyard, his revolver smoking in his hand.

It did not take much imagination to see that it would be unwise to trifle with the mood of the victorious army. The Colonel, who in Bolto had also held an office somewhat like that of justice of the peace, ordered them put down, and immediately performed a ceremony. On Martha's inquiring about Pepita, it seemed the cream of the joke to marry her at once to José, and this was done.

The three-minute ceremony was interrupted once by a soldier who rushed up to say he had found the body of the Don. The bride and groom hastened their responses, and everyone went to look.

He and Shira lay together at the corner of the barracks, both quite dead. His

second shot had pierced her heart as she clung to him, but his body was quite unscarred. Surprise had been her only weapon, and surprise had been sufficient. When the unthinkable happened, when he was attacked by one of his own peons, and a woman besides, a member of the race which he and his ancestors had conquered and for four generations ruled and despised, his heart had stopped. He had for weeks demanded of it the impossible, and this was too much. Death had smoothed out the wrinkles in both their faces, and left them looking calm, noble, and fulfilled.

Martha and Ted had no time to exchange any words on their new state of matrimony. There was a new crop of wounded for her to treat, and he had to assist the Colonel in bringing order out of confusion, burying the dead, organizing the resources for the trip back. The loot, thanks to Pedro, was below expectation, but they found one chest with enough in it to satisfy what remained of the men. Orders were given to use most of the food in an enormous feast to be held that evening, and to be ready to start on the homeward trip with the dawn.

COROTIZO refused to bury the last master of Rancho Ultimo, but laid him instead on the altar of the bare stone chapel, and sealed the door, that his bones might forever witness to the glory of Corotizo. There was not enough left of his army to be much of a problem, and it was decided to take a few prisoners back to Bolto to testify.

Not until late that night, after the feast, after the gorged and exhausted soldiers had gone to sleep, Ted found time at last to seek Martha out in the barracks, and ask her to walk with him to the edge of the cliff where they could be quiet.

"You know," he said, "Corotizo tells me that ceremony was not binding, so you don't have to be married to me if you don't want to. I thought you might like to know right away."

"But I want it to be binding," said Martha.

It was a long time before they spoke again, and then only because a stocky shadow came and joined them in the darkness.

"Getting on all right?" asked the irrepressible Shep.

"Listen, Shep," Ted answered: "Martha and I are going back to live in the States. We've had enough blood and thunder to last us. I'll get a job in a nice city that's not too big and not too small, a nice dull job, and we'll have a house with a garden in the back, and the kids will go to public school and ride their bicycles around the block, and she'll be on the board of the local hospital, and I'll be a Rotarian, and every now and then we'll see a movie about the tropics and we'll say: 'How silly! Things like that couldn't happen!'"

"IT sounds wonderful, darling," said Martha. "Shep, you'll come with us, won't you?"

"Well," said Shep, apparently a little embarrassed, "I was kind of figuring I'd stay here."

"Stay here? In Parador? Why, Shep, you can't do that. These people don't know that they are living unless they have their lives in danger."

"What's the matter with that?" asked Shep.

"It seems to me," said Martha stiffly, "that there is more to life than just throwing it away."

"It's this way. Corotizo wants me to help him reorganize his army. He's going to be a big shot now, and it's work I can do. I like these people. I'd kind of like to help them out."

"Shep." Ted asked warningly, "you haven't gone and got politics, have you?"

"Or religion?" Martha murmured.

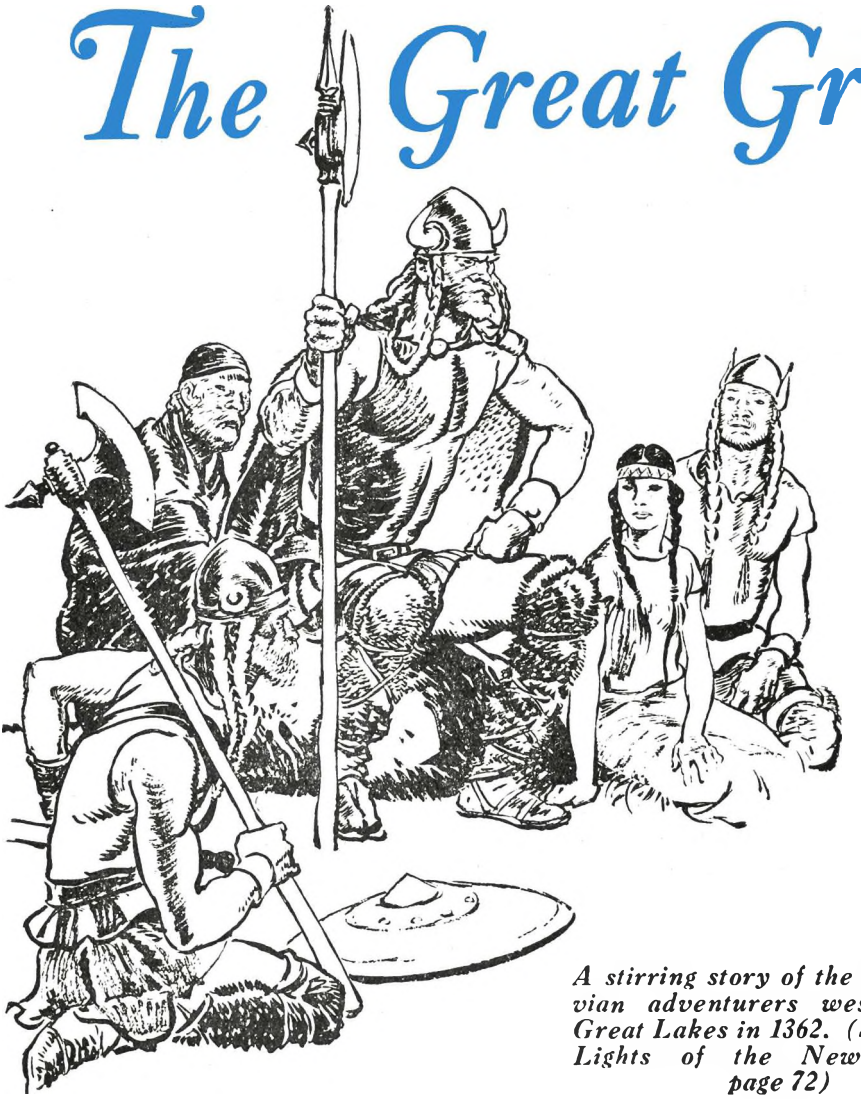
From the long silence they could tell that Shep was really embarrassed now. "Nuts," he said at last. "Nothing like that. Only when guys know so well how to die, you like to give them something worth dying for."

He lumbered off into the darkness before they could make any more embarrassing comments.

Ted and Martha silently moved closer together and time stood still for them as they leaned there on the haunted stones, with death all about them, and life springing out of death—as it does everywhere, but without a mask in the tropics. The great stars swung slowly above them, and they needed no words in the gentle immensity of the night.

George Agnew Chamberlain, who was born in Brazil and who has to his credit many successful books like "When Beggars Ride" and "Night at Lost End," has written for us another fine novel of South America, which will appear in an early issue.

The Great Grim



A stirring story of the Scandinavian adventurers west of the Great Lakes in 1362. (See "High Lights of the New Books," page 72)

PAUL KNUTSSON, busily furbishing ax and helm, was conscious of a pause in the steady chip-chipping of chisel on stone. He glanced at the man working on the huge flat rock beside the fire, and his deep voice launched out upon the darkness.

"Tired of your job, Magnus?"

"Tired? I've scarcely begun; it'll take another day to finish," came the cheerful response. "I've lost track of the time, Paul. How many days since we left the ship?"

"Twenty-eight days; but we've covered only fourteen day-journeys of seventy-five miles each, so make it fourteen journeys. How much have you finished?"

"I'll read it to you. Not the runes, of course, but their message," said Magnus the priest. His voice rose on the night air, recounting what the chisel had already bitten into the face of the stone.

"*8 goter ok 22 norrmen. . . .*Eight Swedes and twenty-two Norsemen on exploration from Vinland round about the west. We camped by two islands, one day's travel north from this stone—" Magnus paused. "That's all so far. Next comes about the ten dead men, and the ship we left at the great bay."

"Don't forget the date," added Knutsson. "The year is 1362."

The other sighed. "So long, so long! It was 1355 when we sailed from Bergen. Then to Iceland, and three years searching Greenland for the lost colony. Then to Vinland, two years; and two years more sailing around this island and into the bay. It seems centuries!"

Captain

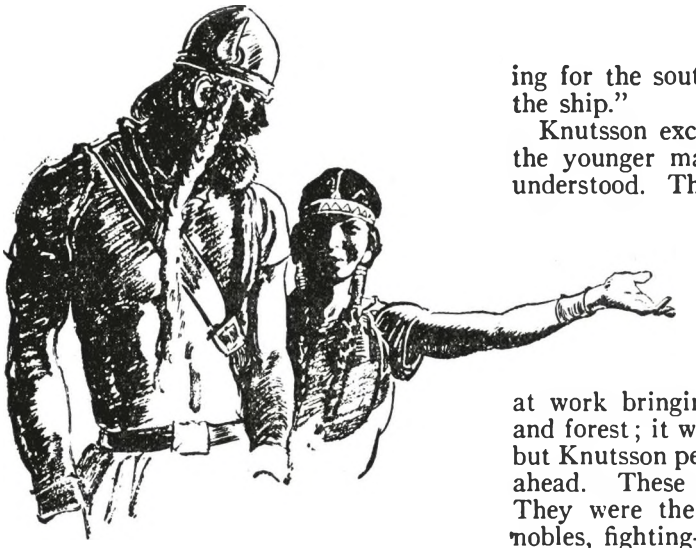
By GORDON KEYNE

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon

Knutsson made no reply, but kept grimly at work. He seemed somewhat more than man. Tall, of gigantic build, with an immense golden-red beard and long hair, he was a throw-back to the Vikings of three centuries earlier. Clad in leather like those who remained of his men, he bulked tremendous, a fitting figure to swing the war-ax with its six-pound head, that lay on his knees. More than mere bulk, however, was the massive, thoughtful, resolute line of brow and nostril and chin; here was a man who backed brawn with brain.

There was food enough for the bitter thoughts that lay behind his frowning eyes this night. Seven years ago! Then he had been a man of fifty, one of the greatest in Norway, judge of the high court, wealthy, commander of the king's bodyguard, famous for his sea-voyages. Hence King Magnus gave him charge of this expedition to discover and re-establish the lost remnants of the Greenland colony; gave him a great *knorr*, a royal trading-ship, and two war-galleys, with his pick of the finest men in the combined realms of Norway and Sweden. Nothing was stinted, all was of the best.

And now what remained? Gone were years of vain search and travel. Here were thirty men, a thousand miles south of the great inland sea or bay where the remaining galley had been left. Ten others had just been killed by savages—a day's journey north, seventy-five miles.



"She can guide us to her own people," thought Magnus.

Now the party was once more fishing and hunting desperately for food, before pitching on to the south. . . .

Voices drifted in across the water; the canoes were returning. Knutsson heard the voice of his foster-nephew, Ivar, uplifted in a ringing shout. Magnus the priest abandoned his rune-chipping and flung brush on the fire. Knutsson laid aside his arms and stood up, a huge flaming shape in the firelight. The canoes landed, a rush of men came up from the landing on the island beach, and the astonished Knutsson looked for the first time on Broken Arrow, heedless of the clamoring men trying to tell him about her.

A woman clad in torn, ragged, blood-stained garments of doeskin and in beaded moccasins. A woman light in color, haggard, emaciated, yet so inwardly alight with happiness, with some high emotion and with a blazing spirit, that Knutsson was dumfounded. All the savages so far encountered were bitter enemies; this woman was, obviously, friendly. She was dripping wet.

"We found her swimming toward this island." Ivar pushed forward to speak. "She laughed and pointed to the fireglow. What does it mean, Uncle?"

Knutsson had no reply. Her words were meaningless, her gestures told nothing. Yet she was aglow with friendship, with happiness, with glad emotion. And her steady eyes, her mobile, expressive features, hinted at a woman worth while, a friend who might have value.

"Magnus! Feed her and see what you can make of her," said Knutsson, and turned. "Well, Ivar, what luck?"

"Splendid. The canoes are laden down with game and fish. We can get the meat smoked tomorrow and be off next morning for the south—or for the north and the ship."

Knutsson exchanged a long look with the younger man, at these words. He understood. The men were already hard at work bringing up their loot of lake and forest; it was no time for discussion, but Knutsson perceived there was trouble ahead. These were no ordinary men. They were the pick of two countries; nobles, fighting-men, demigods who had survived seven years of battle by sea and land against nature, savages, and the blank unknown, men with a great epic behind them and a greater one ahead.

Ivar, although he had taken the name of Knutsson in compliment to his foster-uncle, was not of similar type or looks. He was smaller; eighteen when they left Norway, his silky beard betrayed youth, his smiling warm eyes betrayed a sunny eagerness of life. Yet, except for Knutsson or the gigantic Malkom Gordenson of Bergen, he was more than a match for any of them at wrestling or weapon-play. He had an incredible agility in his steel muscles, and a sharp wit that was worth more than brawn.

"Pass the word that we'll settle plans in the morning," said Knutsson. "To talk with weary men is to talk with birds."

Ivar laughed and went his ways. But to the leader came the dour, shoulder-broad Asbiorn Heldredson of Laxolm. He tapped Knutsson on the shoulder and looked into his face with those bitter and grimly uncompromising eyes; the two hated one another.

"So, Paul! No lack of meat now. No excuse for going on," he said. "Lead us farther, and upon you will rest the curse of leading us to death. That is, if you live to lead us farther!"

Here was open threat. Knutsson met it in his own way.

"Remember the old saw," he said amiably: "'Curse a wealthy man, and you curse the devil; kill a wealthy man, and you kill God.'"

ASBIORN bared his crooked teeth in a snarl.

"You have a wise saw for everything, eh? So you're the wealthy man here!"

"I am the leader by the King's commission and by my own might," said Knutsson. "Whether devil or god, depends on the viewpoint. Hello! Who bruised your cheek, Asbiorn?"

"Your cub Ivar, when I would have killed the savage woman as she swam. You'll repent it if you don't kill her, I warn you!"

"So? You'll repent it if you do." Knutsson kicked the ax. "And with a bruise that will be cured only by worms, I warn you in turn! Now forget disputes, comrade. We'll come to an agreement in the morning."

"We'll never come to agreement this side of hell," said Asbiorn Heldredson, and turned away.

THE camp was up with the dawn and hard at work smoking meat and fish.

"How do you know her name is Broken Arrow?" Ivar demanded. Magnus the priest smiled. He was a sturdy fellow of forty, handier with sword than with crucifix, but he had kept them all up to the mark of Christian men during these years.

"She showed me. Also, she comes from the south; she had been captured by some savages in these parts, had escaped upon hearing of white men, and deliberately sought refuge with us. True, this is partly conjecture, but her gestures were plain to follow. Her people are called Mandan."

"Decidedly, you're a sorcerer!" exclaimed Ivar, laughing. He looked up and saw Broken Arrow approaching, and his voice died out. She had helped to cut up the venison, expertly, and was coming from washing in the lake.

What a difference from the haggard creature of the previous night! As by magic, her uncouth skin garments had assumed a new grace; they were mended and cleansed, her hair was in two raven braids, her face had a fresh beaming radiance, her dark eyes held a compelling intelligence, grave but alert.

Ivar saluted her, and she laughed under his admiring gaze.

"Young, by her teeth," said Magnus.

"What? You judge her as you would a horse?" Ivar broke into a laughter that was stilled by a sudden commotion, and his uncle's voice lifting in a call. He took Magnus by the arm. "Come along! We'll need all your wisdom to avoid trouble; the men want to turn back."

"So do I," said the priest quietly, and followed. The Indian woman trailed along, her intelligent face curious, and took a seat behind him in the circle of men crowded about Paul Knutsson. Except for those smoking the meat, all were gathered here, around him.

Bearded faces intent, eyes hungry, they watched him. Ivar watched them. Except for the gloomy giant, Malkom Gordenson, and two or three others, he saw the same look in all those faces; resolve to force a return to the ship. Nor did Ivar blame them, nor Knutsson.

"This council is open," said the latter, gravely poised, "to decide upon our course. When we left the ship at the end of the great bay and set off to follow up the huge river,* I ordered the men to wait two months; and if we were not back within that time, to make their return to Vinland along the coast, as we came. That period is nearly half gone. Either we turn back here, or we do not." It was like him to open by attack; his were always direct methods.

Asbiorn stood up, swift to accept the challenge.

"There is no need of discussion, of wise saws, of arguments," he said with a fleer. "Let us go back a little to get our situation aright. When we were in Greenland, two years out from home, our big ship the *Halthorda* sank, taking most of our provisions and equipment with her. We went on, willingly. At Vinland we found no trace of the Greenlanders; one of our two remaining ships went on the rocks. We pursued the way, as you bade, around the great island of Vinland."

"Which has proven not to be an island," assented Knutson grimly.

Asbiorn went on: "We agreed that we might cross the island from the rear. Good! We came into the great bay and sailed south—only to find that the shore turned northward again. We found the big river, left the ship, came up the river to explore. Now we turn back."

KNUTSSON glanced around the circle of men.

"Do you all wish to return to Vinland?" he asked. There was a sharp, fierce yelp of assent, against which the dissenting voices of Ivar, Malkom and a few others made feeble play.

"I agree," said Knutsson calmly. "I too vote for Vinland."

He paused, amid stares of amazed incredulity, amid a stark, questioning

*Nelson River.

silence. In front of him was a large patch of dirt amid the stones; perhaps he had chosen the spot for this reason, because he now picked up his naked sword and leaned forward.

"But," he added, "I propose that we let the ship return, while we go on, to Vinland. Look at my reason for the proposal. Here is our position, far up among little lakes at the head of the big river, a thousand miles from the bay."

WITH his sword he began to trace in the dirt, pausing to gesture as he made his point clear. He indicated Vinland, somewhere far to the east on the other side of the "island," and the heavily wooded island of Markland, up north of it, and the estuary of an enormous river* between.

"This and other rivers in Vinland," he said, "flowed eastward. We have come part way around the whole island, which must be as large as Europe; this and other rivers hereabouts flow northward. We are at the end of this river. Therefore, if we go south a little way, we shall certainly come to rivers that flow southward or eastward. If they flow southward, then we have only to turn east and we shall come to those that flow eastward, and so to Vinland. In fact, we must be very close to them. Do you get the point?"

Not all got it. The intelligence of men of affairs, in that day, did not run to education or charts; Magnus was the only one of them all who could read or write. Yet the logic of the thing gradually made itself felt to all.

"Why should we retrace the weary way down this river, a thousand miles?" struck in Knutsson suddenly, seeing Asbiorn gather himself to object. "Our men at the ship can work it around by the northern coasts without trouble, to Vinland; not this summer, for the summer is drawing to an end. They may have to winter on the ice, as we did coming hither. Meantime, we march overland to Vinland, with game in plenty."

There was a quick outburst of enthusiasm, which angered Asbiorn. He sprang up.

"It is easy to see why King Magnus gave you command of this party, Paul Knutsson! You have a brain that drives here and there like a ferret, dragging out fine reasons to suit your own desires. What if we find no rivers flowing eastward? What if the ship is lost?"

Knutsson smiled. "If we find not the rivers we know are there, what shall we find? If the ship be lost, then we're the gainers." His smile vanished, and his blue eyes iced. "You fool! Should we fight our way back a thousand miles through savages who have gathered behind us? You well said that King Magnus gave me command; you well said why! Now it is my counsel that we go on to Vinland as I have said. Who agrees?"

Hot assent burst up on all sides. Asbiorn had lost his followers in a moment.

"Very well," he said dourly. "I agree, against my better judgment."

The Indian woman touched the arm of Magnus, and spoke. She looked at them all, and at Knutsson. She took an arrow from one man, pretended to break it, pointed to herself. She pointed to the sun, gestured repeatedly. Magnus, who had a gift for such things, translated.

"I think she says she comes from the south and west. Look! She knows what you were talking about, Paul!"

So, it seemed, she did. With a stick, she touched the map, and pointed to the water. Ivar, watching, began to comprehend; she was talking about the flow of rivers.

"She can guide us to her own people," thought Magnus—and he said so to Knutsson. "And there the rivers run to the south or east. That's what I make of it, Paul."

Malkom Gordenson, the gloomy lean man stood a head taller than most, stood up and yawned.

"Plague take all this jabbering!" he said. "Paul, give the orders, and we obey. If we end in Vinland as you think, all's well. If we end in hell, we have Magnus the priest to shrive us and lead us out again. I've got to mend my skin boots; footgear's the most important thing, whichever way we travel."

In a volley of laughter, the council ended; and if Asbiorn were ill pleased, that was his bad luck.

LATER, when Ivar and Knutsson went out in their turn to cut wood for the smoke-fires, Ivar laid aside his ax and spoke freely.

"Tell me something, Paul. What's your real reason for going on?"

Knutsson, combing his flaring beard with huge fingers, smiled.

*The St. Lawrence.

"Do you know what the interior of this huge land is like?"

"No."

"We shall find out. New land, new horizons! Could I turn back now?" The glittering blue eyes kindled. "Who knows what we may discover? So far as that goes, my reasoning was sound; we shall return to Vinland eventually, if we keep on."

IVAR thrilled to the words, to the revelation. Further search for the Greenlanders was hopeless. Return to Vinland was problematical. But here was an unknown land to be explored—a new horizon no white man had ever seen!

"And," added Knutsson abruptly, "here we are kings."

"If we live," said Ivar. "Remember the sickness of the bones that came upon Thorgild Lagmanson, and how we buried him under the high black rock with a wide white streak by the wide lake?* Remember the ten men we buried so recently. Is such kingship worth while?"

Knutsson looked at him. "I return the question. Is it? Or is Norway better, with broad lands and fat cows?"

"Right, right! But you are alone in the world; others are not."

Knutsson nodded. "I understand. When my wife died, years ago, I swore there would be no other woman for me; it was an oath. But I saw the look in your eyes, in the eyes of the others, when this woman came among us."

"True." Ivar did not dissemble. "She's not like any of the savage women we've seen. She is neat, clean, intelligent . . . she might be one of us. Magnus says she has a soul."

"Even Magnus?" Knutsson frowned. "We must leave her here. We cannot take her with us."

"What?" Ivar stiffened. "But she'll guide us to her people!"

"We need no guide. I say she stays here."

"You can't do this thing!" Ivar flung up his head and met the lightning-look steadily. "She sought our protection; she has guested with us. She's been working with us all morning, happy, glad, an obvious friend. More, she'll gain us protection and welcome from her own people; they must be far more civilized than most of the stone-savages we've met."

"Look." The ruddy giant, usually of few words, unbent. "We've seen only savage women; our men are not monks like Magnus, used to quenching passions. Inside two days, this woman will have us at swords'-point!"

"She's not that kind."

"We are. Or most of us are. Even now, you want her with all your heart! Do not deny it?"

Ivar caught his breath, scorning to lie before those blue eyes.

"Not as you mean it," he said slowly. "Not in mere lust. Not today or tomorrow. But if the things I see in her prove true, if she is the one in a thousand I believe her to be, then yes! Not for a savage mate, but for a wife with the priest's blessing."

"Well answered; does she desire you?"

"Who knows?" Ivar laughed suddenly. "If she desires any man, I want her not."

Knutsson's face cleared. "Well said! She goes with us. Now get to work."

The axes rang upon the high trees.

Magnus went on with his chip-chipping, for he must have the inscription cut ere night. The big flat stone, said he, would remain forever as a memorial to the ten dead men. The fish and meat smoked and smoked into curing. But the presence of Broken Arrow made the camp a new place, made these bearded warriors different men.

Ivar saw it plainly enough, in a dozen ways. The camp was straightened up, the men took some care of their appearance; voices had a different ring. Einar Onarheim and the other Swedes, who had all been champions of the king's bodyguard and were the bowmen of the party, took to replenishing their stock of arrows because the woman took keen interest in this work, marveling at the iron heads and the manner of feathering the shafts. There was more laughter in the camp this day than for weeks past.

Only Asbiorn Heldredson of the broad shoulders laughed not, but sat apart, whetting ax and sword and spear-points, and his eyes were angry.

DAY and night, watch had to be kept, for the island was no more than a point of land divided from the shore by shallows, and the smoke of the fires would draw lurking redskins. Sunset came, darkness came. The fish and meat were cured and cooked and packed; they made ready the four canoes, stowed everything, and were in shape to break camp at dawn.

*Lake Nipigon.

Unexpectedly, Ivar found himself freed. . . . She was there,

Ivar had the dawn watch. It was dark and chill out there at the shallows. He sat with shield and spear; the starlight was dim, for the dawn-mists were beginning to lift from the water. His ears were of more use than his eyes here. He sat absolutely motionless.

He heard not a sound, but he was aware of something moving. It startled him. Not on the water, but close by. He shifted a little, caught a breath of relief, and then heard her low voice on the heels of it; a voice like the sound of a harpstring just touched. Barely in time, he held back his spear-thrust. She was beside him, her finger to his lips.

He thrilled to her touch, to her closeness; an anguish of mad desire took hold upon him; it was seven years since any of them had seen a white woman. She, somehow, had all the attributes of his own kind; spirit, intelligence, a springing, soaring individuality. As the priest Magnus expressed it in a word, she had a soul. It meant much, to men who had companioned only with brute savages these long years.

Then it was gone. He was himself again, alert and warily watchful; he would not yield easily to such emotion, he told himself scornfully. His senses leaped to a new pricking of alarm. She had a reason, she was not here for nothing. She had laid a knife-blade across his hand, in silent warning. Something astir on the water; a mere blurred something. And it was close. The knife-blade pressed his hand more firmly; silence!

Danger? He strained to see. No, there was nothing; the blur was gone when he looked for it, as a dim star is gone under direct vision. The sweep of dark water was empty. He sensed that she, too, was leaning forward upon bated breath, uncertain yet dreading, and he was glad of this. He could not waken the camp upon vague fears like a nervous boy. He waited.

This was nearly his bane. Silently, with hardly a ripple of water, it happened. A shape uprose in the mist, another and another; a dozen of them, all at once. She was caught by surprise, too. His ringing alarm-shout drowned her cry. He was up and at them, his spear driving at the closest figure and driving home. A death-whoop shattered the echoes of his shout.

the woman—in her hand the knife she had found in camp.

Like wolves, they were around and upon him. His shield caught the swing of a stone ax, dashed an assailant aside; his spear drove in and out. It went clear through a naked shape. He stooped to free the spear and the loose stones rolled underfoot; two of those redskins were upon him full weight, flint knives jabbing. He fell headlong. Others pulled him into the shallows and he clutched frantically at his sword. A stone ax smashed down upon his neck with paralyzing force.

Unexpectedly, he found himself freed. A warrior above him yelped in agony, and blood spurted warm. She was there, the woman—in her hand the knife she had found in camp, steel biting in hot fury as she flung herself amid the dripping shapes. Ivar came to one knee, wavered dizzily, got his sword clear of scabbard.

She fell against him as an ax crunched into her. Then, suddenly, Ivar was on his feet, sword slashing left and right—a weapon such as the red men knew not. It clove them, flesh and bone. They struggled at him with club and ax and flint, the sorry edged stones hacking at him; the blue steel hewed relentlessly, cleaving and stabbing.

Lights flickered; voices rose roaring. Knutsson and the others were coming on the run, torch and spear ready. For one long moment the horde of naked dripping redskins were revealed against the misty background; they stood briefly; stone axes swung and clattered on helm and shield. Then they were gone, with despairing yell and swift splash.

The torch-flare picked up Asbiorn, hip deep in the water, locked with a red naked shape that clung and stabbed. It fell away under his keen edge. Snorting like a horse, Asbiorn turned and waded back to shore. The attack was broken.

"She saved me," said Ivar, helping her up. "They had me down; she fought them back. Somebody look for my spear and shield. . . . Here, give me a hand with her!"

The axes had hurt her, as they had hurt him; but in the torchlight he saw that she was laughing. They all crowded back to the camp, and he told of the happening.

"A Valkyr, this woman!" said lean Malkom Gordenson, beaming upon her

as he aided her to walk. "A proper warrior's mate; I may take her for myself."

"Think twice," said Ivar, looking at him across her drooping shoulders.

Malkom grinned and then whistled between his buck teeth.

"Say you so? Time will tell," said he in his dour way.

They laid her by the fire and bandaged her hurts. It proved that she had stolen the knife from Einar Onarheim the Swede, who was furious upon learning his loss; but his anger passed, and he shook his long yellow hair in a laugh.

"Not bad, not bad! Let her keep it, and I'll have a good claim upon her," said he.

"Life is the first claim," Ivar rejoined, and taking the knife from her, tossed it to the Swede. "Keep your own; she shall have mine instead."

Einar took the knife, and a snarl bared his teeth; but he turned away and said no more. Paul Knutsson, watching and listening, laid his own skin mantle over the woman.

"She is no thrall; she has earned her keep," said he. "If there is any talk of claims, let her first make it."

"It is easy to see that a bear knows its own cub, as the saying goes," said Asbiorn Heldredson. For a moment Knutsson met his steady gaze of hatred, then turned away without response.

Ivar, holding water to the lips of Broken Arrow, looked into her eyes and smiled. Knutsson saw this too, and again held his peace; but his heart was heavy with foreboding.

THE days slid past in hard travel, by stream and portage. Now they traveled by river, now by lakes; the plenitude and size of these lakes astonished the northmen. Owing to the frequent portages and the weight of equipment carried, their progress was slow.

The general belief was that they were heading south and east. Knutsson knew better. Ivar, seeing the captain working each night on a laborious check-up of the day's course, suspected somewhat amiss, but asked no questions; to determine the precise direction of such travel was difficult. Asbiorn Heldredson, however, while making no further bids for support among his comrades, now and again growled covert hints that they were being led to doom; he, too, knew a bit of direction-work, glowering over every change in the trail. Knutsson, watching the broad-shouldered Laxolmer as he watched everyone and everything, knew that trouble lay in wait. For it was Broken Arrow who guided their course in general.

She had amazed them all by her fortitude, her gay acceptance of hardship. With two broken ribs and a dozen minor hurts, the way was hard for her except when she could sit in a canoe; this was not always. Yet she ever had a gay laugh and a sparkling eye for all. She had picked up a few words of Norse, had taught Magnus the priest a few words of her own tongue, and he could talk with her a little.

Still, Knutsson, watching her, was not sure of her guidance, of her knowledge. She was honest enough, but he could sense odd hesitations in her. He did not blame her for making use of them in her extremity, nor did he care a jot that their road was assuredly not leading them back toward Vinland.

FROST hung in the air of nights and shadows slanted ever more northward. Days became weeks. A restless tension crept upon the whole party; tempers grew short, quarrels were more frequent.

All this while they saw no more savages; but rains and flooded marshlands irked them sore; for days together they waded through swamps where the canoes would not float. Broken Arrow pointed them forward in assumed confidence, and Knutsson obeyed her grimly.

Curiously enough, he saw his own secret ambitions furthered by a trivial matter. Broken Arrow and Magnus the priest shared a mutual talent which aided their comprehension. With a burnt stick and a scraped hide they would draw pictures; it became a sort of game, with the others crowded around to watch.

The woman—or rather child, since she was little more than a slim slip of a girl—often sketched in this fashion strange animals, and in particular a shaggy, humped monster with curved short horns, of great size. One evening they were at this, and she was making them understand that in her country these and other creatures abounded.

"Ha!" cried out lean Malkom Gordenson. "There's proper hunting, lads! If she speaks truth, I'd give a year of life to get a spear into such beasts as these!"

After this, they talked much of the Mandan country and began to look forward eagerly to it and its wonders. She gave them further insights into the life

of her people, describing how savage faces were painted for war, showed them much they had not known about those coppery folk; hitherto they had enjoyed only the contact of savage warfare with the stone people.

Now, during three days together, they carried the canoes through trees, skirting a line of low hills, seeking water and finding none. That night they camped on a hillock above a spring, and Knutsson announced a two-day halt.

"We need meat," said he, "and also water to swim the boats."

"And a river flowing south or east," put in Asbiorn.

The captain ignored him.

"Tomorrow we scatter, hunt, seek water," he went on. "It is my rede that ten keep the camp, twenty go out in parties of four. There have been signs of savages these past two days, so be wary."

It was thus agreed. Later, Magnus the priest came to Knutsson and Ivar, who sat together, and spoke of Broken Arrow.

"She is trying to tell me something," he said. "I think it is that we are close to her own country; I cannot be sure. But she talks of enemies around us."

"Like enough," said Ivar. "Our smoke will draw them. We'd better get somewhere soon. There was snow in the air today. We might find winter quarters among the Mandans."

"More than that," said Knutsson, pawing his huge beard. The three of them sat alone. "Aye, more than that! Magnus, you were saying the other night that her people till the ground and raise crops."

"So I gathered from her pictures," said the priest.

"But look what it means!" exclaimed Knutsson, a gleam in his eyes. "With our aid, with our weapons, her people can be supreme among these stone men! To them, we are like the gods who came from Valhalla of old! We shall teach them our way of life, for we shall be kings among them. We shall teach them to sow and reap, to build houses, to erect a town—"

HIS visioned speech was checked by Magnus.

"Paul, you forget whither we go! What of Vinland and home?"

"Vinland!" Knutsson's voice held scorn. "It won't run away. Home! What does it mean to any of us? Nothing, after seven years. We could never bide at home now, and grow old telling tales around the winter fire of what we have seen, where we have been! Devil take all that! Here we are kings. Let us act like kings! —Hello! What's up?"

From the group of men about the fire came a surging snarl and growl, like the furious growl of beasts. A swirl of motion, a sudden clash of steel, the sharp cry of Broken Arrow. Ivar was up and darting at the group.

Knutsson was ahead of him, bursting in upon the struggling mass with a roar of fury. He scattered them, dashed Einar Onarheim headlong into a tree and dropped him senseless, glared at them like Thor in wrath. Einar had caught up the girl, it seemed, to carry her off into the forest; another man had intervened; blood had almost been spilled there. Now, in sullen shame, the party broke up and sought their rest.

WITH morning, Broken Arrow had disappeared; she was gone.

Knutsson did not discover this at once. With daybreak, the five parties were up and off on their hunt, Ivar among them. Only when those remaining in camp, with Knutsson, came to get about the day's work, did they discover that Broken Arrow was gone. She had taken nothing with her, except the knife Ivar had given her. The men were all for getting on her trail, but Knutsson dissented.

"Let her go, and good riddance!" said he. "We have our work to do here, and no time to lose. Down trees, get the camp fortified! Cut wood for the fires, get the boats mended with bark and pitch; without the boats, mind, our return is cut off! We can't be caught by some wandering party of savages. To work!"

He drove them savagely, himself setting the example, but he was glad that Ivar was gone and knew nothing of the woman's disappearance.

Ere noon, came grim earnest of the need, for one of the men went too far afield and they found him with an Indian flint-pointed arrow through his gullet; he was stripped and hideously hacked. Knutsson buried him there, and after this they kept sharp watch and ward, but no further attack was made.

This was their first loss in a long time, and it plunged them all into sober gloom. Knutsson, mindful that Broken Arrow had tried to warn them, kept all hands busy felling trees to make a breastwork about the little knoll, and hoped most desperately that the scattered parties of hunters would not be caught off guard.

Two of the parties came in that night, laden down with meat; toward noon of the second day came Asbiorn and his three. Eight remained out, including Ivar. But Knutsson now had something else to occupy him.

Asbiorn dumped his load of meat by the smoking-fires, washed his broad shoulders of the blood, and came to where Knutsson was cutting up.

"Enough of that, Paul," said he. "I have news for you."

"Very well," rejoined the captain. "Get into your clothes; a naked pelt tempts arrows."

Asbiorn armed, a glint of triumph in his deep shrewd gaze. Knutsson was aware of it, and laid aside his knife and other weapons; he knew the time had come, and dared not trust himself with edged steel.

"Come away from the fires among the trees," he said to Asbiorn. "What we have to say is better said between us two."

Fear shook in him; his thought was that Asbiorn had met Ivar in the forest and had killed him. Few men could match sword-edges with Asbiorn of the wide shoulders.

Asbiorn laughed in his beard, harshly, and they walked off together a little out of the camp among the quiet trees. Then Asbiorn swung around.

"Long speech holds no luck," said he. "Now I have you by the ear, as a hound takes the boar! Three hours' march south of here is a little lake. From it flows a stream, and the stream widens—and it flows southward."

"Good news never dulls sword-edge," said Knutsson amiably. He was hugely relieved to hear no talk of Ivar. "Why should this pinch me?"

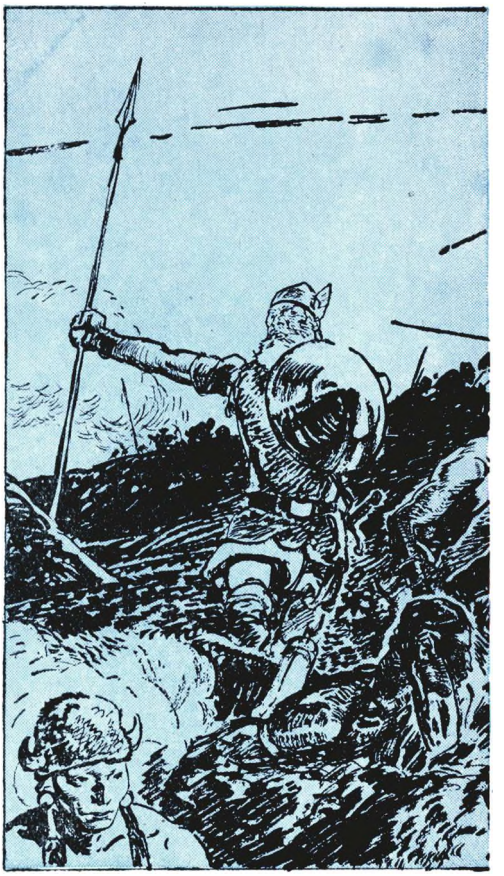
Asbiorn glowered upon him. "Do you mean to march to this stream or not?"

"Maybe." The captain pawed his flaming beard. "Before the sun rises, it is hard to tell what the day will be."

The other exploded in an oath of fury. "You and your wise sayings! No evasion now, Paul Knutsson; you can't escape decision! I know well you have no intention of seeking Vinland."

"Aye? We've been on the march," said Knutsson calmly.

"Whither? Not south nor east; devil take you and your savage girl! I've watched well. All this while we've been working westward and south, but mostly to the west. You know it well; speak up like a man, not like a lawyer!"



The wave of smoke and flame raced on toward the horizon, and on across the blackened ground came the Sioux.

It was hard for the captain to hold down his anger, but he did it.

"That may be. We followed the woman's guidance; no harm if we went a little westerly. We're clear away from all waters flowing north; that is certain."

"Seven years we've been together; and each year I've liked you less," said Asbiorn. "Yet I never thought you a liar, till now. So the word stings, eh? You're not seeking Vinland, and you know it."

"I'm acting as I deem best for all of us." Knutsson's blue eyes swelled with repressed fury. "It suits me ill to take liar's name from a landless rogue like you!"

Asbiorn swung up his spear as though to stab, but checked himself.

"What, no arms? I see, I see! You knew well my steel would not touch an unarmed man. But now things have gone too far." He flung down spear and knife, ripped off sword-belt, slavered out a torrent of oaths. "Now you'll have what's been waiting seven years!"

Knutsson's fist ended the word. Next instant they were blind and deaf to all around; a red mist settled upon their brains. They fought in the ferocity of utter hatred, like two aurochs battling in frenzied rage.

Blow upon blow, hammer-blows thudding across the still air; then the two giants locked in sheer blood-lust, tearing and rending at each other. They tripped across a long tree-root and toppled down, Knutsson undermost. His head smashed against the root. He relaxed and lay senseless. . . .

"Spat! Spat-spat!"

Arrows—a dozen shafts hitting all around. Asbiorn jerked upright to a spasm of pain. One arrow was through him. He saw a swarm of naked brown painted figures bounding in upon him. With one pealing yell, he dived for his spear and sword, scooped them up, leaped back to where two redskins were poised above Knutsson's figure. Asbiorn's spear stabbed; his battle-cry rose in a hoarse gasp.

He dropped the spear, whipped out sword, and fought. They were around him like dogs; they drew back from the sharp steel, and bowstrings twanged, and shafts flew down the sunlight.

He was still standing over the senseless Knutsson when men from the camp burst through the trees. The Indians melted away like shadows, all but four who were down. Asbiorn Heldredson dropping his sword, looked at the four and laughed his harsh laugh.

"A poor exchange! I thought I was worth more than that," he said.

It was his last word; a dozen shafts were through his body. As Knutsson was borne back to the hillock, war-whoops echoed up from the trees to right and left, arrows pelted down, painted shapes scurried among the tree-trunks.

The men barely reached camp. Luckily, the Swede bowmen covered them and sent the redskins yelping off; but the trees reechoed to savage whoops in all directions. It was no mere wandering war-party, but an attack in force. . . .

Toward sunset, Ivar and the seven men with him broke through the cordon.

Obviously, they had not been expected. The Indians were in full at-

tack, pouring arrows into the camp from two sides and attacking hand-to-hand on the third, sweeping in with axe and club. The whoops warned Ivar, who came in upon them from behind, with murderous work of spear and sword, and under the steel, the attack melted. It had cost the savages dear, and only two men slightly nicked by arrows within the camp.

Knutsson was one of the two, a shaft piercing his thigh and the barb tearing it badly. He made little of the hurt, but it was painful.

WHEN Ivar learned that Broken Arrow was clean gone, he looked hard at Einar Onarheim and was white about the nostrils.

"This is your doing," he said slowly. "If I had reached you first, the other night, you'd have had worse than a sore head."

"That score is paid," said Einar, with a grin, and jerked a thumb at Knutsson. "He got his skull bumped today. And better if I had twisted her throat, Ivar; she has brought her people down upon us."

"Her people?" echoed Ivar. "You're mad! These aren't her people!"

"Who told you so?" spoke up Malkom Gordenson. "It's clear enough, comrade. She brought us here to her own country, slipped away, and fetched her people to butcher us and take plunder of our weapons and goods!"

"She would not! She could not!" cried out Ivar impetuously.

His indignation died into a gloomy silence of forced acquiescence, as one voice and another was upraised; he hoped against hope, but had no argument to offer. Even Magnus the priest, yea, even Knutsson, agreed that the thing was too plain to be gainsaid.

"You've dazzled yourself, blinded yourself," growled Knutsson, "tricked by woman's guile! They're all alike. She gulled us, got us where she wanted us, and called in her people to finish us. Women play the devil's game, as the saying goes."

"Then you played her game," snapped Ivar. "You accepted her guidance!"

"Yes. I was tricked like the rest. Asbiorn—God rest him!—was right, lad. I'm thankful he died not by my hand. I was worried lest you come to grips with him. And now we're all gripped fast."

This was true enough, as the night proved. The redskins had suffered frightfully in that one mad assault; they kept afar from the breastwork during the night, now and again sending in a rain of arrows, but with the dawn-darkness made a sudden attack whose ferocity carried them over the bulwark and into the camp itself on three sides.

Now it was hard work, steel ax and sword against flint and numbers. In the end, steel won; the camp was cleared, the breastwork manned again, the painted bodies were flung outside, but two Swedes and three Norse were dead or dying of wounds.

After this bitter lesson, the enemy remained at distance, whoops ringing among the encircling trees, shafts pelting in harmlessly; they were here in force, daring no further assault but lurking close. Gripped, indeed! To set forth by these forest trails, even without the canoes, were suicide for the whites. Many were wounded, like Knutsson. During this day another man died by an unlucky shaft that pierced his eye. Luckily, water was close and could be obtained without peril, since the red men dared not stand before steel. Even so, it was only a question of time, unless the siege lifted.

Lift it did not. Another day dawned and wore to sunset; another man was dead, all were wounded. Spears and arrows flitted incessantly. Fire was set to the breastwork, but the trees were too green to burn.

No retreat, no evasion, nowhere to go; no more hand-to-hand work, just an eternal flitting of arrows, fierce whoops ringing from the trees, an occasional naked painted shape leaping briefly into view.

Another dawn came, chill with boding winter. Luckily, the camp was in meat.

IVAR, his left arm ripped from elbow to shoulder by an arrow, took spear and shield and commanded a sortie for water. Back without harm, he joined the captain, looked into the massive, calmly confident visage, and shook his head.

"Fifteen men on their feet, five unable to travel," he said glumly. "Is this the end?"

Knutsson, tearing at a strip of half-cooked meat, wiped his lips with the back of his hand and jerked a thumb at the sky.

"The beginning of the end. What does that say?"

Ivar looked at the gray sky and sniffed.

"Rain. Storm. And close, too!"

"Right. When rain comes, bows are useless. Ten hold the place, ten sally out and find the camp of these savages.

Destroy it, scatter them; then march south and east. Asbiorn found a lake and a river there."

"They'll follow."

"Perhaps. Why not? One who discovers, must risk going thirsty. As well die fighting, as here like a bear in his hole. Ha!" A raindrop, and another. "Get everyone ready. Let the rain drive down a while before starting. I remain here; you go."

Ivar took charge, picking the tall, saturnine Malkom and nine others to keep him company. The rain began to come down, then thickened into a bursting downpour. Which way to seek the savage camp? Westward, at a venture; the first assault had come from that quarter. Rain or no rain, arrows still pattered into the camp, but men on the move could not keep bowstrings dry.

THE storm thickened; the rain began to come in gusty torrents; amid the worst of these Ivar led out his companions, leaping the breastwork and breaking in among the trees at a run.

Yells guided them; even through the storm, an outburst of savage whoops was going up, off to the left. Ivar headed for it, met no one, and kept going in some surprise. He was in the lead, Malkom at his heels, when they burst through the trees into an opening on the banks of a stream—and stopped dead.

Savages, indeed; a hundred or more of them, struggling in a frenzied combat with their own kind. Groups fighting desperately with ax and spear, while torrential rain swept upon them. At sight of the white men, yells of dismay arose, the groups broke up. Some fled, others pursued, in wild flight and merciless slaughter.

What it meant, Ivar had no idea; still, while the savages were killing each other there was no sense in risking good lives. Swede Einar of the broad face growled oaths, lean Malkom and the others muttered.

Suddenly a yell burst from Malkom, as a group came toward them through the rain at a mad run.

"The witch! Now, by the saints, I'll have her life, woman or not, to pay for those she brought down to hell!"

He darted forward, his ax swinging. Others followed, as recognition came to them. Ivar, in spasmodic horror, saw that the approaching group was headed by Broken Arrow. She was running toward them, not in flight, but in greeting. The truth flashed upon him, as he leaped into action and went bounding to overtake Malkom.

His hoarse, panting scream reached the Bergen man. Malkom turned his lean face, grinned, planted himself to swing the ax as Broken Arrow came up to him. She, suspecting nothing of his intent, a glad cry on her lips, rushed in upon the ax-stroke. . . .

Ivar was first. He hurtled headlong into Malkom, sent man and ax asprawl in the mud; but nothing could stay the terrific force of that descending blade, as they all struck earth together. The war-ax smote Ivar's right leg below the knee and sheared through as though it had been pinewood.

Friends! She had gone, had brought her own people to the rescue; she had saved them all from certain death, scattering these other savages as the wind scatters dead leaves. And this was what came of it: Ivar, the young and radiant, a cripple for life; lean dark Malkom Gordenson sobbing over him in the rain and wind, and accusing himself in bitter remorse; Einar and the other men standing staring in stark horror as they realized the whole truth.

Not they, but the Mandan warriors, saved Ivar's life by twisting gut about the sheared leg and burning it, at Broken Arrow's swift command, and searing it with heated pine-pitch while he lay in a faint of agony. . . .

After this, it was the Mandan country for them all. Winter quarters, said Knutsson; a winter guesting that was to run on and on into the years, with Norway and Gotland and Vinland mere dim memories faded under the sunshine of women's smiles and drowned in the lusty prattle of blue-eyed children. For all, that is, except Knutsson, and Magnus the priest, who were men of their oaths.

FROM a lookout the cry arose: *"The Sioux are coming—are coming!"*

Paul Knutsson—they called him Red Hairy Face now—mounted to the rampart above the gate, where stood the Mandan chief Bear Mouth. The flaming red beard of Knutsson was grizzled, for it was more than seven years since he had come among these people, but he was lithe and powerful as ever.

He looked out across the fields of corn, now harvested and sere, to the dark mass of figures southward. His eye caught a glitter, then another. He turned to the Mandan chief.

"Those are not the Sioux. They are our own men coming back, our hunters. Send out everyone to meet them and help bring in the meat; but be sure that the scouts are relieved and kept well to the westward and eastward. The Sioux will circle to flank us."

Bear Mouth assented and moved away, his voice ringing at the excited throngs among the houses below. Obedience was prompt and unquestioning to any utterance of Red Hairy Face, who was as a god among these coppery folk. None the less every soul in this town, the Town of The Men as it was known, quivered to the ominous breath that had during these past weeks stirred among them like the whisper before the storm.

"The Sioux are coming—are coming!"

Ivar came mounting to the rampart nimbly, despite his maimed leg. Older and sturdier, he was full-armed; at his side pattered a boy of six, his son Ole.

"Not the Sioux after all, eh?" he exclaimed.

Knutsson shook his head.

"Our men coming from the bison hunt. You can see steel flash," he rejoined. Leaning on his spear, he surveyed the scene with complacent pride. "Let the Sioux come! We're ready."

"By all accounts, it'll be a fight," said Ivar, "and a great one! With their allies, they'll be numbered by the thousand. But the sooner their power is broken, the better. It's been shadowing our lives for years. Well, Paul, your great dream has come true. Even for Norway, this would be something worth while."

He too stood relaxed, and Knutsson nodded.

"Your doing, most of it. Never was a leg better lost, a future better won!"

THERE was reason for pride in the scene. The houses below, ranged in orderly streets about a central market-square, were like those of fisher-folk along the fiords of Norway; each was round, massively constructed and covered over with sod; the roof, with its central orifice for smoke, supported on heavy beams. Here in the prairies wood must be hauled from afar.

About the entire town ran this massive rampart of beaten earth between palisades; and outside this was a moat, fifteen feet deep by eighteen wide, half filled with water. The sole entrance was the stone-pillared gateway. With siege at hand, this was now blocked up and replaced by portable steps, with a narrow bridge across the moat. Inside the wall was a second ditch, not so large—less for defense than to supply the town's needs.

"These accursed Sioux have picked their time well," said Ivar, frowning. "We're badly in need of rain, and the wells have lowered; we can't fill the outer moat."

"Were all things perfect, the gods might become jealous," quoth Knutsson. "Think what destiny hangs upon this coming fight! If we win, the Sioux become discredited and powerless and broken. Where we have one town and a few hundred warriors, we shall have a dozen towns—the whole Mandan people, who have hesitated to follow the example of this town, will build and unify!"

"And if we lose?"

"We cannot lose!" exclaimed Knutsson with energy. "Life? Yes. We may die, as die we shall sooner or later. What matter? Our children remain. A dream cannot be destroyed; it will be picked up later and brought to perfection. I regret only one thing."

"I know," said Ivar: "That Magnus is not with us now."

Silence came upon them. The boy Ole ran along the rampart and joined the flood of women and children and old folk pouring over the moat to meet the returning hunters. These were coming slowly toward the town, evidently weighed down by heavy loads. It was the first of the fall hunts, and probably would be the last for this year, since the enemy was known to be close at hand.

"The Sioux are coming—are coming!"

Out of the twenty men who had come here with him seven years ago, Knutsson had buried only one; Magnus the priest. And here lay his sole regret. True, he had learned from Magnus how to make runes and to preserve the written word, but the priestly office could not be filled. He and the others taught the children what they themselves knew of the true faith, and this was all they could do.

"I'd better be getting down," said Ivar, stirring. "Have to get the drying-trays ready for the meat to cure. . . . Hello! Look to the west, Paul!"

Knutsson complied, shading eyes with hand. From this vantage-point they could see what no one else could descry, although the guards at the bastions would sight it in a moment or so: a moving dot far westward.

"A courier," said Knutsson, unexcited. "From the scouts. That means business. I'll see to getting in our men and the

meat; you spread the news inside and cause no alarm. Thank God, the holm is ready!"

Thus they usually spoke of the town among themselves; the Norse word *holm* or island well described this town of ramparts that rose amid the prairie sea.

Ivar left the rampart. He stumped off down the central street toward his own house. As he went, he spread the calm word that news was coming, that the Sioux were undoubtedly on the way. The few left in town received the report quietly enough, hastening to get ready the trays for curing the meat in the sun.

Few enough were left. All the other whites and the main body of warriors had gone on the hunt, risking everything for the sake of needed meat.

IVAR entered his house; two other of his children were playing at the door, and Broken Arrow was expecting her fourth child momentarily. A Mandan woman was with her now. Ivar told his news, holding the hand of Broken Arrow and meeting her gaze with a confidence he was far from feeling.

"The Sioux are coming!"

The words quivered in his own heart, too; not with fear, but with a dread expectancy of what, at best, must be faced. Old accumulated hatred, jealousy, the vicious ferocity an inferior race always cherishes toward a greater one—the Sioux were fighters, and had fighting allies, boasting that they would destroy the Town of The Men utterly.

The lodge was quiet and peaceful. Sunbeams struck down through the smoke opening in the center, across the empty fireplace of flat stones. About the walls were room-divisions and beds, the belongings of each person neatly contained in hide sacks. At one end was the high seat, as in Norway, for the head of the family.

"I must be busy, dear heart," said Ivar, rising at last. "Will you send me word when I am needed?"

"You're needed out there, not here," said Broken Arrow. "This is my affair, husband; if you receive no word, be assured that all goes well. However, I'll see that Ole finds you in case of need."

He stooped and kissed her, and taking up his weapons again, departed.

In the marketplace, by the central stone pillar of assembly, Bear Mouth and Knutsson were awaiting the tidings. Two of the guards, summoned to act as couriers, were stripped and ready to seek other Mandan centers with a demand for aid, and to bring in the scouts from the eastward. Ivar moved among the old squaws and children preparing the drying-pans, making pretense of keeping busy; but when he saw the courier top the ramparts, he joined the other men.

"You're needed out there," said Broken Arrow.

Naked, exhausted, lean as a dry cob, the courier came to them. Bear Mouth gave him a gourd of water; he rinsed his mouth, spat, and controlled his heaving lungs.

"The Sioux are coming." The ominous words were on his lips, were bitter fact at last. "How many, it is impossible to say; some thousands. Like a drifting herd of bison covering the earth. A few fugitives from the western villages joined us; there all the people save these were slain without mercy. They follow, with the scouts. Before the sun sets, the Sioux will be here."

Bear Mouth gestured to the two waiting runners. These, already prepared with messages, rose and went.

Knutsson spoke to the chief.

"When the hunters come in, make preparations to fire the cornfields and the

grass beyond; but whatever you do, wait until the final moment! Until sunset, if possible, until the Sioux are actually upon us! Let them be met with fire. The wind is from the east and north; it will go well."

Bear Mouth, a squat, powerful man of indomitable character, assented silently.

Silent, the entire populace of the town crowded the ramparts, watching.

To these hundreds, it was the approach of doom. They came, against the sunset, with a thudding of drums . . . a sea of men, savage, famed for their ferocity. Sioux warriors grouped by septs and medicine societies, flanked by more savage allies. War-bonnets flickered, voices uplifted. That anything could stand against these thousands of fighting-men seemed impossible.

SUDDENLY, here and there, smoke-puffs rose on the wind, as along the line hidden Mandan warriors blew firebrands alight. The dry standing corn caught like tinder, the dry prairie grass flew into a wall of smoke and flame that went rolling down the sky. In a moment, those serried ranks were covered from sight.

They scattered frantically, some trampling down the grass, others taking cover in dry wash or coulee, others running like deer to outflank the approaching wave of flame. But behind that rolling wave came picked young men of the Mandans, swift runners footed with green hide to carry them over hot ground and cinders. As the flame and smoky heat passed, they struck among the Sioux like a wave of slaughter. They carried only spears, stabbing in the Norse fashion, pausing not for combat but slaying and racing on to slay more. Then they were gone, speeding back to the town, leaving a windrow of dead or hurt figures. The wave of smoke and flame raced on toward the horizon, and on across the blackened ground came the Sioux—on to the very edge of the unsuspected moat, pushed on into it by those behind, halting at last in blank dismay, although some got across to make vain assault upon the high rampart.

Norseman and Mandan ranged that rampart, boy and woman stood with them. The waiting piles of arrows shrank. The twanging song of bowstrings deepened. The crowded ranks of painted warriors below died fast, as the singing shafts smote into them. They broke back at last like an ebbing wave, recoiling from the impossible, and those of them that remained alive were dispatched by arrows and spears in the last sunset light.

It was a bitter lesson, but it was only a lesson. With full night, the tiny campfires of the Sioux ringed the town afar; the darkness echoed to the sound of war dances and scalp dances. Daring warriors crept close to the moat, shouting challenge and insult or pelting arrows into the town. They got no answer.

That night, Ivar held his new-born son, while Knutsson baptized the babe and named him Magnus, and Broken Arrow smiled upon them in the firelight. Einar Onarheim and Malkom Gordenson and other old companions looked on. . . .

Day brought war in earnest. The assailants had no cover, yet they tried one attack, swimming the moat. Their fire-arrows could do no damage to the sod-covered houses, and such of them as reached the rampart found it faced with green hides; they suffered heavily and gave up this attempt after a while. But the Mandans, seeing the thousands who faced and circled their town on all sides, vented no exultant yells.

Three days passed, with arrows drifting on the air and the enemy staying afar, yet busy with some mysterious work in scattered bodies. On the third evening Knutsson called a council in his own capacious house. His companions were here, and the chief men of the Mandans.

"Tonight or tomorrow," he said, "we shall win or lose this game. The Sioux cannot keep up a siege; they cannot find food for so many men. They must strike with all their force, so let us expect the worst and meet it."

ONE after another spoke, this man jubilant and confident, that man doubtful. None had better advice than to fight on stoutly, until the lean giant Malkom took the word.

"It is in my mind," said he, "that luck avoids him who awaits the battle. If you have a plan, Paul, let us have it. It is better to give blows than to parry them."

Knutsson, stroking his beard, smiled a little, and turned to the Mandan chief.

"For two years and more," said he, "we have trained your best warriors to fight in our own fashion, Bear Mouth. They have shields of hide, as we have; the Sioux use no shields. They are trained to battle as we do, shoulder to shoulder, stabbing with spears from be-

hind the shield-wall. Tomorrow, when worst comes to worst, as I think it will, I shall lead these warriors and my own companions."

He told them, very simply, what lay in his thought.

AT his words, they were aghast. Ivar cried out against it, then bit his lip, realizing that the gamble must be taken. Malkom, Einar and the others exchanged quick glances, then nodded one by one. Bear Mouth and the other Mandans reflected in stony silence.

"My brother," said the chief at last, "if what you fear should come to pass, if by some strong medicine the Sioux should surmount the rampart, we can still fight on."

"Yes; that will be your share of it," said Knutsson. "Give me your picked warriors. They will die in good company, at the worst!"

"And at the best, will not you and they perish?" asked Bear Mouth stolidly.

"That may be; but our children will remain."

This was ever the one thought in Knutsson's mind, as Ivar well knew. This huge captain who had no children of his own, was passionately set upon the future of the sons his comrades had sired; to him, nothing else mattered.

"And," he went on, "remember that now we must not merely drive these Sioux away! We must give them such a dread lesson that never again across the centuries will they lift the scalp-cry against any Mandan! What we do is done for generations yet unborn."

"Let it be as you say," replied the chief. "The orders of Red Hairy Face shall be obeyed. I, too, have children."

When Ivar, later, told Broken Arrow what was to be done and that he must share in it like the others, and why, she said nothing for a long while. Then she held his hand against her cheek, and sighed lightly.

"It is nice to think that you will be waiting for me," she said. But, at the moment, he did not think what her words meant. Nor did he speak with her again, for he was summoned hurriedly in the dawn when the first attack came.

It came suddenly, with an ingenuity, a blazing ferocity, that all but won its way into the town. During the dark hours, hordes of Sioux had silently crept up to the moat on two opposite sides of the ramparts. In the dawn, they brought up huge lashed bundles of dry grass and reeds from beyond the burned sector; these were pushed into the moat, while the Sioux opened a tremendous arrow-rain that held the ramparts almost clear of defenders. Swimming and riding the bundles, the enemy gained the ramparts themselves, hauled more bundles across under cover of the arrow-fire, and with sunrise were on the ramparts, mounting on the bundles.

With this, the covering fire had to cease, at least in part, but it was maintained on other sections of the rampart while the twin attack was pursued with stubborn fury. Only the covering bastions saved the town in this moment, permitting a rain of missiles to be showered on the assailants. Only the Norse steel met and held the rising tide of assault that, time after time, gained foothold on the crest. As Knutsson had foreseen, the Sioux were resolved to conquer at this one stroke, and at all costs.

On one side, the attack was checked when fire was dropped on the grass bundles, consuming them; this method failed on the other side. Here the Sioux gained footing, mounting on piles of bodies. Knutsson drew out of the fray, his voice blared like a war-horn at his own men, and he turned to Bear Mouth.

"It is time. Give the orders."

All had been arranged in advance. Bone whistles shrilled. The trained Mandan warriors and the Norsemen drew out of the fight, leaving other warriors, women, boys, to ply bow and spear under Bear Mouth. Knutsson, heading his men, marched to the great pillared gate.

This was thrown open; the usual wooden bridge was run forward across the moat; the giant captain and his two hundred men, at a run, were out and across and charging full into the flank of the Sioux mass, before the enemy suspected the attack. Norsemen in the front rank, shields locked, steel aswing, they struck like a thunderbolt into the midmost of the Sioux array and pierced to the very heart of it.

THERE befell a hewing so grim that the tale of it has never perished from the unwritten annals of the red man, though the hewers were not gods but men of flesh and steel. The two hundred locked into a circle and fought from behind the shield-wall, with Knutsson everywhere at once, and Ivar and Malkom seconding him. Against the steel, the naked painted warriors fell fast and thickly, yet ever the stone axes swung and the

flint-tipped arrows drove in. So great was the slaughter wrought by those stabbing spears, so terrible was the ax of Knutsson and his blood-spattered figure, that the two hundred carved a road clear through the Sioux masses. The attack on the ramparts ceased; the assailants there were cut off to a man, and arrows rained from above upon the enemy masses. Bear Mouth, however, was slow to lead forth the rest of his men, and the Sioux warriors closed about the little band. . . . Then Paul Knutsson knew they were lost, all of them.

They fought on and on. Spears gone, swords out, breast to breast with the crowded Sioux, they slew until arms were wearied. Here and there the shield-wall was broken, yet it closed up again. Arrows shivered on mail-shirts, axes pounded on shield and helm. Swede Einar was down, to a spear-thrust under his armpit, and Knutsson axed the chieftain who killed him. Malkom Gordenson of Bergen took two arrows through his body, another through his lean throat, and passed his sword to a Mandan warrior as he died.

STILL they fought, lessening one by one, slaying with every blow. Knutsson caught one ringing shout, and plunged forward like a wild bull to the side of Ivar, who was ringed about by a dozen Sioux. Ivar went down, and Knutsson stood above him, smiting to right and left until the ax-haft broke in his hands.

"Take this," cried Ivar, passing up his sword. "Tell her—tell her I know now what she meant—"

He coughed and fell forward. Knutsson took the sword and went berserk in his grief and fury, charging into the midst of the Sioux warriors, spreading death before him until at last they broke and fled in terror.

Then Bear Mouth came, almost too late, striking in upon the flanks and putting the Sioux and their allies to wild rout, pursuing them with slaughter merciless and bloody until the whole blackened plain was strewn with dead and wounded, who were dispatched by the squaws and boys.

Knutsson, jetting blood from a dozen wounds yet nowhere hurt mortally, went from man to man of his dead. Of the Norse, not one remained alive; here, to a man, was wiped out the expedition that had left Bergen so many years previously. Here died the last of them, save only the great grim captain. For him alone the saga was not yet ended. And he, sitting among his dead companions, wept for the first time in long years.

UPON a day in spring, Knutsson sat in his own big empty house.

Now, as for many a day past, he was engaged in cramped and awkward labor; the constant chip-chip-chip of mallet and chisel busied him. It was the same chisel Magnus the priest had employed, on slab and on mooring-stone; it was well worn.

The sound ceased. This effort, after many, had reached its end, and the flat stone was deeply bitten with runes on both sides. With a deep breath, Knutsson held it to the light that came from the orifice above, slowly deciphering the runes he had carved. Then, at a light step, he glanced around and saw Broken Arrow.

She came and sat beside him, smiling. His grim eyes softened upon her, and he smoothed the flaming beard which was turning to gray at last.

"It is done," he said.

"Tell me what the marks mean," she requested, and laid down quilled moccasins beside him. "Here are the moccasins I promised to make; they, too, are finished."

He thanked her gravely, admired the moccasins, then gave his attention again to the stone, turning it to the light so that the runes stood well out. He read them slowly; even to compose them had been long labor.

"I, a lagaman, went many days from Vinland. The last of my men died in the holm where I made great slaughter of the savages. This was two years ago. I am alone. I am Paul Knutsson of Othemdale. 1374."

His voice ceased. She remained silent for a little, looking at the stone.

"It does not say much about—about anyone else."

"No," Knutsson agreed. "Why should it? They have left children, who shall be told about their fathers; but my only child is this expedition. It is my saga, and it is nearly ended."

She thought for a space, and nodded.

"Perhaps you are right. What shall you do with the stone?"

Knutsson stroked his beard and looked up at the sunbeams, his bright blue eyes very calm and assured.

"I shall build another stone pillar in the marketplace, and put the stone in the pillar as a record."

There, three hundred and fifty years later, the explorer Verendrye found it.

A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

BERLIN MASQUERADE

By FREDERICK PAINTON

AN AMERICAN UNDERTAKES AN ULTRA-HAZARDOUS SECRET-SERVICE JOB—AND LEARNS WHAT BERLIN—AND BERCHTESGADEN—ARE LIKE IN WAR-TIME.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

"The pamphlets!" I half-yelled, and sprang out to pick them up.

BERLIN MASQUERADE

By FREDERICK PAINTON

THIS man was tall and thin, and under the shadow of his hat-brim he had a long narrow face with a big undershot chin that made his face look like a horse's. He had his hands in the pockets of his light overcoat. He came out of the alley off Fifty-eighth Street and lurching into me, put his right-hand coat-pocket against my side. I felt something hard and pointed.

"Put your fingertips on your shoulders, Brownen, and keep them there," he said quietly. "That's a gun against you, and I'm not fooling."

I had never seen the man before in my life. And in the shock of being held up, the fact that he had spoken my name didn't register. I raised my hands. I wasn't afraid, but I was amused.

"Fellah," I chuckled, "you're wasting your time. I've got exactly forty-eight cents."

He cursed me suddenly, violently, "Stop mucking about," he growled, "and walk to the curb." His voice had an English accent.

Even as he spoke, a long light-gray sedan drew up to the curb. The driver reached back and opened the door. Prodded by the gun, I was forced across the sidewalk.

I hadn't expected this. "Say," I muttered, "this looks like a one-way ride. Haven't you made a mistake?"

"Button your lip and get in," growled my captor.

He suddenly brought up his knee against my buttocks, and I went sprawling into the car. I wasn't amused any longer.

"Put down that gun," I growled, "and I'll fold that bird-beak of a nose against your face."

"Bloody well likely," he snapped. "You're harmless enough when you haven't got a gun or a blackjack in your pocket."

Swiftly now, he searched me for a weapon. I had none.

"All right, Bob," said my captor. "Let's be moving, old boy."

"Righto, Marty. Better gag him, though. A squawk would be inconvenient."

"I'll do better than that," said the man called Marty grimly.

"Listen," I said: "what *is* this anyway?"

"This," said Marty, "is my pleasure in the party, Brownen."

His hand came out of his pocket in a quick flowing movement. The gun in his hand leaped toward my face. I dodged but not enough. I felt the sudden pain of the blow against my temple, and then I felt nothing at all. . . .

There was a taste of Scotch whisky in my mouth when I next knew anything, and some of it was on my neck—cold, the way whisky is with the alcohol evaporating. I opened my eyes. I was lying on a couch in a pleasant room in which several bridge-lamps glowed. The man who had walloped me was standing near my feet.

HE was just saying something to a short, roly-poly man with sandy hair and pursy merry lips and deep-set eyes that slit into half-moons of merriment when he smiled; he stopped smiling and looked at me critically, and then his eyes seemed little slivers of gray metal.

"Perfectly astounding," he said, nodding his head. As it nodded, three or four chins piled up below his real one like terraces on his neck. "In fact," he

went on in his deep, chuckly voice, "it is practically incredible."

I licked my lips, wiped the whisky off my neck and sat up. I had a hell of a headache, and I was sore.

"If I get just a bit sorer," I said, "I'm going to throw fists, guns or no guns. I'm like that when I get mad."

"Steady, my lad," said the roly-poly man; and he too had the broad flat accent of an Englishman. "You've nothing out of this but a headache, and we'll see that you're paid for that." He poured a jigger of Scotch into a whisky-glass. "Have another spot. It'll do you good; and then, if you don't mind, I should like to ask a few questions."

I threw the whisky into the back of my throat and it tasted good all the way down. The man called Marty said: "What I can't understand, is where Brownen is."

"Listen," I said, "my name is Brownen —Eric Brownen. So now you know where Brownen is."

"Well, I'll be triple-damned!" exclaimed the roly-poly man. "This is positively unbelievable." He glanced at me sharply, then took out a wallet and removed a fifty-dollar bill and thrust it into my hand. He sat down on the edge of the couch, and it sagged beneath his gargantuan weight. "Your name is Brownen, eh? Tell me something about yourself. D'you mind?"

I REALIZED that some mistake had been made and they were trying to be decent about it. The fifty dollars calmed me down, too. I told them my history. After all, I had nothing to conceal but twenty-eight years of big tries. I started with my boyhood in Wisconsin. It was mostly a history of football: high-school full-back, with the University, and pro football that got me enough money to study metallurgy and mining engineering at the University of Berlin.

Roly-poly's eyes jerked wide at that.

"Berlin?" he repeated. "So you speak German?"

"From the cradle," I assented. "My people are of German extraction. My grandfather ducked out of Germany in 1870 to keep out of jail. He was a newspaper editor who didn't like Bismarck."

"Where in Germany?" asked Roly-poly quickly.

"Coblentz," I told him; "but before that we were Berliners. I know, because I've had the high German ground into me from a kid."

"So you must have kin over there now?" said Roly-poly.

"Sure," I nodded. "My grandfather had a couple of brothers and a sister. When I was studying at the Technological Institute, I boarded with a great-aunt."

All this time a fierce sort of tenseness was coming over the room. Roly-poly's eyes were blazing. The guy called Marty was motionless as in a trance. And two other men had somehow come up close and were staring at me in utter fascination. I was getting damnably puzzled and curious myself.

"Then," said Roly-poly slowly, "you might possibly know of another Brownen —only he spells it the German way, *B-r-a-u-n-e-n*. His name is Wolff."

"Sure," I said. "He's the son of my great-uncle Johan, and we'd be second cousins. He's two years older than I am. He was traveling salesman for a sewing-machine company in Berlin."

I stopped speaking and there was silence. Then a lot of them let out their breath in a sigh, and the guy called Marty said, "Well, bless my soul," and it was such a mild expression said so explosively that I had to laugh.

Roly-poly said: "That most certainly accounts for the incredible resemblance."

"Resemblance?" I repeated; and then it dawned on me. "Oh, you mean between me and Wolff. Well, it's possible. All we Brownens have a great resemblance—it runs in the family. I remember my great-uncle Johan used to say I could be his son."

"You most certainly could," said Roly-poly. He rose from the couch. He took out another fifty-dollar bill and gave it to me. "A great injustice has been done you by my men, Mr. Brownen, and I most humbly apologize. This will repay in part for that lump on your head."

I got up too. I was a little wobbly, but the whisky in my stomach was warm, and I felt good.

"It sounds mysterious as hell," I said. "Mind telling me what it's all about?"

Roly-poly regarded me seriously.

"It is quite possible that later I shall do just that," he rejoined quietly. "If you would be so good as to give me your address—a telephone-number too, if it is available—I may get in touch with you."

I gave him that information, and threw in gratuitously that mining engineers were a dime a dozen, and if he knew of a job, I would be grateful. He

shook hands, a warm pudgy hand with an amazingly firm grip. The door opened for me, and I went down three flights to the street. I found myself on Park Avenue not far from Seventy-sixth Street. I walked to Lexington Avenue, took a downtown subway, and went home to bed. It was two o'clock in the morning, but I lay awake a long time thinking about the night's adventure.

What was it all about, anyway?

CHAPTER TWO

A WEEK later, I had nearly forgotten the queer incident, when it was thrown in my face with a bang. I was dickering with a guy about going to Bolivia as resident assistant engineer on a tin-mining project. Coming uptown on the subway I opened an evening paper. Black headlines leaped out at me: WHOLESALE ARRESTS IN NAZI ESPIONAGE ROUND-UP.

In the blocks of type below I read:

> F.B.I. agents believe they have captured an important Gestapo* leader in Wolff Braunen who gave his address as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and said he was a sewing-machine salesman. He protested his innocence, and claimed to be in the United States only to make a new connection since the war has ruined Germany's export trade. He said he wanted an American firm to represent in South America, and intended to return as soon as such employment was found. The F.B.I. have him booked for illegal entry into the United States, and suspicion of espionage.

I don't recall much about that ride uptown, because my mind was remembering Wolff Braunen the only two times I had ever seen him in Berlin. I never had liked him too much. You know how a personality hits you, even if it is a distant relative. And he was domineering and arrogant as a lot of Germans of Prussian extraction can be. He got my fur up by railing against the United States, saying the *verdammt* Wilson had tricked Germany into surrender in the last war, and then double-crossed her at Versailles. He hated France and England, but he hated America worse, because he said we were English cat's-paws.

That's no way to make friends with me, because I had two brothers in the Thirty-second Division during the last fracas, and one of them stopped a machine-gun bullet beyond Montfaucon, and the other has a limp to this day from a German bayonet.

Like everybody else, I was reading the daily reports from the present war, and I was smart enough to know how the ultimate outcome would affect the United States. So I wondered about my second cousin, Wolff Braunen. It made me feel kind of funny that a man with the same blood in him as I have in me was a big German spy.

I knew now that Roly-poly had been trying to grab Wolff Braunen that night instead of me. We did look alike. The only difference was that I had my nose broken the time we played Notre Dame, and I wore my brown hair combed straight back and Wolff always parted his on the side. What I didn't understand was why Englishmen, instead of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, should be trying to catch Wolff. The F.B.I. had got him, but it was still complicated.

I live on West Fifty-eighth Street beyond Eighth Avenue, in an old brownstone front, the lower floor of which is a wop restaurant.

As I arrived here this night, a man stepped out of the restaurant and said: "Just a sec, please, Mr. Brownen."

I saw it was the Englishman called Marty.

"Oh, hello," I said. "I see they finally got the right Braunen."

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* Gestapo: short for *Geheime-staats-polizei,* the German Secret Police. It now includes, due to the ambitions of Heinrich Himmler, its chief, every branch of police effort including the *Geheimdienst,* or Military Intelligence.

The old organization was as follows: the *Nachrientendienst,* or military counter-espionage, headed by *Oberst* (Colonel) Nicolai. He was the German espionage chief during the World War, was retired in 1918 after the revolution and wrote a book called "The German Secret Service" that figured in German espionage trials in New York two years ago. After Hitler's rise, he was recalled to head the Military Secret Service, which position he now holds.

Then there was the *Marineministerium* or Naval Intelligence, and the *Politbureau* or general espionage on special projects.

Himmler, desirous of power, banded them all together as part of the Gestapo. There are many other branches now.

He grinned, shrugged. Then: "I've been waiting for you. Captain Morsley would like to see you." When I merely stared, he went on: "You said something about needing a job, last time. Captain Morsley told me to say he probably has one. He's very anxious to talk to you."

Well, the Bolivian thing was still up in the air, and I had nothing to lose. Besides, I was curious to get some more dope on how they'd caught Wolff. I nodded and said: "Lead the way."

He had a car parked down the street, driven by the guy called Bob, and we climbed in. He never spoke another word during the trip to Park Avenue.

IT was the same pleasant living-room; Roly-poly opened the door and gave me the warm pudgy grip. "I'm so glad you decided to come," he said. "I'm Morsley and I think we can do business."

There was another man in the room, a squarish guy of fifty or so with pure white hair and a reddish face. Morsley said: "This is Mr. John Wymeth. He will sit in on the conference."

Wymeth shook my hand and said: "Absolutely remarkable!"

"That seems to be unanimous." I grinned.

Morsley poured some highballs, and it was good Scotch. He had a file-folder, and he touched it and said: "We've taken the liberty of corroborating your statements, Mr. Brownen. The record is excellent. Excellent! I want to ask just one question before we get down to business."

"Shoot," I said.

"What is your attitude toward the present war in Europe?"

He looked at me closely as he spoke. I saw that John Wymeth stopped swinging a gold knife on the end of his watch-chain, and turned squarely to watch me. I realized this question meant something, so I didn't gush out: "Listen, I'm an American, first, last and all the time." I thought hard and took a minute or so before I replied:

"Up until Hitler," I said, "I had a lot of sympathy for Germany. I lived over there two years, and I know something of the deal they got under the Versailles treaty. I was even for Hitler at first, because he was like a coach on a football team, putting the old zip and spirit into a discouraged lot."

I stopped for an instant to pick my words. Nobody said anything; they just watched me intently, and waited.

"You know how the German character is," I went on presently. "It's arrogant when they're winning, and kind of whiny when they aren't. Maybe a psychologist would call it an inferiority complex. I wouldn't know about that. To answer your question: I'm not for Hitler, and I'm not for Germany in this war."

"Why?" asked Morsley softly.

"Because Hitler doesn't know where to stop, and the Germans are hypnotized to follow where he leads. If he beats England, he'll try for South America, and he'll tangle with us. And it's better that he be licked over there, than over here. I mean, I'm trying to be objective about it, and look at it from this country's best interests."

I paused, and then added: "Finally, the German viewpoint isn't the best for world dominion. If people are going to get anywhere, it is with English and American philosophies—and not with Hitler's."

Morsley nodded. "I think that answers me fully." He turned to Wymeth. "What do you think?"

"I'm satisfied," rejoined Wymeth curtly. He was an American, by his voice. "Go ahead."

Captain Eustace Morsley began to talk, quietly, clearly as if he were explaining a technical problem. What he said was this: he and his men were members of the British Military Intelligence, and because England was purchasing much military equipment in this country, they were over here as old hands to lend what aid they could to the F.B.I. in preventing sabotage and rounding up espionage gangs. He said that there were plenty, because the United States borders are long and hard to guard, and besides, a lot of refugees from all nations were coming in, and among them it was easy for the German Gestapo to spot agents.

HE dwelt on this point in detail, and reviewed some recent history of Gestapo endeavor in Norway and Holland, Belgium and France. He admitted that there were probably a lot of German agents in England who couldn't be spotted at the moment, but who certainly would emerge if the proper moment arrived.

He spoke of *Nids,* and Germans belonging to the *Bohrmaschine*[1] and the *Sturmtruppen*[2]. He said a *Nid* was any local unit of Nazis or Nazi followers. He said that the American Bund was a

Nid whose activities were directed from the *Deutsches Ausland*[3] in Berlin by *Nachrientendienst* agents.

"In this country," said Morsley gently, "*Sturmtruppen* blow up powder-works—like the Hercules in New Jersey recently. They put time-bombs in the holds of vessels carrying supplies. They spread propaganda. And if by any chance the United States should become a belligerent, they would try to paralyze the country's war effort."

I nodded. "I'm against our getting into this war," I said.

"So are we all," nodded Morsley. "That's why I'm telling you this."

"All right," I said. "What *are* you telling me?"

He explained that British Intelligence had various and sundry agents in Germany. In fact, their Intelligence was very good, because they had put in their men early—around 1932, some of them. And others were even resident agents who were hold-overs from the last war.

ONE man in particular—Captain Morsley called him G-21—was an original Nazi party man and had risen to be a minor official in the *Deutsches Ausland* Bureau. This *Deutsches Ausland* Bureau was a tremendous affair.

"A building of more than three hundred rooms," said Morsley, "is filled to overflowing with filing-cabinets containing millions of names. Listed there is the name of every Nazi supporter in the United States—indeed, in the whole world outside Germany."

I stared at Morsley. "You're going into a great deal of detail. Why?"

"Because," said Morsley slowly, "this agent of ours, G-21—Arnold is his name—has been spending the best part of a year getting the names and records of every Nazi undercover man in England and the United States and their possessions."

I thought about that and then grinned. "I get it," I said. "I always wondered, every time I saw the headline, 'Fifth Column Round-up Begins' how anybody could know *who* is a Fifth Column agent. This Arnold's dope will enable you to put the finger on the key men."

"Exactly," nodded Morsley. He paused significantly and then added: "Every key Nazi leader in this country—your country."

"Well, so what?" I asked.

Morsley gestured toward Wymeth. "Mr. Wymeth is one of your own very hush-hush Secret Service. He'd like that list awfully."

"We would," said Wymeth grimly. "It would save months and months of work, running down the background of hundreds of suspects."

He got up, twiddling the watch-chain knife nervously.

"By saving that time," he growled, "we'd save a hell of a lot of explosions, strikes, fires and the like."

"Well," I said, "this is all very interesting, but I don't see why you tell me."

"Because," said Morsley, "if you'll consent, we're going to send you to Berlin to bring back those lists of names."

THE idea must have been subconsciously in my mind, for I wasn't greatly surprised. I was only curious.

"Why can't Arnold bring them?" I asked.

"Arnold's in a key position," said Morsley. "It's taken us eight years to get him there. He's priceless now. We couldn't replace him—as we'd have to do if he just ran over the Swiss border."

"Then what about your other men?"

"The same applies," Morsley said. "They're needed. Yet Arnold's lists must be had. The mails are out of the question. We were considering sending a British agent from England—when you providentially turned up."

"Why not send such a man?" I asked. "After all, England is the country at war."

"The risk is tremendous," said Morsley frankly. "You don't know the power and resource of the Gestapo. The chances of such a man getting safely out of Ger-

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(1) *Bohrmaschine*—literally "boring machine" The German foreign activity is divided into two parts—the termites, working from within through Bunds and such internal agencies, to propagandize, corrupt, weaken and pave the way for the [2]*Sturmtruppen*—the storm troops. These are men active and trained in the use of violence, either for sabotage or, in case of war, seizing airdromes, railroad centers, to disrupt and disorganize the rear of an army. They coöperate with parachute troops and *Nid* members in paralyzing resistance by smashing communications.

[3]*Deutsches Ausland:* literally, Germans living outside Germany. It must be remembered that by German law, no German, even if he take citizenship in another nation, ever ceases to be a German. Even if he be loyal to his new country, pressure is put on him to enforce obedience to Nazi orders—chiefly through threatening or punishing his relatives still in Germany.

many with those lists is rather less than a hundred to one."

I shrugged. "But they'd be even less with me. Your man would be a trained agent. Me, without background—without—"

"If you go to Berlin as Wolff Braunen, your second cousin," said Morsley, "the mission is simple and safe. You go as a Nazi agent. You remain unquestioned, unsuspected. You go openly—while our man would be risking instant discovery the moment he crossed the border."

"Wolff Braunen!" I said. "But he's in jail. The arrest is all over Page One."

Morsley smiled. "We made very certain the arrest got a great deal of publicity. His escape will be equally sensational."

"His escape?" I repeated. Then: "I get it. He doesn't escape, but the newspapers report it—and I go in his place."

"Exactly," beamed Captain Morsley.

I hung on the doubts and dangers of it. Morsley pressed my arm. "Within a week's time you will be aboard the Pan-American clipper plane for Lisbon. Portugal is flooded with Nazi agents. So is Spain. They would welcome you, hurry you to Berlin. You will get the lists from Arnold—and leave."

"Will it be just as simple as that?" I grinned.

He chuckled and then sobered. "You will have to be alert, but you can do it. Besides, my lad, you're doing it for your country. —Eh, Wymeth?"

Wymeth said quietly: "Brownen, nobody can force you to do this. You'll get no credit if you succeed, no help if you're in trouble. But if you do go and you do succeed, you'll be giving this country a hell of a big boost in its defense program. I'd like you to do this, but damn it, I can't ask you."

SILENCE came over the room. I didn't put up any more argument, for I had made up my mind to go. The mission had a fascinating appeal, and I could see that if Wolff Braunen reposed in prison while I masqueraded as him, I had a decent chance of pulling it off. Maybe patriotism—don't laugh—had something to do with it too. A motive like that frequently doesn't come to the surface—it just lies below and subconsciously prods you on.

Morsley said finally: "We'll do everything humanly possible to smooth the way and help you."

"O.K.," I said. "What're the details?"

I WANT to tell you, the week that followed mighty near killed me! Sleeping less than four hours a night, I studied and rehearsed to be another man. One overlooked detail might bring failure and cost me my life, and neither Morsley nor Wymeth intended to have such a slip.

Wymeth got a dossier on Wolff Braunen that contained not only Braunen's record but everything the American and British Intelligence knew about the German *Geheimdienst.* I studied the facts until my eyes blurred with fatigue, only to pore over it again when Wymeth or Morsley's harsh questioning revealed that I was not alert and ready with the easy answer.

I had to memorize the appearance, speech and actions of Gestapo men I had never seen but must know and recognize. I had to learn to click heels, bow from the hips and get a crazy look when I said, *"Heil Hitler!"* The fact that I could speak perfect German, and was of German extraction, was not enough.

I had to be a German. I had to be Wolff Braunen.

"It's a simple matter to get into Germany," said Wymeth grimly; "but if there is the tiniest suspicion, you'll never get out."

Finally, however, even Morsley was satisfied and they outlined the final important phases of the plan.

"I'll consider Berlin and Arnold first," said Morsley. "He's had word that someone is coming for the lists—a code message in some of the leaflets our bombers drop.

"When you get to Berlin, go each evening possible to the Traube on the Leipzigstrasse—it's an old famous restaurant. Take the table in the left corner. Light a cigarette and take four matches to do it. Swear, using the oath, *Um Gottes Willen!* Lay the matches in the tray so they make a *P.* Someone will say, 'The *Kuchen* are excellent,' and you will reply, 'then bring me two.' You will be taken to Arnold."

They made certain I memorized this.

"That part is simple," said Morsley. "The main thing is your contact with Fritz Deicher."

"Deicher?" I repeated. "You didn't mention him before."

"He's the laddie who will get you to Germany," grinned Wymeth. "He's the chief resident Gestapo chief in the United States."

I stared. I was amazed. "But," I cried, "why don't you arrest him?"

Wymeth chuckled. "They'd only send another—and we'd be months spotting him. We *know* Deicher, and we can watch him. Through him we can spot others. Do you see?"

I nodded. I began to see this thing was big, awfully big.

"What must I know about Deicher?" I asked.

"Nothing much. Actually, you are his superior. He has radio communication with Berlin. He'll get his instructions. All you have to do is insist on flying, not going by ship."

I nodded. That night Wymeth brought me Wolff Braunen's clothes, those he had been arrested in. Such was their attention to detail.

Wymeth said: "Here are three pennies. That's to buy a newspaper with, tomorrow afternoon."

"A newspaper?" I stared at the coppers. "But won't I—"

"A man escaping from jail is broke," Wymeth said. "He will also be hungry, so eat nothing from noon on. At a quarter after nine tomorrow night, go to Deicher's apartment." He gave me a slip of paper on which was noted the address —on Park Avenue. "Rap four times—three quick, then a space and the fourth."

He held out his hand. "After that, you're on your own."

Captain Morsley also shook hands. "You should be back in five weeks at the latest."

I forced a grin. "If I'm not, think pleasantly of me."

I lay down and got my first eight hours of solid sleep.

WYMETH saw me off in the morning. "Don't forget to gash your nose—it was broken in the escape," he warned.

I nodded, my heart already pounding with excitement.

"Nothing should go wrong," he said. "But if it does—call this number. I'll do what I can."

I could see he did not think he could do much. We shook hands, and I went out to wait until nine-fifteen that night.

It was then only noon. I was oppressed by suspense; I had to stay out of sight. Time passed with the speed of a turtle. Minutes seemed centuries long. I walked in Central Park. I wandered up and down Broadway, staring into the windows. I finally went to the library at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue and got some books on German railroads and communications, and spent some time studying mileages and motor roads leading to the Swiss border.

AT six o'clock I spent my three cents and got a newspaper, a five-star final. Across the top in a big headline was:

NAZI SPY SUSPECT
MAKES DARING ESCAPE

There was a huge four-column cut of Wolff Braunen, and beneath was the detailed account which I read and memorized carefully. Braunen was being taken from the jail, it asserted, to the F.B.I. headquarters for further questioning. On the way he had turned on his two guards, nearly brained one and smashed the other through a plate-glass window. He had run down Nassau Street and disappeared. The police were combing the city, and his recapture was said to be only a matter of hours.

I went over and over the account, visualizing, reënacting it mentally. Then I went back to the library and got out Nicolai's book on "The German Secret Service" and dozed over it until half-past eight. I was, by this time, very hungry.

I came out into the darkness of Forty-second Street. I took a big breath. What lay ahead? I set my shoulders and walked over to Vanderbilt Avenue —then north and over to Park.

On the way, I deliberately cut the bridge of my nose and daubed some of the blood into my nostrils to dry.

The apartment-house was one of the largest on Park Avenue—and one of the swankiest, as I found out. A doorman dressed like a major-general looked haughtily down at me. But I gave him just as tough a look, and he said nothing as I walked in.

I was amused for a moment. The paper had carried my picture—or Wolff's—on Page One. It told of the fight, of my injury. Yet this man's suspicions were not aroused. People look, but rarely see. . . .

On the sixteenth floor I paused before an apartment door marked with the card; *"Frederick Deicher."*

I raised my hand. I had the sense of an actor going into his rôle. Then I rapped.

The door opened almost instantly. Wymeth had showed me a photograph of Deicher, but it flattered the thick-jowled, bullet-headed man who stared at me from under thick bristly brows. His hand snaked out, jerked me inside.

"You fool!" he growled. "If you've been followed here, and betrayed me, you'll answer for it."

I saw then that his right hand was in his pocket and that the cloth sagged to the weight of a gun.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEICHER'S German and his appearance told me what he was—a Berlin tough who had ridden to the top on the froth of Hitlerism. And I knew what to do. I had been excited, nervous inside. Now I was cool, sure of myself. I shut the door.

"What do you think they'll say in Berlin," I said coldly, "when I tell them you were thinking of your own thick hide instead of *der Führer?*"

The words bit deep, and he flinched. I glared at him.

"Do you think I was so stupid as to be followed?" I sneered. *"Achtung!* Draw a bath. Get me food. Send the message at once that I am free, and will leave for Germany as soon as possible."

I used the clipped cold tone of the professional officer (which I had learned Wolff was). And that never fails with gutter trash.

"Of course, *Herr Hauptmann,*" said Deicher. "No offense meant. But with so much at stake—" My cold gaze made the words stumble in his throat. I learned then what I verified many times later—the Nazi Party man is afraid of but one person: the professional German army officer.

Eager now to please, he drew the bath.

"Your nose, *Herr Hauptmann,*" he said solicitously, "they've broken it!"

"It can be mended," I said. "Have you anything else to tell me?"

He cursed long-windedly. "Professor Eitel Hagen died—without completing the formula."

This was Greek to me, but I frowned and said: "That is bad."

"I have notified Berlin," Deicher said. "I am awaiting instructions now."

He left the bathroom, and I stripped and doused myself in the water. The name Hagen kept popping back into my mind. Somewhere recently I had read it. The memory recurred as I toweled myself.

Hagen! Of course! He had been one of the consulting chemists in the Marcolle Laboratories. A famous authority on trinitrotoluol and the cellulose explosives! An American, though, so why should Berlin be interested? I made up my mind to find this out, as an item that would be important to Wymeth and Captain Morsley.

Deicher had food in the kitchen, prepared by himself.

"I thought perhaps you would come," he explained, "and sent the cook off."

There was cold chicken, potato salad, bread and a big pot of coffee. I ate ravenously.

"What have you done?" I asked.

"Otto is calling Berlin now," he replied. "We should have word in an hour."

He shook a handful of travel-folders. "I've checked steamships. You can get off to South America tomorrow."

I laughed harshly. "And the accursed F.B.I. agents watching every gangplank?" I shook my head. "No, Fritz, when I leave here I go by the Pan-American Airways to Lisbon."

"That is madness," he cried incredulously. "Every person is closely studied—known."

"Its very daring will help," I said. "A dye for my hair, a mustache, a new passport. A passport," I added, "that will receive a Department of State visa to depart."

He shrugged uneasily. "The passport and the visa are simple—we have friends. But—"

"Inform the Embassy in Washington, then," I said. "I can travel as an attaché—have a diplomatic visa."

I stood up. *"Mein freund,* the work I do in South America is too important to take any risks on recapture. It means ten years of prison—and I won't have it."

WE had a glass of schnapps. I was feeling better now, more at ease. I could handle this monkey and I knew it. Ten minutes later the telephone rang and Deicher answered it. I learned nothing from this end. He merely said, *"Ja . . . . Jawohl . . . . Ni, ni,"* and, *"Zu befehl!"* He hung up, and turned to me, something akin to awe in his face.

"Otto has talked to Berlin," he said. "You are to get to Berlin in the utmost urgency. No pains are to be spared. You are to bring the Hagen formula."

"But it is incomplete," I said.

"That doesn't matter," he shrugged. "Those are orders from Herr Himmler himself." His eyes grew wider. "It has been called to the attention of *der Führer*. He has ordered your hasty return."

"You see?" I said. "There is no time to be lost."

He nodded. "I go at once, *Herr Hauptmann*." He pointed to a door. "Your bed is in there. I shall return by morning and everything will be arranged."

He clicked his heels, whispered: *"Heil Hitler!"*

And for the first time I saw the fanatic glare that these Nazi get when they make the salute.

He left at once and I went over the apartment to see what I could find. Whatever else he was, Deicher was too smart to leave anything incriminating around. I gave up at eleven o'clock and went to bed.

KEYED up, I did not think I would sleep. But the week of exhausting effort told, and I slept hard. So hard, indeed, that when a hand shook me I woke and didn't know where I was.

Deicher was grinning down at me.

It was a full minute before I collected my wits. Then I sat up.

"It's all arranged," he said. "I've talked with Grostedt. You leave on the Dixie Clipper this afternoon. You are Dirck Van Loewden."

"Dutch?" I said. "But what about the real Van Loewden?"

"He will remain in protective custody until such a time as you are safely reported, and he can be released." He held out a large glossy photograph of a dark, square-chinned man of about my own age. "We chose him from the list as one you could most easily resemble."

A glance at the picture told me that all I had to do was dye my hair, cut it differently, affix a small mustache and carry one shoulder slightly higher than the other to pass muster. Moreover, Deicher had several letters, an automobile registration certificate and a Chamber of Commerce membership as well as the passport which already had several South American visas. I chuckled.

"Did Van Loewden make much of a fight?" I inquired.

He grinned. "At first he was obstructive. But when we told him that we knew where his parents and his sisters were, and what would happen to them if he tried anything, he shut up quickly enough."

"Excellent," I said.

Deicher went on to say he had made reservation on the plane, but I myself would have to go in about the visa.

"The State Department is becoming finicky in such matters." He put the passport on the little table. "When you get to Lisbon, you will go immediately to the Embassy. They will take care of your further movements."

"You haven't wasted a moment," I said.

I glanced at my strap watch—or rather, Wolff's. It was quarter after ten.

Deicher took my words as a compliment and actually flushed. He pointed then to some blue trousers. I saw that the waistband had been ripped out and the lining, too.

"Der Teufel!" I exclaimed. "What's that for?"

"For the Hagen formula," he said. "It is written on silk and it will fit here splendidly." He smiled as my eyebrows went up. "It is one of Van Loewden's trousers—it is better to be careful in small detail." He gestured briefly. "The bath is ready. I have the dye and the hair for the mustache. I'll finish sewing while you bathe. Then I can fix the shoulder. I—I was a tailor once."

I went into the shower and turned it on hot, and then cold, and toweled myself. There was a bathrobe hanging on a hook, and I donned this.

I came out of the bathroom to find that Deicher had underwear, socks, shirt and shoes laid out, and had opened the shoulder seam of the blue coat.

"A little padding will build up that unusual slope," he said. "Go ahead and put on the other things and I'll make a fitting."

"Very well," I said, and shucking off the bathrobe, reached for the underwear.

"Grostedt wants to know," said Deicher, "if you've made things straight with Maya Wirten?"

I WAS puzzled. Wymeth and Morsley had mentioned many people, but no Maya Wirten.

"Why, no," I hazarded.

"No?" He looked up from stitching white silk strips in the waistband. "Why, you wrote—" He broke off—his gaze fixed on my bare legs.

I followed his glance. "What's the matter with you, man?" I asked impatiently.

He lifted his gaze. His face was a fish-belly white. He looked at my face as if he had never seen it before.

"You are not Wolff Braunen!" he muttered hoarsely. "Where is the *scar?* There is no scar!"

In a quick flash of movement his hand dived into his coat, came out, tugging at a heavy gun. I reached him in two bounds, and smashed him in the face with my fist.

CHAPTER FIVE

I DO not remember distinctly how the gun came to be fired. In a moment like that all else save the fight to live seems blotted out. There is no sense of smell, taste; there is no feel of pain or fear. I only know that despite my blow he drew the gun and tried to press the muzzle against my body. My left hand closed around his wrist and held the gun up. The fingers of my right hand groped for his throat. Thus we stood, chest to chest, panting, straining, sensing for the slightest weakening in the other. We did not speak; we were past that. Our eyes glared into each other's.

I was pressing forward tautly.

Suddenly he relaxed all his muscles. I plunged forward under my own impetus. It is an old trick but a good one because I had to relax the tension of my body. And before I could tighten up again, he had jerked loose the gun, swept down the muzzle.

I remember grabbing frantically for his arm below the elbow and twisting viciously. At that instant the gun roared seemingly in my very face. I felt the heat of the flame from the muzzle—a spatter of powder. I smelled the raw reek of cordite; but it was Deicher who slowly folded up and collapsed to the floor. My twist had turned the gun muzzle down and in. The bullet had penetrated his chest just below the rib cage, ranging downward.

He went to his knees, his staring eyes incredulous. Then he rolled over on his back, and his left hand went toward his groin where, apparently, the bullet had finally lodged.

"I—don't—understand," he said queerly, jerkily. "The scar—the scar—and Wolff—" He spoke no more.

The rattle in his throat as his diaphragm collapsed, choked in his throat. And before I could even reach down and take the gun from his hand, he was dead.

There was a dreadful silence in the room. I could hear my strap watch tick, and my own hard breathing. It was minutes before I realized the consequences of that shot. How could I go to Germany now?

Momentarily I expected footsteps in the hall, a rap at the door. But nothing happened. Apparently the shot had not been heard or, if heard, was confused with motor noises below.

I smoked a cigarette and forced myself to think calmly. It was tough; I had never killed a man before.

But finally I wrapped my right hand in a handkerchief and called the Pennsylvania number. Wymeth responded.

"You overlooked one detail," I said bitterly, "a scar on Wolff Braunen's leg." And rapidly I told him what had happened.

"I've got an idea how this can be handled," I finished, "but you'll have to get here—and quick."

I hung up with his promise to come at once. Somehow I forced my hands to be steady while I dyed my hair jet black. The hair for the mustache would have to wait on Wymeth. The waistband was still loose. And I was looking at the meaningless figures on the silk ribbons when a knock came at the door. It was Wymeth and Morsley.

They barely looked at Deicher's body.

"We didn't know about the scar," admitted Wymeth, "but I called—where Braunen is concealed—and there *is* one."

"Deicher was talking with a guy named Otto, and also one called Grostedt," I said. "We can't cover this up. But there's a way out."

They looked at me silently.

"You can put out a story that you trailed me—that is, Wolff—here," I said. "There was a gunfight, and Deicher got killed, but Wolff escaped."

They exchanged glances.

"It will work," I said, "because Hitler himself is interested in this Hagen formula." And I told them about that, showed them the silk with the indelible writing.

Wymeth looked at the silk while Morsley went over Deicher's preparations. He checked and re-checked.

"It could work," he muttered, and went to talk to Wymeth. They muttered together for ten minutes or so. Then Wymeth said, "Go ahead and get dressed. I'll see that the passport is visaed. Your ticket is bought and I'll get you five hundred dollars besides."

"We'll slightly alter this Hagen experimental formula for detonite explosive," said Morsley, "and the Germans will be so delighted to get it, they won't ask too many questions."

BOY, that apartment—the dead man lying undisturbed—was a hive of activity after that! A doctor came, injected my right leg with novocaine, then slashed the flesh and bandaged it carefully.

"It will hurt," he said, "because I'm binding it to leave a scar. But you can take it."

I had to. And it did hurt. A man came and copied the Hagen formula on silk. Another man stitched it into the blue trousers.

"The formula"—Wymeth grinned—"is slightly altered. It will befuddle the German chemists, but will take some time to do so—enough."

The phone rang at two o'clock. I answered it.

"Otto," said a guttural voice. "Herr Deicher?"

"Has gone out on my business," I said. "This is Wolff Braunen. What is it?"

"Ah, Herr Braunen! Message from Berlin. *Oberst-Leutnant* Osfried will meet you in Lisbon. There must be no delay in departure. *Der Führer* is impatiently waiting."

"Zu befehl!" I said. "Tell them I leave this afternoon on the Clipper."

I hung up and turned to Wymeth. "You'll locate the German radio by tracing that call."

"We already have," he grinned. "We are waiting to make a Sir Basil Thomson* bag."

The final preparations went ahead. I had been weighing this new development and finally I said, "Suppose I get this Nazi list but can't get out of Germany—on account of this Deicher kill. What do I do?"

Morsley answered me. "We've got men across the Swiss border in Basle. They use short-wave radios to propagandize Germans in Bavaria. I'll give you a special code to memorize. As a big-wig in the Gestapo it is just possible you can get access to the radio—perhaps to broadcast. Send your message and they'll do what they can."

"But if I can't get at a radio?" I said. "The Germans don't like radio."

Morsley shrugged. "You're on your own, old boy." He smiled. "But cross that bridge when you must. I still think you have only to go in, get the lists and come out."

At three o'clock, trying not to limp, I started for the Pan-American base at La Guardia Field.

As I reached the door Wymeth followed me.

"I've got an idea how you can get out of Germany and back here," he said.

"Let's have it," I muttered.

"Hagen had an assistant, Karl Walther, a naturalized American. He is anti-Nazi, but perhaps they don't know just how bitter. When they can't make head nor tail of this doctored formula you're carrying, you can say that you'll bring it back and get Walther to straighten it out. If they want it as badly as they seem to, they'll *help* you out of Germany."

It was a good idea, and I nodded acquiescence. Morsley shook hands.

"Happy hunting!" he said.

Wymeth said: "You're learning fast, fellah. I'll be looking for you in five weeks."

I took a cab to LaGuardia Field and an hour later was thundering south in the Dixie Clipper for the first stop at Hamilton, Bermuda.

THE huge seaplane glided down through the brilliant sunshine toward the glittering Tagus River. On either bank Lisbon sprawled through valley and height. We were coming in. Portugal lay spread before me and the least hazardous portion of my journey lay behind.

* Sir Basil Thomson, then head of Scotland Yard, identified and located nearly a hundred German spies, prior to 1914, but did not arrest or molest them, as to do so would mean only repeating the difficult task. Following the declaration of war in August, his men rounded up and arrested all of them, and the German Secret Service suffered a blow from which it never recovered during the First World War.

It was only some forty hours since I had left New York, but it seemed centuries removed as I stepped into the customs shed and heard the liquid flow of Portuguese.

MY bags were spread out on the bench and the customs inspector looked at my passport. Then the indifferent expression left his swarthy face.

"Senhor Van Loewden!" he exclaimed. "Hah!" And again: "Hah!"

Without so much as looking into my bags he made a cross on them with chalk. A porter said, "Senhor Van Loewden!" and seized my bags and hurried out to the sunshine of the street.

There were taxis in line, but he did not summon the first; instead, the fourth pulled out of line. Into this the porter crowded my luggage. He whispered to the driver, who leaped out to hold the door.

I blinked. I hadn't expected anything like this. I passed the porter an American fifty-cent piece. As he took it, he whispered: *"Heil Hitler!"*

I climbed into the cab. "The Embassy, senhor, is it not?"

"You seem amply prepared," I muttered.

"Word came twelve hours ago, senhor," he nodded. "There is all urgency."

He put the cab in gear and drove off at what seemed to me a wild, reckless pace.

We sped on through some beautiful streets—one in particular, Avenida de Libertade, was one of the loveliest I had ever seen. The air was bright and sunny, and I felt pretty good except for wondering what was going to happen when I got to the Embassy.

It was a big building with a gorgeously carved façade, and I went in at number six. A brass plate on this door read DEUTSCHESKONSULAT. I went inside, and a bullet-headed clerk jumped to attention and said: "Hah! *Herr Hauptmann,* the *Oberst-Leutnant* is waiting inside. Follow me, *bitte.*"

There is one thing you must hand the squareheads; they plan with meticulous detail. I followed the clerk into a large sunny office. And here I came face to face with the man whom I was to curse and wish dead a thousand times—*Oberst-Leutnant* Max Osfried.

The man himself was certainly a shock.

He stood by the window puffing on an exquisitely carved cigarette-holder a foot long. He was slender, and young enough, but some disease had plucked his head as clean of hair as a toad's skin. He even had no hair on his eyebrows. And though he used brown make-up pencil to draw a line where they should have been, still the impression of those round, hard eyes in that hairless face was shocking. Like two marbles rolling in doll's eyes; like a cobra's eyes as its head moves slowly, silently, so that the eyes see your every movement and weigh it.

Turning from the window, these eyes fastened on me. And before he veiled them I saw such a look of malignant hatred that it startled me.

His too-red lips smiled mirthlessly. "The gods are with you, Wolff, and you finally arrived."

I played my part. *"Heil Hitler!"* I cried, snapping out my right arm horizontally.

"Heil Hitler!" he replied, and again his eyes held venom.

He did not offer to shake hands. Instead he said, "You have brought the Hagen figures?"

"Naturally, *Herr Oberst-Leutnant,"* I replied, and carrying out my part, started to boast of how I had outwitted the stupid *Amerikaners.* He cut me short.

"Enough of your blithering, Wolff," he said sharply. "Give me the figures. They are wanted anxiously."

He advanced on me eagerly, his hand outthrust. I remembered the look of hatred, and the necessity of using the Hagen formula to get me to Berlin.

"No, *Herr Oberst-Leutnant,"* I said. "I wish to deliver it myself."

His stony eyes flashed with fury. "Do you realize what you are saying? Am I not the Party chief of the *Deutsches Ausland* Gestapo?"

I STOOD my ground, puzzled by this ill-disguised rage.

"The Hagen figures were entrusted to me, *Herr Oberst-Leutnant."*

He stood quite still. But the muscles along his jaw quivered.

"I understand," he said finally in a thick voice. "But you're too ambitious, Wolff. You think to be *Oberst.* You think to supplant me for *Sud Amerika* and with *her.* You think this will do it."

I said nothing, because his words puzzled me, hinting at past contacts of which I knew nothing.

"I am a bad enemy, Wolff," he went on. "I can help you be Party leader for *Sud Amerika.* Help me, and I will do so. But you must give me those figures."

I had to make a quick decision. And I had to base it on Wolff's character, not mine.

"*Herr Oberst-Leutnant,*"—I tried to convey just the slightest touch of mockery,—"our Führer himself waits for the Hagen figures. What arrangements have you made to get me to Berlin?"

He took a big breath, held it intolerably long and let it go with a sigh. He stepped back so that the sunlight reflected from his hairless white skull.

"So be it, Wolff," he said. "You have made it—not me." When I did not speak, he went on almost as if talking to himself: "I'll break you, Wolff. I got rid of you once and I can do it again."

I don't know what possessed me to say what I said next: perhaps it was an inspired actor's *ad lib.* At any rate, I smiled and said: "She has remained faithful, then?"

He gave me a sharp look.

"I have a plane at the field," he said curtly. "We shall leave at once."

HE pressed a button. A liveried servant appeared with his gray visored cap, his cloak and his sword belt.

"I wish a full report of American conditions," he said. "You can give it to me during the ride."

"*Zu befehl, Herr Oberst-Leutnant!*"

I realized anew my importance when I saw the plane that was to convey me to Germany. It was a fine two-motored craft, luxuriously upholstered, completely sound-proofed, and manned by a crew of four: Two pilots, a radio operator, and a soldier orderly who was to look after our wants during the voyage.

The Mercedes motors had already been warmed, and as Osfried strode, booted and spurred, to the cabin, the crew of four sprang to attention and thrust out their hands.

"*Heil Hitler!*" said Osfried, and I echoed him.

They chorused the reply, and after we had entered and sat opposite each other at a table between two thickly upholstered chairs, the pilots ran to the cabin. The motors roared. We taxied perhaps a hundred and fifty yards and then the wheels left the earth and we climbed gradually over the heights along which Lisbon nestles.

Osfried smiled grimly. "Three months ago we would have been forced to fly by way of Italy. Now it is much simpler. We will refuel in Paris."

He licked his full red lips.

After the plane had climbed over the Escarpo do Rojo and began following the Tagus Valley northeastward, the soldier-servant brought beer and retired out of earshot. Then Osfried took me minutely over my supposed experiences in South America.

It was ticklish ground, but fortunately, hoping to be employed in South American mines, I knew some general facts. I had also read newspapers. I confined myself to the generalities.

"We can have the trade of every country south of the Brazilian bulge," I said, "but we've got to make deliveries. Every South American government save that of Ecuador is favorable to us, and I intend to do something in Quito, given the chance."

He said nothing, gave me no clue as to whether this was satisfactory or not. He asked questions about New York, Otto, Grostedt, and I did my best.

Only once was the interview broken and that was when two stubby-winged Spanish fighters, their black wingtips dipping, came alongside. Our pilots apparently spoke to them, for they waved their hands. We were then passing over Segovia and the battered mass of the famous Alcazar.

Then Osfried began to poke into what appeared to be sabotage plans in the United States. I waved my hand impatiently.

"That proceeds," I said. "I am more interested now in what plans there are for *me.*"

His head was dipped over the table so that now his eyes looked up at me from under those horrible hairless brows.

"There are many plans for you," he said. "Some of them will be made known to you in Berlin."

Deliberately I leaned back and yawned openly.

"If you will pardon, *Herr Oberst-Leutnant*—" I said, and shut my eyes.

WHEN we landed briefly in Madrid I didn't even open my eyes; and eventually the soft drone of motors did make me nap, and I only wakened when we set down on the concrete ramps at Le Bourget in Paris. Here Osfried received several messages. The pilots scanned maps and got weather reports.

I climbed out to stretch my legs and watched several French prisoners under a German guard, working with a concrete mixer and shovels to fill a bomb crater on the east take-off. From where

I stood I could see the swastika flag flying from the Eiffel Tower, and it gave me a queer sensation.

As I turned back I saw a tall slender girl walking swiftly toward our plane. At the distance it was hard to say more about her than that she was shapely and had yellow hair curling from under her hat. I was startled to see Osfried hurry toward her, seize her hand.

He must have said something, for her eyes turned in my direction. Instantly she wrested loose her hand. She almost ran to me. I had a fleeting glimpse of large dark eyes with long curving lashes, a full lovely mouth, a straight little nose. Then her arms closed around my neck.

"Wolff, darling!" she cried, in a soft Bavarian accent. "Oh, I am glad again to see you!" Her warm red lips pressed hard against mine.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT'S a good thing she made it a long kiss. I was so amazed I merely stood, and I could feel her lips seeking a return, her arms hugging tightly for some display of my joy, until I kissed her, and put my arms around her.

But all the time I was thinking: Who was this? And where did she fit in?

She finally stepped back, gasping. "To think of it," she cried. "I came down to get a ride to Berlin—and find you. Oh, why wasn't I told?"

I didn't have to say anything because she saw my nose.

"Oh, Wolff, your nose—it's broken."

"The New York police are rough." I forced a grin.

She ran her finger along the edge of the break.

"I'll get used to it," she said. "Indeed, it makes you handsomer."

"Maya," came Osfried's voice, "we are ready to go."

For once I could have blessed that hairless monster. So this was Maya Wirten! My girl!

I took her arm. "Maya, I'm hurrying to Berlin with important papers."

It was fatuous, but it served. "We can talk all the way," she said, and clung to my arm.

I saw Osfried's face as I helped her into the plane—and it was a compound of hate, jealousy and envy such as few men must endure.

The plane took off immediately.

I hung in suspense for a while, waiting for questions I knew I could not answer. But for the moment I was spared. Osfried asked her why she was in Paris and she explained she was broadcasting in French, not only for the occupied area but the unoccupied area as well.

"It was Herr Goebbels' idea," she went on. "He thinks we must influence the French women for their effect on the men. But it's done with now and I go back on the North American series, starting tomorrow."

So much was clear—she was in the German propaganda service. More became clear: Osfried was in love with her. That is too weak a statement; he was passionately, insanely mad for her. She took out a cigarette and he jumped to hold a match. His hand touched hers in the operation and I'd swear he trembled.

He continually licked his lips; his gargoyle eyes never left the *Brünnehilde* beauty of her face. It is dangerous to love like that—dangerous for Osfried, dangerous for us. I began to see complications that would be difficult to avoid.

Then she turned her questioning to me. Thank God, I was a relative of Wolff's, even distantly; and I had been in Germany as recently as six years before. Else I would never have withstood her innocently probing questions.

But I did fare well, and took hope.

Then suddenly she said: "What did you do with the ring?"

"You'll get it," I dared to say. "Tomorrow."

I was thinking that Wolff was engaged to her, that they had quarreled and he had taken back his ring.

I even added: "All that is past now, isn't it, *mein Lieb*'?"

"Yes," she said quietly. "All that is past, darling."

But she asked no more questions and the remainder of the trip to Berlin was passed in peace. When we came in at Tempelhof Field, Osfried said: "Wolff, at least you will give me credit for my share in getting the Hagen figures?"

I shrugged, playing it to the end.

"I'll tell everything, *Herr Oberst-Leutnant*. It makes my share of the event more interesting."

Maya said: "Wolff, when can we be alone? There is so much to say."

I looked at Osfried. He shrugged and said: "Maya, Wolff has much to do. He

is still on duty. Until he has fully reported, his time is not free."

I smiled at her. "You see?"

She wrote hastily on a card. "My address and telephone. Except when I am at the broadcasting station, you can get me. And make it quick, my sweetheart."

She reached up her lips and I kissed her. She waved from a taxicab and then she was gone. I turned to Osfried.

It was now dark and his face had a hideous white grayness. I wanted above all some hours of freedom to get to the Traube. But for the moment I had to listen to Osfried.

"Go to the Fürstenhof on the Potsdamer Platz," he said. "Rooms are reserved for you. I shall see Herr Himmler and find out when he will see you."

THOUGH I nodded, I didn't like this. The speed and efficiency with which I had been brought from Lisbon didn't make this delay sound right. I had expected to be taken to Himmler at once. So I said: "Why wait now?"

"Because I so order it," he cried in sudden fury. "Remember, you are not *Oberst* yet."

I seized the opening. "But I shall be. And meanwhile, since I do not wish to be arrested, give me German money. I have only American."

It is a little ironic comedy here to report that he gave me reichsmarks at the rate of five for one dollar, American. There was a touch of the miser about Osfried.

In any case, I took one of the few official cabs, stowed my luggage and departed for the Fürstenhof. Osfried's order for me to remain there until telephoned was in my ear as I rode off.

I was pretty well satisfied with developments on the whole. I was in Berlin, and two hours or even less of free movement would permit me to get the Nazi lists and be ready to seize the first chance to get out.

My rooms at the comfortable old Fürstenhof were practically luxurious and I received the awed obsequiousness accorded to a Party man. So I enjoyed a bath, a bite of dinner, and began to weigh the risks of moving through the blackout to the Traube restaurant.

However, the opportunity wasn't given. I had just returned to my rooms when the telephone rang.

A curt, authoritative voice said, *"Herr Hauptmann* Braunen? You will come at once to Herr Himmler's office in the Alexander Platz. He will expect you within ten minutes."

"Zu befehl!" I gave the common German reply of obedience. . . .

The blackout was complete when I walked across the Potsdamer Platz to Voss Strasse. I was cautioned, by a policeman, not to smoke.

"The *Schweinhund* English come every night now," he said grimly.

I noticed an absence of cabs. Knowing Berlin of old, I halted on the corner for a trolley car which would pass in front of the Polizei-Prazidium.* Then, because I was nervous, I started to walk up Voss Strasse. I had nearly reached Wilhelmplatz when a motor-car with only blued lights in its headlights came up at fast speed. It stopped with a scream of brakes. Two men leaped out. They wore ragged clothes and cockbill caps. But one had a gun, the other a blackjack. They rushed at me.

The one threatened with his gun.

"Don't resist, *Herr*," he growled, "or it will be the worse."

The other had every intention of slamming me on the head with the blackjack. The driver of the car had slanted it so that the scene was vaguely illuminated by the blued lights.

A man is entitled to be a fool once. And I made my fool play then. These two men meant business, and they were tough. But I did not throw up my hands. As the blackjack-wielder lunged in, I made a football charge. A blocking dive that struck him just above the knees. I hit him with one hundred and eighty pounds of drive and he shot backward and went down with a crash that must have nearly broken his back. I was curled for the roll; I went on over and up to my knees, and leaped to my feet.

The man with the gun was less than ten feet from me. He fired point-blank.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW a man with a pistol that seemed the size of a cannon could miss at that distance, I'll never know. But the bullet whistled past my neck, and he

* Polizei-Prazidium, head of the old German public police. It is now one of Himmler's many offices.

never got the chance to fire again. I closed with him in a rush, and I was rough. A knee to the groin doubled him in agony. A hook to the jaw straightened him up, and a left to the stomach dropped him practically paralyzed.

I grabbed the gun and jerked him to his feet. His face was screwed up in agony. Then a shot roared behind me. The driver of the car! It didn't come close enough to worry about, but I lost no time in jerking the breathless gunman in front of me. At that, the car drove off. I gave a yell, but there was no policeman to stop it.

I shook my prisoner. He was gasping, still in agony.

"Who put you up to this?" I growled. "Quick, or I'll give you some more."

He shrank in my grasp as I raised one hand. He wasn't big, and he was awfully scared and hurt.

"Oberst-Leutnant," he whimpered, "we were not to shoot unless you resisted. We were to bring you to him."

Osfried! Now, what did this mean?

Before I could question him further, the policeman on point duty at the Wilhelmplatz came running up. He had a blue flashlight to light up the scene.

He immediately handcuffed the prisoners. "Armed robbery in the blackout is decapitation," he said sternly. "Now, *mein Herr,* your evidence."

As I told him what had happened, I was weighing my best move. If I charged Osfried with the attack, he would deny it. He had power, how much I could not say. But for the moment I decided to let it go as a hold-up in the blackout. I had a hunch I might turn this incident to my own use against Osfried.

AFTER the policeman had permitted me to go on, I continued toward the Polizei-Prazidium. It was clear to me now that Osfried had intended forcibly to take from me this perfectly useless Hagen explosive formula. But if it was useless—and Wymeth would not have let me take it if it was valuable—why was Osfried risking so much to get it?

I had no answer to the question.

But that he had risked even more than I had known was made clear when I reached the Polizei-Prazidium.

An *Ober-Leutnant* looked at me in blank astonishment when I told my name, rank and that I had been summoned by Himmler.

"But there must be some mistake, *Herr Hauptmann,*" he cried. "Herr Himmler left yesterday for Berchtesgaden. He is summoned by the Führer himself."

I knew then that Osfried had framed it all. To what other purpose besides gaining the Hagen equations I knew not. Nor at the moment did I care.

The *Ober-Leutnant* said, "I shall see that Herr Himmler learns of this immediately."

"Do," I said.

"And we shall give you a special car and bodyguard back to your hotel."

I did not want that at all. Himmler away meant I had the few hours necessary to contact Arnold. But it did no good to protest.

"There is word concerning your arrival, *Herr Hauptmann,*" said the *Ober-Leutnant* firmly. "It is my duty."

SO I rode back to the Fürstenhof in an official police car. It was delay, but as soon as they were gone I intended to start out at once for the Traube.

The silly fools escorted me directly to my door. The *Feldwebel* said: "If the *Herr Hauptmann* agrees, we shall leave a policeman on guard here in the corridor."

"Ni, ni," I said hastily. "Thieves may be in the street, but not in the hotel."

That seemed to satisfy him, and I sighed with relief as they thumped down the hall. I went into my room to give them a chance to get clear of the hotel.

The instant I closed the door, I knew something was wrong. The lights were on. I had left them off. My baggage had been moved from where I placed it. One leather bag was open, although I had left it closed.

I had been forced to surrender the thug's gun to the police as evidence, but there was an American automatic in my one bag. I walked to it.

As I reached inside, Maya's voice said: *"Ni, ni,* Wolff! Take your hand out of there."

I turned. She had stepped out of the bathroom. She had a tall yellow-haired young man with her. And this youth held a Lüger pistol with a hollow steel butt that made it into a semi-machine gun. He had it trained on my middle, and it took only one look at his crazy eyes to know he would use it.

I let my hands drop to my side.

"Well, Maya!" I forced a smile. "Is this any way to greet a sweetheart?"

She wasn't smiling, and she didn't smile now.

"Let's have done with the pretense," she said. "You're not Wolff. I knew it the moment I kissed you in Paris."

"I thought I kissed you very thoroughly," I said, grinning. "At least, it was marvelous to me."

She stamped her foot lightly.

"What I had to do, because Osfried was there," she muttered, "had nothing to do with you."

I did not reply to that. What was between her and Osfried? It was just one more mystery in this clash of personalities that threatened my mission.

"I know you are not Wolff Braunen," she said quietly. "You are kin to him—the resemblance proves that. But you are not he."

"I am afraid you are ill, *lieb' Fräulein,*" I said.

I had my gaze on the youth. His look nor his aim had not wavered.

"Impersonating Wolff," Maya Wirten said, "you have come back with papers. I wish them—now. You will not be harmed if you obey."

"And if I refuse?" I asked.

"I shall turn you over to the police to deal with as an impostor," she said.

I smiled. "If you intend to do that, why didn't you bring the police with you?"

She flinched then. Whatever her scheme, the police did not figure in it except as a last resort. I took hope that boldness might get me out of this jam.

"Why did you come here and search my baggage?" I assumed the offensive. "What if *I* have a few words to say to the police?"

"The police have Wolff's fingerprints," she said.

Damn the kid's unwavering stare! I had been a fool once tonight, but I knew better than to be one now. One move, and that gun would cut me down.

"Listen here, Maya," I said. "I don't know what all this means, but I bring no papers of interest to you—whatever your game."

"Then why Osfried's interest? Why Himmler's? Why Hitler's?"

I shrugged. "The thing I have relates to an explosive. Naturally, with a war on, they're interested."

FOR the first time she seemed to hesitate. Her fine eyes were clouded with doubt. I seized the instant.

"I'm going out that door, Maya," I said. "If your man shoots, I won't be the only one dead."

I walked toward the door. The youth grunted: "*Der Teufel! Ich weide—*"

"Wait, Kurt," she cried, and I knew I had won.

But before I could even take hold of the door-latch, there came the thump of boots in the corridor. Knuckles thudded on the paneling of my door.

The boy might have shot then, but Maya thrust down his arm. Her gaze sought mine bewilderedly. I shrugged. The rapping was repeated.

"Who's there?" I called.

"*Oberst-Leutnant* Osfried! Open up! *Sehr schnell!*"

I swung on Maya. "It won't do for him to catch you here," I whispered.

"But what shall I do?" She was completely confused now.

I gestured to the bathroom.

"In there, the both of you. I'll get rid of him as quickly as I can."

She fled to the bathroom, taking the youth with her.

"Open up, I say," yelled Osfried.

BUT I went to my bag; the American automatic was there. I dropped the magazine, made certain there was a cartridge in the breech. Then I unlocked the door.

"I've got a gun now, *Herr Oberst-Leutnant,*" I said, "so walk carefully."

He was in full regalia, cloak and sword banging at his boots.

"I don't know what you mean," he muttered, but his eyes evaded mine.

"I think you do," I said.

"*Durch Gott!*" he cried. "Enough of that. Pack your things. We leave at once."

I shook my head. "I go nowhere with you! Your men failed to get the Hagen figures. Now you want to make certain."

I hefted the gun as I spoke. He stared at it. Then he cursed, one of those long German oaths.

"Listen, and don't be a *Dummkopf,*" he said. "That *Ober-Leutnant* at the Polizei-Prazidium has talked by radio with Herr Himmler at Berchtesgaden. You've got to go there—now."

"Well planned," I said; "but I'm not a fool twice."

His face twisted with fury. "Can you get it through your thick skull that the Führer himself wishes to speak to you? It is his command—he hates delay. You've got to go now."

Still I shook my head.

Osfried backed into the corridor. He pointed to a man waiting there.

"There's your *Ober-Leutnant* to escort you to the plane himself. I am summoned too. And God help us both if we delay an instant."

For an instant I could only stare. Berchtesgaden! Hitler! I was to talk to Hitler! Good God, how could I possibly escape detection now?

"Come," said Osfried harshly. "The plane is waiting."

AUGSBURG had drifted under the left wing, alive and glowing in the dawn sun. Ahead and below was the private airport of Hitler's eagle's nest at Berchtesgaden. (There was no camouflage of the field, and I wonder what international politeness keeps it and Hitler's house from being bombed to ruins.)

The motors had been shut off and we were gliding down. I had slept part of the journey from Berlin, chiefly because the presence of two other Party officials prevented my having it out with Osfried. But I had considered that problem and had arrived at a decision.

So when we had climbed out and were walking toward the swastika-marked Mercedes (one of Hitler's private cars), I turned to Osfried. He was pale, ill at ease. He seized this chance to mutter: "False charges by you now will not help either of us."

"I am in no danger," I lied; "but you are."

"I will deny everything—and I have friends. Goebbels will back me against anything you say."

He said this vehemently. I perceived it must be so, because he was obviously depending on it. And I knew that club-footed Joseph Goebbels was still a master in Germany, dictator of propaganda.

I said, however: "Goebbels will toss you to the jackals if it pleases him."

His silence proved his fear of that contingency.

"You wanted the Hagen formula," I said. "Why?"

"The man who delivers it receives praise from the Führer," he said. "I should be a general—made one of Himmler's assistants."

It was as close as he ever came to admitting the attack on me.

"And you wanted to oppose my promotion—and cause me to lose favor with the Party—and with Maya?" I hazarded.

He did not reply, because we were now in the car, and the ascent of the winding private road had begun. I closed the discussion by saying:

"It suits my purpose now not to expose your action. But I may do so later—and if it becomes necessary, I'll throw you to the lions."

He made no reply. I leaned back, feeling that at the proper moment I could use Osfried to aid my escape.

We sped up the winding road at prodigious speed.

Halfway up, we were stopped and searched. My gun was taken. Osfried was forced to leave his sword. Never was road better watched. S.S. troops were spotted everywhere.

We passed concrete pill-boxes with machine-gun nests so placed that they commanded every inch of that winding road. Once I caught the sun-flash on field-glasses as some officer higher up inspected us as we went around a hairpin curve.

This road ended at a sheer rock escarpment. The house was a hundred feet above, reached by an elevator. Approaching from this way I could get no idea of its size, except that it was huge—like an American country house, only all modern, of glass and concrete.* Here were more S.S. guards. Before entering the elevator, we passed before an electric eye arrangement that would have signaled if we had carried a knife or gun.

The ride up passed in silence. We got out in what was a large foyer. I saw a man, obviously a valet, in black suiting with a swastika on his left breast. A maid was similarly in black. Because I was nervous, I had lit a cigarette. An *Unter-Leutnant* said sharply: "Put out that cigarette. You know the Führer loathes tobacco."

He snatched it away from me, pinched out the coal and handed it to the valet.

"Follow me," he ordered, and led the way to a large anteroom, most magnificently furnished.

There was some sort of major-domo here whose expression was a perpetual smile. I did not find out why until I got closer, when I saw that his lower jaw had been shot away and rebuilt by plastic surgery. The smashed nerves and

* Though called a cottage, Hitler's Berchtesgaden home has twenty-two bedrooms.

muscles accounted for the fixed smile that became ghastly after a while.

He nodded to Osfried, and they spoke a few words which I could not understand. I was getting more nervous by the instant. The palms of my hands sweated, and I wiped them on my trousers. I wanted badly to smoke.

And while I stood waiting, the door behind me opened and two men entered. Good Lord! One of them had a club-foot. That is to say, he wore a shoe with a built-up sole, perhaps an inch and a half thick, and as he put his weight on it, he rocked forward to thrust out his other leg.

Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda! How could you mistake that little man with the thin cynical face, the tired disillusioned eyes, the hard twist to the discontented mouth.

The other—big, elephantine, wearing a gorgeous blue uniform hung with gold swastikas and gold rings. A huge moon face in which a flat mouth and a big hooked nose, and thin bloodshot eyes, seemed lost in doughy flesh. Goering, the Air Marshal!

Though they walked together, these two did not speak. Goering wore a pair of new black riding-boots. They creaked, and the spurs clanked as he walked. I had heard he was a jolly sort of man, but his face was set now, and when once he glanced sidelong at Goebbels, the glance was filled with hatred.

He preceded Goebbels into the room beyond, and let the door slam back in the other's face.

Goebbels' hand stopped it, and his mouth tightened; and a tremor, probably of hatred, shook his thin slight frame. He disappeared from sight.

"Surely," I whispered, "they're not here about this Hagen business?"

Osfried shrugged. "Perhaps. It is highly important."

I FELT sweat burst out on me once more; my shirt felt cold and clammy to my hot body. What would they think when they found these figures nonsense? I'd never get back to Berlin and Arnold and my mission. . . .

Ten mortal minutes passed and then a buzzer rang. The man with the frozen smile said to Osfried: "You are to enter with the *Hauptmann*."

As befitted his rank, Osfried preceded me through the door. We entered into an enormous room, two sides of which seemed made entirely of glass. At the far end a log fire burned in a huge fireplace.

Goebbels and Goering stood near this, looking toward the inside wall.

Here, in front of a bas-relief map* that covered that entire side of the room, I saw a smallish, unimportant-looking man, thick with middle age around his belt-line. He had a sagging forelock on his left temple. He had a toothbrush mustache, the kind Charley Chaplin has made famous and funny. It took, even then, an instant of mental effort to comprehend that *this* was Hitler. Adolph Hitler! *Der Führer!*

Osfried's heels slammed together, spurs clinking. He stiffened rigidly. I quickly thrust out my own chest and banged my heels together. There was complete silence in the room after that, save for the crackling of the fire.

HITLER had not yet turned. My gaze stole to the map; it was studded with little flags that became myriad along the French channel coast. He was studying these, hands loosely clasped behind him. He wore a gray coat with a Sam Browne belt of black. A swastika arm-band encircled the coat above the left elbow. He wore gray slacks—not very well fitted. His shoes were small and black and highly polished. He wore a white shirt, and the tie had been carelessly knotted so the ends hung apart. An Iron Cross of the first class was pinned to his tunic.

Finally, now, he turned slowly from the map. He thrust back the forelock, which promptly fell part way down again. He stared at us. His face was an utter blank. There was still silence. Goering was looking at a ring on his fat finger. Goebbels merely appeared bored.

Then Hitler's right hand flew out, fingers stiffened so that they bent upward. He looked at us, did not speak.

Osfried's hand flew out. "*Heil Hitler!*" His voice was choked with emotion. It was my cue. My own hand flew out. I cried: "*Heil Hitler!*"

Hitler waited; then his head nodded, and Osfried darted forward, to freeze again two paces from him. I drew up behind and to the left of him.

"Osfried, Max, *mein Führer,*" he said. "I have brought Braunen, Wolff, at your orders."

* Hitler is inordinately fond of maps and spends hours poring over them. This bas-relief map of Europe was specially built, and he has another of what is known as "Germanic Europe."

Hitler looked a little blank. Goebbels clip-clopped up on his horrible clubfoot. He murmured with Hitler in an undertone. Hitler nodded. He smiled at me. Now, this smile was a warm one. It did not remove him from the commonplace, but it did lift his face out of the sagging droop that his solitary mind and fifty years had imparted to the flesh. Now he nodded at me. I advanced to within two paces.

"Your Führer," said Hitler, "knows of your gallant courage and resourceful daring. For your services to me, I am pleased to confer upon you the Iron Cross of the first class."

He hooked it to my coat without compressing the pin. I did not know what to do. I stepped back a pace, flung out my hand and, trying to put all the fake emotion I could into my voice, I cried: *"Heil Hitler!"*

This seemed the proper thing to do. Everybody looked pleased, and Hitler smiled again.

"It will please me to sign your commission as *Oberst-Leutnant.*"

AT this juncture another door on the right opened, and a slender, weasel-faced man, the fires of insatiable activity glowing in his deep-set eyes, entered rapidly. I knew from pictures that this was Heinrich Himmler, chief of the dreaded Gestapo.

He looked like a man who had come up the hard way and wanted to go farther. And in his eyes, as in Goering's and Goebbels', was the eternal suspicion of everyone—the suspicion that is the price of power.

He did not salute Hitler, but whispered with him briefly. While Himmler talked, Hitler put his hand in friendly fashion on the Gestapo chief's shoulder.

Then Hitler turned and said to Osfried: "You may wait outside."

Osfried whirled in proper military fashion; his glance swept me—fear, hope, hatred, all his tautness was in the brief gaze. He went out, and I was left alone with the four most powerful men in Germany.

Himmler came over and shook hands. "We'll look into that attack and fake message later," he said. "Meanwhile, let me have the Hagen figures."

I smiled weakly. "I have no knife, Excellenz, and they are sewn in my waistband."

Goering overheard, and bellowed with laughter. He ceased picking part of his breakfast from his teeth and gave me a gold knife encrusted with small diamonds. Rapidly I slit the stitches and pulled out the pieces of silk.

"You understand, Excellenz," I said, "that this is not complete."

"Yes, yes," he said impatiently, taking them. "Wait over there. The Führer may wish to question you."

I WENT over by the huge map. I tried to feel calm, to study the many flags, but all I could think of was what was going to happen when they discovered the fraud.

But a man stays tense just so long and then after a while ceases to fret. There was nothing I could do, but I told myself that if exposure came here, I'd damned well make a fight of it. It would be something if I could take one or two of those muttering maniacs with me.

At the end of ten minutes Himmler strolled over unhurriedly. Goebbels and Goering and Hitler were still looking at the silk strips.

Himmler commented: "It's somewhat abstruse."

I nodded.

He said: "Did you bring the Black Front dossier?"

Black Front? I had not the slightest notion of what he meant. All I could do was say: "No, Excellenz."

He scowled. "But I expressly requested it. What—"

To stave off disaster, I broke in: "Perhaps, Excellenz, you will be good enough to recall that Deicher was shot and killed by the American police. He doubtless would have given it to me, knowing its importance. But"—I shrugged—"it was a close call—and the poor fellow gave his life for me to escape."

Himmler nodded. "Yes, that is so. But I must stir Grostedt up. The *verdammt* Black Front is becoming annoying."

With that, he strolled back to the conference. A moment later he crooked his finger for me to approach.

Goering was saying: "I can't understand this. It was my conception that Hagen had completed everything but the problem of stability."

"Correct," came Goebbels' cold voice. "The vibrations of an airplane would explode the charge. But Mannerheim, who was conducting similar experiments, can solve that."

"But not from this, you say, Hermann?" Hitler's voice was sulky.

"Not from these," growled the huge man. He turned his little piggish eyes on me. "You say you have this from Hagen?"

"Not at all, Excellenz," I rejoined. "It was given to me by Deicher to bring to Berlin. I know nothing else of it—" I paused as a desperate idea occurred. "Except—" I hesitated deliberately.

"Well, what else?" roared Goering. "Out with it, man."

"Deicher apparently expected trouble over this." I gestured at the silk. "He told me to say that if there was one man who knew the answers, it was Kurt Walther, Hagen's assistant."

"Walther?" Goering swung on Himmler. And now I could see Goering didn't like the Gestapo chief, either. "What about Walther?"

Himmler shrugged. "A renegade, Herr Marshal. But he is an able experimental chemist. Just what Deicher meant I do not know."

He looked at me. They all looked at me. Hitler's eyes were almost vacant, as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

"I believe Fritz had in mind the compulsory coöperation of Walther," I said. "I am not certain but Walther has relatives over here."

Their eyes betrayed immediate comprehension, all save Hitler's, which remained the same.

I said boldly: "Your Excellencies can depend upon it that if Walther's coöperation is necessary to explain or aid these equations, I can go to New York and get it."

I waited anxiously for their reactions. Upon them depended an easy, secure escape from this country.

Goering said: "We'd better talk to Mannerheim before deciding anything."

MY heart sank, at these words: If Mannerheim was indeed such a chemist as they described, then he would immediately see through the gibberish Wymeth had given me.

"He's in Bremerhaven," said Himmler.

"Then get him here," cried Hitler suddenly. His eyes took fire. "Time! It is the one fact no one can conquer. Minutes! Hours! They are priceless."

Everyone else suddenly grew very still and quiet.

Hitler's body seemed to jerk, and his face got red. "Time! *Gott im Himmel!* Do you realize I am growing older? That I have so much to do, and only four years to do it in?"

Goebbels said gently: "*Mein Führer,* do not listen to that soothsayer Cossitz.* You have done what you have done because you are a genius, a leader, and not because that mountebank thinks he can read your life in the stars."

"Hush, Joseph," said Hitler, but not illtemperedly. "I'll not have Karl cursed."

It was mild, but Goebbels shut up.

HITLER took a turn around the room in silence, then swung back and eyed the map. "I could fix peace for a thousand years," he said, "if only I could push those red arrows across the channel. Use Mannerheim, Walther—anyone—but give me the weapon. I must be done with all this fighting and get on with reconstruction and organization. Only four years." His eyes filled with tears. "So much to do, so little time in which to do it."

I wondered just how much faith he did put in this astrologer—if his belief in his death in four years meant anything.

"For centuries," he suddenly burst out, "they have squabbled in Europe like a pack of snarling dogs. They need the master, the whip to make them lie down peacefully, to make them produce, to build Europe into a new and rich land. I will have it so, Hermann. Nothing shall stop me."

Himmler caught my eye and gestured slightly. Hitler had apparently forgotten me. He was still breathing hard, the lashes of his pale eyes wet with tears. Now he turned.

"You may go," he said. "Heinrich will direct you further. I am well pleased with you."

I raised my hand, cried, *"Heil Hitler!"* and backed out. I stood in the anteroom, weighing this strange scene. Where was I? How close to disaster?

I waited possibly ten minutes before Himmler came out. He took hold of my arm in friendly fashion.

"You've done all you could, Wolff," he said, "and I think your plan of striking through Walther is an excellent one. Have you worked out the details?"

I had not, but I began improvising on the spot.

"Where are Walther's kin now?" I asked.

"In Berlin," replied Himmler. (The man's memory is phenomenal.)

* Cossitz is an astrologer whose star-readings are believed to aid Hitler in his choice of time to strike. He travels everywhere with Hitler.

"Good!" I cried—and I meant it, for I saw how to return immediately to Berlin. "Excellent! I shall go to Berlin now—today. I'll see Walther's relatives—with your permission, of course. I'll get a letter from them to him. The letter will say what will happen to them unless he gives his instant and full cooperation."

Himmler's head nodded approval.

"I may be able to improve on that," he said. "But in any case you are to return to Berlin—you and Osfried. You will hold yourself for my orders. Mannerheim has been summoned. When he has stated his case, I will know what to do."

He shook hands and strode off to another part of the house. The major-domo with the frozen smile led me toward the elevator door.

During this interlude I weighed the situation. Mannerheim would betray the writing on the silk as nonsense. This meant haste. Moments counted. I could reach Berlin late tonight. I could, therefore, leave by dawn for the Swiss frontier. And by the time Mannerheim had shown the trick, I should be across it to safety.

Climbing into the transport plane with Osfried, I forgot all else but this scheme.

CHAPTER TEN

BERLIN lay dark and quiet along the Spree as my cab chugged through empty streets toward Leipzigstrasse and the Traube. It was shortly after eleven at night—a clear night—and the driver told me the bombers were expected, and no one wanted to be caught away from shelter. He seemed to think I was a fool to pay his triple-rate for the trip.

I was eager and nervous. I had rid myself of Osfried; there had been no messages or guards at the hotel, nothing to delay my meeting with Arnold.

I paid the cab and entered the blackened foyer of the famous old restaurant. A concierge closed the outside door before opening that to the restaurant.

"The tiniest spark of light, kind *Herr,*" he warned, "the scrape of a nail on stone—it is enough for them."

I tipped him a mark and passed inside. The place was crowded; there was smell of hops, of whisky, a fog of smoke and the low hum of many voices. It was as if people, knowing they would not be permitted to sleep, wanted to be up, and gay, and face the danger in groups. A sort of community courage, each man afraid to show his fears in front of others.

There was a huge sign that read: *"At the first alarm, please walk quietly to the shelter stairway."*

In the far corner some air pilots were rapping their mugs together and singing: "We Sail Against England Now." They had nice voices.

The head waiter, card in hand, bowed me in. I put on my most supercilious air and looked around. The table in the left corner was empty.

"I'll sit there," I said, "and I'll want food."

"The *Herr* has his card?"

I showed him my Gestapo card. He turned a little pale.

"As the *Herr Hauptmann* wishes."

He led the way to the table. I knew he would spread the word of my identity. I would be left severely alone, save by my waiter, which was what I wanted.

From the *sommelier* I ordered a glass of schnapps, and beer with my supper. Then the regular waiter came. I looked him over carefully.

He was a man of forty-odd, with a scar from his neck to his temple. His hair was white, his face lined, his eyes as expressionless as a doll's. Could this be a British agent?

I laid the menu flat, took out a cigarette and a box of wax matches. Now, wax matches ignite readily, and save in a gale of wind, it is difficult to waste one. With the cigarette bobbing in the corner of my mouth, I said: "I'll have wienerschnitzel,"—match scratch and out—"red cabbage, and be sure it's good and sour"—match scratch and out—"fried potatoes"—match scratch and out—"black coffee"—match scratch and out.

I looked at the match-box in disgust.

"Um Gottes Willen!" I cried in disgust. "Did you ever see such accursed matches?"

I threw the four burnt ones into the ash-tray, but made certain they had the proper arrangement. I glanced up at the waiter. His face was as blank as a wall.

"If the *Herr* will permit," he said, and took the box and lit a match and held it until my cigarette was going. He threw the burnt match into the tray. It made no pattern.

"Is that all the *Herr* wishes?" he asked.

"That's all," I said, "but hurry it. I'd like to eat a meal in peace once."

He moved noiselessly off. My glance followed him. Suppose he wasn't the agent? Suppose I had to lose this precious night; suppose Himmler's men had caught the in-between agent. How, then, could I get to Arnold? A thousand fears and worries assailed me in the next fifteen minutes.

Nor were they allayed when the waiter brought my order and a huge stein of beer. He served me deftly, silently; and when he had done so, he withdrew. I decided then that he was not my man. Perhaps the guy was off tonight. I ate, but the food tasted flat when I thought of Mannerheim, perhaps at this moment, pointing the finger at me.

I WAS nearly finished when the banshee shrill of a siren cut through the noise and smoke of the room.

"Air-raid alarm, *Herren!*" yelled the waiter. *"Bitte,* the protection is below. Service as usual."

I delayed to finish the veal, which was excellent. The siren screamed up and down, and up and down, like the death-cries of some monster. A nervous hush had fallen over the room. Then chairs scraped, there were hollow laughs, and some comment. They filed to the air-raid cellar below.

"Sehr schnell, bitte, Herr," said my waiter quietly.

I rose. Now I could hear distantly the diatonic beat of many motors, a dissonant threnody that suddenly had a deadly meaning.

Like the diapason of an organ, the roar of the anti-aircraft guns made the room quiver.

Quietly the waiter led the way to the cellar entrance. We were the last to enter, because of my delay. Here was the chance, if my waiter was the agent, for him to speak, give me a signal. He said nothing at all.

I smothered an oath and went below. The air-raid cellar was more than large and commodious and airy (forced electric ventilation); it was a movie house. Presumably to offset loss of morale by British bombing, a few such large shelters as this had motion-picture projectors. And as the waiters hustled about to get orders, the lights darkened and a German news-reel picture began to flicker.

These were absolutely marvelous, and I sat entranced. They were pictures of the swift savage German advance into France, and were propaganda to show the irresistibility of the German army.

I had never seen anything like them before in my life. These were not made with telescopic lens from a safe dugout. There were pictures of a *Panzerdivision* charging and being opposed by a French tank squadron. And the pictures were made from a tank advancing to the attack. The operator of the camera must have been a member of the crew of a leading tank.

I saw a German tank hit and burst into flames. The crew came leaping out, their clothes flaming, and two of them crumpled, almost in midair, as a burst of machine-gun fire hit them. I saw two French tanks hit by heavy shells. One burst into flames as it stalled. And our tank—that is, the camera tank—was bearing down on it, the picture getting bigger and bigger as the camera advanced.

So I saw a man die on the screen. He was a Frenchman, and I should say he was an officer, because he had a little bar of cloth on his left sleeve. He had torn off his tank helmet. And as we came closer, he was trying to come out of the tank entrance in front. Smoke and flames surged from behind and around him. He was on fire, and his face held such agony as I never want to behold. He didn't make it. You suddenly saw him relax wearily, quietly, and lie half in and half out. You saw the clothes burn off him, and you saw his flesh blacken. Then the tank went on, and a new scene of Frenchmen—running and being machine-gunned—followed.

Next to me a German whispered: *"Kolossal!* Do you realize that fifty of our photographers have been killed in action—taking such pictures of the victory as this?"

"It is unbelievable," I muttered.

"It is heroic," he said.

MINUTE after minute of death and destruction. I felt half sick, but utterly fascinated, as man is, by the sight of horrible death. It was difficult to believe that this was not a movie trick, a drama in which, afterward, all the actors would get up and smoke cigarettes. But that Frenchman dying returned like a nightmare. Then the lights went up, and I blessed the light.

My waiter came to me. "The *Herr's* beer is at the table."

In the corner was a small table, and on it a stein of beer. I had not ordered

it, but I went there. The waiter came to me and asked me if I wanted anything else. "The *Kuchen* are excellent," he said.

"Then bring me two," I replied.

"Be quick," he said in English. "Who are you? What is it?"

My heart leaped and thudded suffocatingly at last.

"Brownen, Eric. New York. Captain Morsley—"

"Yes," he said, making out my bill. "A propaganda leaflet had a code message about you."

"I'm to see Arnold and get the Nazi *Nid, Bohrmaschine* and *Sturmtruppen* lists and leave at once."

He handed me my bill. "Impossible!" he whispered. "You cannot see Arnold."

My heart sank. "Impossible? You mean that he's been killed—that—"

"No, he's alive. But he's in the concentration-camp at Dachau."

I was stunned. Concentration-camp! The same as saying he was buried alive. If he was not dead, he might as well be. Then I seized a thought.

"But the names—the lists—maybe you know where—"

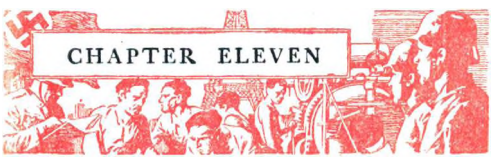
"No." He bowed as for the tip. "Arnold hid them. Only he knows where."

"But you can get him word—that I'm here—"

"No. Every effort to get to him has failed. It is too risky. It means capture."

For one instant a touch of emotion came into his voice. "The fool fell for a girl—and they got him." He paused, pulled back my chair. "Go now. Stay away from me. I have other work to do. I cannot help you in this. I advise you to go back and report the truth."

Ten minutes later the all-clear blew, and I went up to the now quiet street. A few searchlight beams wheeled across the sky like a battalion of bright bayonets. I started to walk to the hotel. Arnold in a concentration-camp! What was I going to do now?



THE next morning I walked to the Polizei-Prazidium by the roundabout way of Unter den Linden. A squad of Polish prisoners under a German corporal were working on a huge bomb-crater in the magnificent thoroughfare, not two hundred yards from the gorgeous arch of the Brandenburg Gate.

I stopped to look because I wanted time to consider once again the plan of action which had come out of a sleepless tense night. For hours I had wrestled with the thought of catching the next train to the Swiss border. And each time I had shrunk from it. Maybe the German blood in me accounts for this stubborn streak. But I hated to leave unfinished business, go back and say lamely: "I flopped."

Instead, in the dawn, a possible way of reaching Arnold had occurred. It was dangerous; it had less than a fifty-fifty chance of success. But I determined to try it.

Now, staring at that huge bomb-hole, I weighed all the factors once more. Then I shrugged and walked swiftly to the Polizei-Prazidium.

Word travels swiftly in the Gestapo, and it was known that Hitler had decorated me, promoted me. A captain received me very correctly, heels clicking. I smiled and gave him his ease.

"I haven't got the commission yet, Captain," I said.

It was the wrong thing. He frowned. "What the *Führer* promises, he gives!"

"I meant," I said hastily, "that we are equals until it is signed."

He smiled and we shook hands, and I said: "Certain matters have risen, and it is necessary for me to look at the dossier of Emil Schönbritz." This was the name by which Arnold was known in Germany.

"It's rather irregular," he said doubtfully. "You are certain it is official?"

"When Herr Himmler comes he will tell you so."

"*Ni, ni,*" he said hastily, "I take your parole for it."

Good God, the endless, eternal files of German method! He led me into a room that stretched for a city block, filled with files and men working at them. When I had said Schönbritz was working in the *Deutsches Auslander* Bureau, the Captain knew exactly where to go.

He gave me the dossier and I eagerly read the record. There was a lot of official phraseology about Schönbritz getting drunk and assaulting a certain Major Kleinglauer of the S.S. troops. But between the lines I read the real story. Arnold had fallen in love with a Berlin girl, Magda Runge, and unfortunately for him, Major Kleinglauer was smitten

also. There was jealousy written there, and the fact that Schönbritz had refused to step aside for the Major. According to the record, Schönbritz, while drunk, had violently attacked the Major, cursed the S.S. troops as Hitler's hoodlums. The Major had finally subdued Schönbritz by use of his sword and gun.

That was the pay-off. Civilians in Germany cannot carry arms. Obviously, Schönbritz had not attacked the Major. Equally obviously, the girl had preferred Schönbritz, and to get him out of the way the Major had framed him—beaten him up, charged him and got away with it.

The sentence read: "*Six months disciplinary confinement in the penal barracks at Dachau.*"

The date the sentence began was only three weeks gone. Arnold had over five months to serve. My hope of using a pretended friendship to get him out was gone. But there was still another way.

I turned to the captain. "This man Schönbritz is an acquaintance of mine, and I'd like to see him. Can you get me permission to visit him at Dachau?"

The captain looked amazed. "But that is impossible—it isn't done."

"But—" I began.

"Such permission could only come from Herr Himmler himself," interrupted the captain firmly.

I was in despair then, for I knew I had no excuse to see Schönbritz that could stand Himmler's sharp inquiries.

WHILE I stood debating my next move, a chilled voice behind me said: "So you have thought of it too."

I turned quickly to face Osfried. His face was enigmatic, his eyes hostile.

"Well—" I stalled.

"I can save you time," he cut in. "The Walther family is in the City Prison awaiting transfer to Dachau."

"Why did you make the inquiry?" I said haughtily, to gain time.

"Because Herr Himmler is just returned, and my informant at Berchtesgaden declares that Mannerheim is completely confused by the Hagen figures."

I didn't wonder at it. But a sudden chill came to me. Was I already suspect, then, for bringing nonsense? I pretended anger.

"The Walther idea was mine," I said. "You can't make face with Herr Himmler by stealing it."

"Some day, Wolff," Osfried threatened, "I'll find a weak spot in your armor. Expect no mercy."

I laughed harshly. "I have still the little matter of the assault on me—at your orders. Herr Himmler—"

"You are quite mistaken," he cut in calmly. "A brazen charge with no evidence cannot hurt me."

"The two men you used will give evidence—"

"No," said Osfried. "They were unfortunately shot and killed while trying to escape."

I stared at him, then shrugged. "Very clever, and very brutal!"

He did not reply. And while I stood gazing past him, a new plan of attack came. I smiled. "In any case, I shall see Herr Himmler now."

I TURNED on my heel and went out to the stairway that led to Himmler's offices. As I entered the antechamber, an S.S. trooper said: "*Ach, Herr Oberst-Leutnant,* Herr Himmler has been trying to reach you for ten minutes. Please to go in at once."

There was no time to wonder about this summons. I might be sticking my head into a trap. But the trooper opened the door. I caught a glimpse of Himmler at his desk.

I walked briskly in, came to attention before his desk and said: "I have just learned of your summons, Excellenz. I was here on official duty."

I kept my face expressionless, but I studied his for a clue as to what the situation was. He gave me a penetrating stare.

"Stand at ease, *Oberst-Leutnant,*" he said unsmilingly, and I relaxed.

He suddenly swore heartily and said: "We've been cheated. By whom and how I don't know, but Mannerheim declares the Hagen formula is gibberish."

"I'm sorry, Excellenz," I said. "But you know, I was merely the messenger—"

"I know. That's understood. No blame attaches to you. But the fact remains that Hagen was on the track of a greater explosive, and if we had his experiments complete, Mannerheim could reduce the volatility and stabilize the explosive for use."

"I had hoped he had sufficient data for that."

"He has nothing useful. Two intermediate steps are completely missing. And yet this detonite, if stabilized, could make bombs that could raze London in three months' time. The Führer is certain of it. He wants it for spring use, if we cannot reach a decision before."

"My plan to use Walther—" I began. "He knows all of Hagen's steps—"

"I was coming to that," interrupted the Gestapo chief. "It presents difficulties, as I find"—he patted a folded dossier—"they're a pack of cursed Jews—and this Walther in America will do nothing for us."

I was aflame with an idea. I leaped forward.

"Excellenz," I cried, "suppose this Kurt Walther learned in the handwriting of his own relatives that his assistance to us would ease their lot—get them their freedom?"

He appeared puzzled. "How would you get those swine to write such a letter?"

I had him, and I plunged on.

"Listen, Excellenz: these Walthers are in the City Prison. Have them transferred to Dachau at once. I shall be placed under pretended arrest and be shipped with them. I promise you that by talk, promises—hope of freedom or even of escape—I will get the letter."

As he hesitated doubtfully, I hurried on: "I'll explain that I shall escape—get to America. I will ask them for a written message to their son."

I forced myself to grin mockingly.

"When Kurt Walther sees that letter from Dachau—and he knows its reputation—and I tell him what will be in store for *them* if he refuses—Excellenz, you know he will give us anything."

"They're clannish and affectionate," he murmured, and as the idea grew on him, he finally smiled. "*Herr Gott,* I think it will work. At least, with the Führer demanding haste, it will expedite matters." He nodded at me approvingly.

My head pounded. He had accepted! I could reach Arnold after all.

"I'll arrange matters at once," he promised. "It will have to be realistic." He smiled grimly. "But orders will be given to lighten your hardship."

"For this," I said fervently, "I could endure anything."

HE smiled at my apparent zeal, and waved his hand in token of dismissal. As I retreated to the door, he called: "And incidentally, those two thieves were killed trying to escape. The matter is thus closed."

I bowed and withdrew.

It may seem that I was using the sufferings of the Walther family, even increasing them. But anyone who knows the City Prison in Berlin will realize that even the dreaded Dachau would be a relief. I could not save them; even if I had been actually a German agent, and had obtained Kurt Walther's aid, it would not have saved his family. The German holds no promise concerning Jews as binding.

I would do what I could to aid them, mitigate their suffering. And I solaced my mind by reminding myself that if I cramped the Nazi terror by possessing the list of their dangerous leaders abroad, then I was bringing closer the day when the Walthers and their kind would be safe and secure. So I went to the hotel, full of hope once more.

At six-thirty that night I was arrested.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I HAD bathed and was just on the point of dressing to go out to dinner. There was a rap at the door. I opened it, still in my underclothes. Two black-uniformed men stood there.

"Herr Wolff Braunen?" they said.

I nodded. "*Ja, Ich bin Braunen.*"

"You will come at once," said one harshly. "You are under arrest for treason."

Himmler *had* worked fast!

"All right, boys," I said. "Wait until I get on my clothes."

"Clothes, hell!" said one, springing at me. He swung savagely at me with a rubber truncheon. "You'll go as you are, you dirty traitor."

I went down, and he hit me again.

A man can live a lifetime in twenty-four hours, and it seemed to me that I lived two in the black hours that followed. I was not knocked completely out; the Storm Troopers learn to use a rubber truncheon with a great deal of skill. I was, however, scarcely aware of anything. I remember that I was shoved into a flimsy *ersatz* overcoat; that the two S.S. troopers calmly appropriated all my clothing, weighing its value, telling what they would do with it. I was dragged downstairs, handcuffed and thrown into a Mercedes car.

I vaguely remember the sight of the Anhalter Bahnhof.

A half-hour later I was jerked out, to find myself in the yards, where switch-engines were busy banging cars around.

I was pushed and shoved to a freight platform, where five little freight-cars, the kind called vans, were drawn up. There were blue lights here, shaded by canopies, and I saw guards with rifles, and two more Storm Troopers. They were guarding a door.

I was given a terrific kick, and I turned in a half-dazed fury.

"You fools!" I yelled. "You were not told to do that."

A blow from a club knocked me backward.

"Told!" cried the trooper. "We were told to give you hell."

Under a rain of blows, I was forced into a freight-car.

"Two hundred and twenty-six," droned the trooper at the door.

I plunged inside, tripped and sprawled on a mass of humanity that emitted screams, curses and groans. It was pitch dark.

But a second or so later one of the guards blinded me with the cone of a flashlight. "On your hands and knees, you swine," he said calmly. "And don't let me hear any love-making between you men and women, or I'll come down and you'll learn different."

He laughed harshly at his joke.

The mass of humanity, smelly, ragged, horrible, moved like some vast jelly-fish, and gradually, as the men and women there came to their hands and knees, there was room for me to kneel too. But just barely. We were jammed in there so tightly that I dreaded when the door would close. How many of us might come out alive from that airless place?

The door was closed, locked. I heard someone, booted and spurred, climb to the little perch on top of the car where the brakeman rides. We were in utter darkness. The floor had some filthy straw on it. There were no sanitary conveniences. The smells were vile beyond belief. But after a while you didn't notice this; you were only aware of panting as if you had run. It began to be steamy warm.

THERE were no sounds in here but moans and whimpers, and occasional calls for missing relatives, wives, husbands, fathers. After the door closed, there were attempts to shake down into some sort of endurable position. Then I felt men made primitive and savage by suffering and the desire to live. There were kicks; there was slugging in the dark. But somehow we jelled down.

By now the train was in motion. There were no springs on the freight-car, and a flat wheel went *thump-thump,* until the sound became as monotonous as the ticking of a clock.

For a long time I merely crouched and cursed. What had gone wrong? Was this a trick that had safely bagged me? Or had Mannerheim pointed out that I was a part of the scheme to fool them? Certainly, if Himmler had told them to go easy, this was not it. I was filled with helpless fury.

AS the air and stench became worse, I finally fell into a stupor. It was not sleep; but time passed, and daylight came through the cracks in the car. It had now grown bitterly cold, and the huddle of humanity drew closer together.

No food was thrown in, and we crawled and maneuvered to reach the three buckets that held dirty drinking water. A cupful revived me enough to remember the Walthers. If they were in here, then my scheme had not yet failed.

I called aloud: "Frau Walther! Herr Walther!"

I looked anxiously around the dreadful pack of humanity.

I called again: "Frau Walther! Herr Walther!"

A gnawing fear twisted my stomach.

Then an old and dirty man, shriveled and pathetic, moved.

"Is someone saying my name?" he whispered timidly.

The woman next to him, nearly as ragged and broken, tapped him. *"Ni, ni,* Otto. Say nothing and perhaps they will spare us."

With a surge of thankfulness I climbed and detoured over bodies until I had space to plant myself, with my knees up to my chin. At least Himmler had carried out this end of the plan.

"It was I who called, Herr Walther," I said gently. "And I am a friend. I would help you if I could."

"Ni, ni," whined the woman. "It is a trick. I warn you, husband, do not speak."

Pity gave me such a wrench that for a moment I could not go on. They were people in their sixties, a lifetime of work and child-rearing behind them, entitled to sit by the fireside and talk of a pleasant, useful life. Instead, spirits broken, dreading the death that yet would be a mercy, they crouched and cowered.

The old man finally said: "How do you know me? I do not know you."

I set myself to win his confidence. God willing, if I got out of Germany and he gave me a letter, I would deliver it! I told him I had friends in America, that I was young, I could escape. I had heard of his son. If I befriended him, perhaps his son would help me. I told him anything to win him over.

At noon, when we backed and filled in some railroad yards, we were given a couple of ounces each of *Schwarzenbrot,* and filthy stuff it was. I gave mine to old Walther, and he gave it to his wife. With her bad teeth she made work of eating the soggy, sour stuff. But she ate it; she was starving.

BY another nightfall we had become friends, and as we curled up, trying to make comfort in misery, the old man talked to me.

"For myself I do not care," he said. "My life is spent; I am useless. But for her, my Sarah—" His voice choked. "She has dreamed of holding a grandchild—a grandson—on her knee."

He paused. "There is one in America—little Fritzchen. Kurt wrote to me of him, urged me to leave when there was time." He stirred slightly. "But who would think they would make war on an old man and an old woman?"

"They'll pay, some day," I said.

"Yes, the Jehovah is a just God, and it is written, an eye for an eye."

The train rumbled on through the night. The bitter air whistled through the cracks. Escape in sleep had come to some; others moaned, and a woman sobbed in heartbreak.

"If you escape,—and I shall pray for you,—I will give you the letter to Kurt. In him and my grandson we live on—unbeaten."

He said no more, but I did not know if he slept or was wrapped in his thoughts. I dozed uneasily, mostly from sheer exhaustion, and even my pains were endurable. . . .

The water was gone next morning, but we were too cold to know sharp thirst. And about noon the train halted. Ten minutes or so later the doors were unlocked, and we squinted in the bright sunshine.

A spick-and-span Storm Trooper said: "All out. Get out, you swine, and keep your heads low."

We crawled out. I was shocked to find how weak I was. A few, some younger men, were even weaker, and fell down and were kicked and whipped to their feet. I tried to help Walther and his wife, and was roughly pushed on. We stumbled, a staggering line, to trucks painted gray. We climbed in through the rear, with a trooper counting monotonously and striking each prisoner a blow. I became separated from the Walthers. I never saw them again.

I knelt, and when the long truck drive ended, we were in a pine forest. Carved out of it was the concentration-camp. Gray buildings in gray squares around compounds, and all of it surrounded by walls surmounted by three strands of wire. Electrified. It was a dreary place, and I could see no movement except guards in little cupolas that looked out at us. They had light machine-guns that could swivel and cover every inch of open space before the woods closed in again.

We were herded into an opening, and guards in brown uniforms said: "Strip!"

We shed all our clothing. No exception was made for the women, and we finally huddled, stark naked, and were put in a line which entered a small unpainted hut. Here water was running. Here was a man—a prisoner, by his gray *ersatz* clothing. As the prisoners went under the shower, he used razor, cutters and scissors to take off every hair on the new prisoners' bodies. He did it silently, like an automaton, with a guard leaning on a Mauser carbine, watching.

I did not, however, have to go under the shower. An *Unter-Leutnant* came presently from another part of the building group. He carried a paper in his hand.

He went along the line and finally said, "Braunen, Wolff, stand clear!"

I stepped out of line. He looked at me curiously, then said: "Follow me."

"Naked?" I growled in sudden fury.

A hope had leaped into my heart—a hope to escape even slightly the intolerable misery I had endured.

"Never mind questions—come," he said, but his voice was not harsh nor angry.

He led me to a barracks room that had a fine shower. He gave me a razor, soap and then some gray *ersatz* clothing, not much better than that I had just doffed, but at least clean. Clean once more, my morale leaped upward. What had happened seemed a horrible dream.

NOW I was led to a luxurious office. Here sat a colonel—a man of forty-two or so, which meant he was certainly no *Oberst* in the Reichswehr,

where a man is almost in his dotage before he achieves that rank.

He looked at me with a curious glance. "You've had a bad time of it," he said,

I took my cue from that and cursed, using every German word I knew.

"Wait," he finally grinned. "It was no fault of mine, *Oberst-Leutnant.* The guards were not told you were a Gestapo man on a special mission. They thought you were a real prisoner."

"But Herr Himmler—" I began.

"Herr Himmler sent me word. He apparently entrusted your arrest and the the Berlin end to a subordinate." He smiled in real mirth. "Perhaps you have an enemy who wanted to make you suffer a little."

Osfried, curse him! The colonel saw by my expression that I understood.

He roared with laughter. "A great joke on you," he said. "*Gott,* how your enemy must have hated you." Again he laughed until the tears ran down his red cheeks.

Such was my welcome to Dachau.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THERE was one obstacle in Dachau to talking to Arnold that, for three days at least, seemed insurmountable: I could not get a moment alone with him.

There were four thousand ragged, half-starved prisoners in the place, and some three hundred guards. And these last, alert, and brutal as men must be to do that kind of job, pounced on any two men who even exchanged a word. There was a rule prohibiting prisoners from talking to each other.

This I might have circumvented if it were not for the spies. The place was full of them. Chiefly they were Party members, sent here for minor offenses, who hoped to curry favor and be reinstated by reporting some infraction. But there were others, too, poor hopeless devils who betrayed their kind for an extra morsel of horse-meat or a chunk of bread.

Twice I tried to talk to Arnold, and twice I was reported before I caught on.

The commandant said peevishly: "I know you are here on a special mission, but be careful. I can't have discipline upset."

"Zum Teufel!" I took a high hand. "I have my work to do. How can I do it without talking to the prisoners?"

"What is your mission?" he asked.

"That you must ask Herr Himmler," I replied haughtily. "I can say, however, that it concerns two persons, one of whom is the prisoner Walther and his wife. I have not seen them, nor had the chance to work on them."

"And won't, for the moment," frowned the commandant. "Walther tried to save his wife from a—er—fall, and suffered a fractured skull when he—er—fell himself."

I knew they had been beaten too much. I steeled myself not to show pity. But I could help them.

"Herr Kommandant," I said, "make certain nothing fatal happens to them, or you will answer to Himmler. See that they are fed, and given good care. It is a high matter of state; and if you doubt me, telegraph Himmler."

"Oh," he said hastily, "they will recover, and I personally will see to their care."

"Also," I said, "tell your spies to leave me to my work. Time presses."

Whether he did this last, I do not know; for that afternoon I managed to get to Arnold.

You must know that for even the smallest infraction of the rules, the culprit was roped to a whipping-frame and given a stated number of lashes from the cat-o'-nine tails. At this time all the permanent prisoners—that is, not Party men—were paraded and forced to witness.

But such cases as was Arnold under his name of Schönbritz were continued in their work. He was assigned to the planing mill, working the lumber, and I had gotten myself placed there also.

The whipping occurred just while we were eating the eleven o'clock *"soupe."* It was a woman—a girl—being punished; and the guard on our end of the mill, near the saw, had climbed a rise to get a view. The women—like the men—were whipped naked.

ARNOLD sat on a pile of sawdust, cleaning his pannikin of the swill we were given. I went over and sat next to him.

I was not permitted tobacco, but I did have matches.

"Arnold," I said, "watch, and then start talking."

With the matches I made the signal.

He stared, his pale, drawn face amazed.

"I had to come here," I said hastily, and told him what had happened. "You've got to tell me where the lists are hidden. I've got to be out of Germany in two or three days."

"By God!" he muttered in English. "I wouldn't have believed anybody could get to me."

I could hear far-off the slap of whip-thongs on bare flesh. I heard our guard call an obscene observation about the whipping to another.

"Where are the lists?" I asked.

HE resumed sopping up the potato gruel with the bread.

"I'm dying," he said. "Diabetes! I weighed one hundred and ninety when I came in here. I won't go out alive."

He looked bad, with diabetes lumps on his face. He probably got no medical care, no insulin. But I forced myself to say: "You'll be all right. And I've covered you here."

He nodded, remained silent.

"Where are the lists?" I asked.

He looked at my still-filled pannikin. I couldn't eat the slop. Silently his hand snaked out, took it and tipped the swill into his own.

"It doesn't do any good," he said. "I get no strength from it. And they won't give me insulin. Kleinglauer has friends here. He wants me to stay. But I eat in the hope—" He shrugged. "I would like to die outside this place."

He ate all I had left. I began to fret; was the man crazy and not going to tell me? Or was he hoping for my help for his escape? That was impossible: no matter what is said contrariwise, escape from a German concentration-camp is practically impossible. The only one I heard about was when a British bomb accidentally fell on the camp at Buchenwald, and blew out part of the barricade. And all those prisoners were recaptured.

Without papers, and with S.S. troops watching every means of movement, you haven't a chance.

Perhaps some of what I thought was on my face, for he said: "No, I don't want your help to escape. I couldn't make it —not to the Swiss border."

"Every hour counts now with me," I pointed out.

"Yes," he said, "I know." He devoured the last of the bread. He chewed slowly. "If you wanted to hide something, so that in case you couldn't get back to it, no one could ever find it, where would you hide it?"

I shrugged. "In the woods, fields—I don't know. What difference does it make?"

"Because I'll never dig it up, and maybe you won't. Know the old Dorotheenstadt Cemetery in Berlin?"

My heart quickened. "Yes, at the beginning of the Chausséestrasse—on the left."

"Good!" His manner changed; he appeared to be tossing bits of bark taken from the sawdust. Actually he was making a little map that he destroyed as swiftly as he had made his point.

"A cemetery remains untouched through the centuries. In Dorotheenstadt Cemetery near the east wall—about here—is Hegel's monument. You know, the philosopher. At the east end of the monument—the corner—take five steps to the right. You are nearly to the wall now. Here, one meter to the left, dig down about a foot. Be careful of the sod. Replace it as carefully as I did."

"And the list?" I asked.

"Is inside an aluminum tube. It's written on silk in indelible ink—every accursed name and alias and all past and present addresses that I could find. It took me nine months of work."

"And they're all there—even those in America?"

"There are three thousand names on the list," he said. "And if you round up those swine, you'll get all the others. They are the key men in the *Nids*. And that includes South America and the Near-East—a hundred that I know of."

IT was a monumental, splendid job he had done. And I realized that he would never be told that by those at home. He would never get any thanks, yet he was being killed by the enemy here as surely as if they had used a bullet.

"I'm going to tell them what you've done," I blurted out.

"Decent of you." He rose, a hang-dog, sick and trembling figure. "If you get to England,"—his voice lingered lovingly on the name—"I've a sister in Axtell. It's in Devonshire. Cyrilla Barkley-Mason. You might tell her that—that I was thinking of her."

He shambled off; no word of farewell; not daring to shake hands. A dying man going about the business of dying, slowly, in a place where you have twenty-four hours to let your mind dwell on the fact.

A few moments later the guard came down, blew his whistle. I worked steadily, planning how to get quickly to Berlin.

At a quarter after two an S.S. trooper arrived at the mill, and I was summoned.

"The commandant's office, *schnell,*" said the trooper. "March!"

I followed him to the *Kommandantur.* As I went in, the colonel said: "A lovely Fräulein—and all the way from Berlin, from Herr Himmler himself. My lad, you are among the fortunate."

A woman! What woman? I kept my face impassive, but inside me the tocsin of alarm was pounding. I followed the colonel into an adjacent room.

Fräulein Maya Wirten rose. She put aside a cigarette. I noticed it was tipped with crimson from her lipstick. Instantly I was on my guard.

"Darling!" she said, and came into my arms. I could do no more than put my arms around her. I felt her pressure, and as my head tilted she reached up and kissed me on the lips. The colonel chuckled knowingly.

"I have such splendid news from Herr Himmler, darling," she said. "You are to return to Berlin at once."

What kind of trap was this? I smiled and said: "Maya, sweetheart, nothing would please me more. But my mission is not yet accomplished."

"I see I shall have to be more explicit." She turned to the commandant and said smartly: "This is strictly from Herr Himmler for Wolff's ears alone. May we?"

He clicked his heels and bowed from the waist. I could see he was eaten with curiosity, and his eyes strayed over Maya's figure hungrily. But he went out. The moment the door was shut, I whispered: "What's this comic opera mean?"

"You've got to get out of here," she whispered in return. "At once. There's not a moment to lose."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"You fool!" she said. "Wolff Braunen is back—the real Wolff Braunen. He's in Berlin. He's seen Osfried by now. They know everything. Osfried is unquestionably on his way here now."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE import of her words didn't register on me, because I was suspicious of her. This was just a trick to force my confession I was not Wolff Braunen!

"My dear Maya,"—I grinned,—"haven't you got that obsession out of your head yet?"

To my surprise, she did not become angry. She put her hand on my arm. I saw she was trembling.

"This is no time for lies and deceit," she said. "I tell you I was at Tempelhof Field when Wolff Braunen arrived. He was ill; they took him off on a stretcher. I went to him, and he recognized me. He was semi-delirious, but he kept calling for Osfried and yelling of treachery."

I was suddenly frozen, with terror gnawing at my stomach. Her tense voice, this amount of detail—she could not be lying. And yet—

"What you say is impossible," I said harshly.

"How can I convince you?" she whispered. "Why do you think I came? I hate Wolff Braunen. I loathe Osfried. I'm sure you are a British agent. I want to help you—before it is too late."

"You, a German," I muttered, "want to help a British agent?"

"I am of the Black Front," she said. And when I stared, she went on: "Oh, I'll throw myself on your mercy—anything to convince you."

"The Black Front?" I repeated.

WORDS poured like a torrent from her: I learned that for seven years there had been a revolutionary movement in Germany, an underground organization that was striving, even now, to throw off the shackles of the Nazis. She was heart and soul in it, for the Nazis had killed her father, a Bavarian professor. Her only brother had been shot down in Poland. Her mother, an Englishwoman, had died of the shock.

"I've pretended to be of the Party," she said. "I pretended to like Osfried, because being in the Ausland Bureau, he knew of steps taken against Black Front exiles. I could save them. I got a job in the propaganda department because we have secret newspapers, secret radio-senders, to tell the German people the truth."

She paused breathlessly. "Now, do you think I speak the truth?"

"That invasion of my room—" I muttered.

"I had a tip that Wolff Braunen was bringing a secret list of Black Front names to be rounded up. I wanted to destroy it."

Now I remembered Himmler's mention of such a list. I was convinced she was honest, but I could not believe Wolff

Braunen had escaped. Wymeth and Morsley—how could they permit it?

I said as much. "Also," I went on, "how could he have got here so quickly?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. I tell you he *is* here."

"Then why hasn't Osfried telephoned here to have me locked up in solitary?"

She sighed. "You waste the time a miracle has given you! Between here and Berlin a terrific storm has knocked down the lines. I tried to telephone when I learned the truth. I could not get through. So I've driven twelve hours without stopping."

I STOOD silent, examining this yawning abyss that had suddenly opened.

"I've got the car," she said. "You might still make the Swiss frontier. Only, do not wait and plan here!"

I lifted my glance to her white face. Why had she done this for me? Then suddenly I grinned, squeezed her hand.

"We'll go now—at once," I said.

"I have your clothing in the car," she said. "I went to the hotel for it, though I'm supposed to be in Paris to broadcast in the morning."

And I strode to the door of the commandant's office.

The commandant looked at me, smiling archly. "The lip-rouge is a sign of triumph, Herr Braunen, but scarcely becoming."

I scrubbed my lips and told him that an urgent message from Herr Himmler recalled me to Berlin at once.

The commandant sighed. "Lucky beggar! To have a fine time in Berlin while I am stuck in this God-forsaken place! However, here is your pass, and for the Fräulein too." He looked at my clothing. "You cannot go as you are."

"She has brought my clothing," I said. And then to cover up: "I shall doubtless have to return. I shall speak to Himmler of your cöoperation."

Thank God for the spirit of strict discipline that pervades the German! The colonel nodded, pleased, and wrote out the gate pass. It was nothing to him, all of this. I had come by orders of Himmler, and I was leaving by the same orders.

I shook hands, and he clicked his heels, and kissed Maya's hand. We walked out the main gate with its black-uniformed guards. Looking back, I saw gray, stooping figures moving around with the slow movement of helots, of slaves.

Her car was a closed Mercedes sedan, and while she drove, I crouched in the back seat and changed clothing. She had brought everything of mine from my room.

"We'll go straight to the Swiss border," she said. "The Black Front is strong in Bavaria, and I have friends there who can show us the way through a pass. Can you mountain-climb—or ski?"

I said: "I never climbed a mountain except in an automobile. I've never been on skis. And anyway, we're not going to Switzerland—not right now."

I had climbed over the seat and sat beside her, looking at my face in the bent rear-view mirror. She was startled enough to jerk the wheel.

"What do you mean? What else can you do?" she asked.

"Go to Berlin!" I told her.

"Berlin? Are you mad? You cannot hope to escape capture."

"I've got to go to Berlin," I repeated. "I came here to do a job—the answer is in Berlin."

She became furious. "Doesn't it mean anything to you that I have risked everything to warn you? That I too must escape? If you won't think of your own life, think of mine."

"I have wondered why you did it," I said; "so now I'm going to explain."

AS the car sped at ninety kilometers an hour along one of the superb *Autobahns,* I told her everything, from my first encounter with Morsley, withholding only Arnold's name and the location of the British agent in the Traube.

"I know where that list of names is," I finished, "and I've got to get it."

"What good will it do you—if you can't get out of Germany?" she demanded. "There's a chance—now. Ten hours more, and Osfried will close every loophole. Germany will be an iron-barred prison."

"Still," I said, "I've got to take the chance! The wiping out of the foreign Ausland *Nids* will strike a terrific blow at Hitler."

"I know, but how can we get out?" she persisted. "You can't move a foot in Germany, once the S.S. men are alarmed."

I had been thinking vaguely about that. Now I said, "You spoke of a short-wave radio broadcasting."

"Yes," she nodded. "We have one in Berlin. It moves every day after broadcasting fifteen minutes."

"Could it get a message to Basle?" I asked.

"We have the power. But why?"

"I'll explain later," I said. "After I've thought it through. Meanwhile, they won't think we'd head for Berlin, so we're safe for the moment."

She pushed the speedometer needle to one hundred and twenty kilometers an hour.

Presently came the place where we must turn off to the Swiss frontier. I said: "I'll go on alone if you want to take a train and get out while it's time."

She didn't even slow down. "You're lost without me," she said. "I at least can get you help from the Black Front."

"Stout girl!" I said softly.

HOUR after hour we sped on behind a whining motor. Fortunately there were two *bidons* of gasoline strapped to the running-boards, so that we could refill the tank without having to stop at a gas station. Now that gas was rationed, a stop would have meant registration, and thus Osfried would have had a clue to our whereabouts. As it was, we reached Berlin at one A.M. without stopping even to eat. The official license of the car got us past soldier guards with merely a hand-wave.

In Berlin an air-raid was on.

British planes were cruising back and forth across the sky, followed by searchlights and anti-aircraft guns. We could not use lights, and were forced to crawl along. Maya wanted to wait and take shelter, so we would not be stopped by police. I refused. If we could reach the Dorotheenstadt Cemetery while the raid was on, then everyone would be underground and our job would be simpler.

The British pilots were using the Spree as a guide, and striking apparently for the Anhalter Bahnhof, and the factories near Marienberg. I couldn't hear any crumping bombs, because the anti-aircraft fire was so thunderous. But on the far horizon, as we came over the eastern hills, I saw the glow of a big fire.

We crept on, moving at less than a horse's walk. Air-raid wardens yelled at us. A fire-fighting crew clattered past. But since the planes were now over the northern part of the city, we did not make for a shelter and kept yelling: "Official business. Urgent."

We did not reach the Chausséestrasse until nearly three o'clock. By now the all-clear signal had gone, as I knew it would, for the British bombers had to dump their loads and leave in time to be clear of the French channel ports before dawn brought German chasers to harry them. People would now relax and sleep. We parked the car and walked into the cemetery.

I had taken some tire-changing irons and a pair of pliers and a knife from the tool-kit.

"If we're stopped," I whispered, "we're frightened, and taking refuge against bombers."

She said nothing. Her body pressed against mine. I felt her trembling.

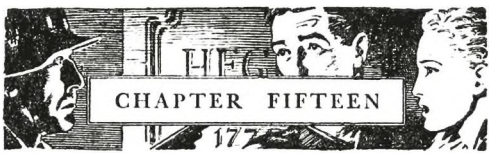
"Afraid?" I asked.

"Dreadfully," she said. "Let's hurry and get it over with."

We climbed the wall, and I lowered her to the other side. She knew the position of Hegel's monument better than I in this utter darkness. She led the way until we finally saw the shaft and pedestal looming against the stars.

I marked off the position, paced the distance and drove the tire iron into the spot.

I was beginning to slice the sod with my knife when out of the darkness behind a voice said: *"Halte!* Stand where you are, or I shoot."



SILENTLY I moved away from the spot, to the edge of the monument. Maya was beside me. I drew my pistol. Suddenly a blue light lit us hideously. It was a pocket flashlight; I could not see beyond it to know who held it.

The light advanced jerkily as the man walked. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

I forced a smile into that dreary light. "If you had a girl and were caught by the air-raid alarm, what would you do, *mein Freund?*"

The light was close enough now for me to make out a burly shadow behind, and star-glitter on buttons and polished leather.

"Your papers?" he said crisply, ignoring my pointed jocularity.

I cursed in German as if annoyed, and fumbled for the papers. Maya hesitated, waiting to take her cue from me.

I knew what I now had to do.

This Storm Trooper would report to his commander. Osfried would know we were in Berlin and would search from

house to house until he found us. I advanced and held out the passport and *carte d'identité*. The trooper fussed, tucking his light under his arm. He had to take his eyes off me for that brief second. Maya took a step forward, lurched into him.

"Danke schön," I said, and swung a right uppercut that started at my knees. It hit him flush on the jaw, lifted his heels from the ground.

"Oof!" he sighed, and fell with a crash.

I leaped in, my own gun now out, intending to bash it into his face. But he was not senseless—and he was brave. I saw his eyes glitter under the coal-scuttle steel helmet. Then the gun was looking at me, his finger white on the trigger.

THE two shots sounded almost like one—almost, but not quite: my bullet beat his by a heart-beat, and it was he who fell back, dead. His bullet took a chunk from the tip of my right ear. My slug had hit him in the mouth, torn upward through the roof and so into his brain. He was not a pleasant sight to behold.

Maya whispered: "Dear God, you've killed him!"

I poised in the darkness, waiting, listening, staring. There was no sound. I felt Maya trembling.

"It was he or I," I said slowly. "There was nothing else to do." I paused. "Douse that light. Take his gun. If anybody comes—well, we'll shoot it out."

Silently she obeyed me, and silently I went back to my job. With the knife I sliced out a square of turf, and with the two tire-irons I scooped out the soft loam. It did not take long. In less than five minutes I had tapped something metallic. I dug around it until I could get a good grip, and then jerked it loose. It was the aluminum canister.

Inside were rolls of soft Chinese watered silk. I took these and put them next to my skin under my undershirt, and reburied the can. I piled back the earth as best I could and then refitted the turf. The mark would show, however, if Osfried came this way. I would have liked to prevent that, but I did not know how. I went to Maya, who was standing with her back to the corpse.

"The shots were not heard," she said.

"No, I guess not," I said. My plan, started during the drive to Berlin, took on details now.

"You have friends—Black Front friends, I mean—in Berlin?" I asked.

"Yes," she said. "Several who would dare much—if I asked it."

"You spoke of a radio-broadcaster," I went on. "Could it reach—say—to Basle?"

"Yes, of course. What are you driving at, Eric?"

I switched my questioning for a moment.

"My dear, I've got what I came for—the list. I can leave Germany, but I won't leave without you—and I won't take a reckless risk."

She waited, still shivering, and I put my arm around her, drew her close for warmth.

"If we managed a new load of gasoline, just what are our chances of making the Swiss frontier—if we start now—at once?"

"None whatever," she answered me steadily. "Osfried has reached Dachau. He will close the Swiss border—an obvious move; every train, every *Autobahn* will be closed. The emergency signal will go out, and not even a baby can move one city square in all Germany without its papers being demanded by a Storm Trooper."

"You mean we're now trapped?"

"Trapped and locked in. My friends can hide us. Move us around from one to the other. But we can't get out."

"And yet, my pet," I said softly, "we can and we will." I gave her a gentle shove. "Go to the car. I'll be along in a moment."

When she was lost in the darkness, I swiftly stripped the Storm Trooper of his clothing, even to the cowl-like helmet. At the last resort the uniform might be of great help. I hurried out of the cemetery and found Maya behind the wheel of the car. Her eyes flashed whitely as I threw the bundle into the back seat, but she made no comment.

"WE'LL go now to the house where the radio-sender is," I said. "If you think it necessary, we can abandon this car some distance from it. The car will be useless in a few hours, anyway."

"Yes." She nodded, and throwing the car in gear, we moved off at a cautious pace. Strained and silent and white, Maya stared ahead into the faint blue light of the headlights.

Suddenly, it seemed, she could stand it no more.

"Oh, Eric," she said, agonized, "what must you think of me? I help you—an enemy of my country. I stand by and see you kill a man. And yet—"

I reached over and slapped her smartly on the cheek.

"Steady, Maya," I warned gently. "No hysterics now—you haven't time."

The slap had startled, shaken and stiffened her. She drove on, turned into some street whose sign I could not see.

"I'm all right now," she said.

"Good!" I mustered my cheerfulness. "Then I'll answer your questions: I think you are a brave girl, a gallant thoroughbred. I think you are working for the real Germany, the one who will some day be admitted to the friendship of all nations when Hitler and his gangsters are dead and forgotten."

I patted her shoulder. "If Hitler and his muggs were out, this war would end tomorrow. It isn't Germany—it's the Nazis. You fought them before; you've got to go on."

"Thanks, Eric," she said. "I feel better—but tell me again if I blow up—it gets pretty horrible inside my heart!"

We both felt better after that; it was something to cling to in a maze of darkness and danger.

ON a street whose name I shall not mention,* we abandoned the car, but only after Maya told me it could not be traced to her. We walked, I with my bundle, toward a small side-street filled with the unpretentious homes of workers.

"The radio-sender moves every day," Maya said, "and so does the printing press. But my schedule says it should be here tonight."

She went to the side door of a small stone house and rapped in a peculiar sequence. It was no time in the morning to be moving about—the people might be in their bomb shelter—but she rapped again, and the door was unlocked.

"Wirten, Maya," said Maya. "I bring a friend for whom I vouch."

We entered, still in darkness. It was not until we passed a third door that I came upon a room, brightly lit. Four men were here, and every one had an automatic pistol pointed at me.

How shall I describe what followed my acceptance into this little group of daring men? Their eager questioning: What about America? Could this accursed war be stopped before all Germany fell into the black abyss of anarchy and medievalism?

Mark you, they were not for fallen France or fighting England! No, they cursed both nations for precipitating the war when they were about to bring about Hitler's downfall by raising a hungry, discontented people.

NOR did Maya tell them my exact status. She only said I had certain facts that would prevent Hitler from attempting to overthrow American democracy.

And I learned then that these men—Germans, all of them—had come to accept the bitter necessity of a German defeat at arms as the only fact that would overthrow Hitler.

"Zum Gott!" cried a gray-haired man, Ernst. "What does the conquest of Norway, Holland, France or Poland mean to us? It means that Germany must go on fighting until she is beaten. The days of such conquest of alien people have passed. Suppose England now makes a stalemate peace? It will be only a little time before we must fight again. War! Good God, there will be no end to war, in your lifetime or mine."

He stared at me. "If only I could have stood in your shoes at Berchtesgaden for one little minute, Herr Erich, I would have solved the world's troubles with four pistol-shots!"

I led around gradually to our predicament. We were hunted, and we must leave Germany. I had a plan, but I must use their radio.

Maya urged the point.

Ernst said: "The radio direction-finders hunt us down as soon as the listeners tune in on our wave-length. So only a moment, *gut Herr,* for we have our little message to send too."

The radio had a key for sending. I sat down to it, ran over the code Morsley had told me, and began pounding code dots and dashes.

"KSV, Basle, Switzerland. KSV, Basle, Switzerland. Message begins RIVORB unscramble and check Morsley of New York now in Berlin and mission accomplished but Himmler aroused and border closed and arrest imminent period Only possible means of escape is by British bomber period Can hold out seventy-two hours but scarcely more period Next raid have regular propaganda pamphlets dropped containing message this code as to where and when most feasible spot to

* The gallant fight of the Black Front continues even now, and nothing should be said to betray those who are for the liberated Germany. Radios still broadcast the truth and hope of freedom. Pamphlets are still printed and distributed—under pain of instant decapitation.

*land and pick up period Do not acknowledge now or try to trace this station Message ends. Station LIBER signing off."**

They were all staring at me when I got up. Even if they knew Morse or International, the code baffled them. Maya said: "They are suspicious. What did you do?"

"Sent for help to friends in Basle," I said frankly. "They may not be able to help. We should know in forty-eight hours."

Ernst said: "You would not betray us?"

"Not for anything in the world," I said. "I even ask you to find some place where Maya and I may hide until word comes through from my friends."

"Believe him, Ernst," said Maya. "He is a man."

Ernst said, "Come," and we went out into the night. Six streets eastward was an old dormered house towering against the night.

He led us in, and up into a dusty attic where there was a tiny room.

"Here," he said gravely, "you are safe for tnis night. Tomorrow we shall see. *Gute nacht, gnädige Fräulein, und Herr Erich, und schlafen Sie wohl.*"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

OLD Ernst came into the room and wearily sat down and took off his hat. It was not the same room to which he had first brought us. We had moved three times since then, and now were in the Charlottenburg section. Maya and I noticed an odd expression on his face.

"The weather?" I said. "What about it? Will there be a raid tonight?"

There had been no raid the night before, and consequently I was still in ignorance if my message had been received—and acted upon.

"She is clear," he replied. "They will come."

He did not know, of course, why I was so anxious. I hastily asked him for the day's grist of news.

He scratched his head. "You said all Germany would be seeking you and Fräulein Maya."

I laughed grimly. "I think so."

"You are wrong," he asserted. "Osfried looks for you, yes, and for some reason the border to Switzerland is closed. But Himmler is not looking for you—at least not for Fräulein Maya."

Maya gasped. "Are you sure, Ernst?"

"I have my friend in Himmler's own Secretariat," he said. "I made inquiries—discreetly, of course. There is no general fugitive order issued for you two."

I remained silent, puzzled. The old man must be mistaken. Osfried would turn over stones to find us. And yet—I caught Maya's gaze, and saw there the same puzzlement—and also fear.

"I don't like it," she half-whispered.

I tried to figure some reason for Osfried not to get out a general arrest order, and I couldn't. So finally I forced a grin and said: "Well, that will make traveling later a bit simpler."

Nobody else smiled.

I said to Ernst: "Is there any chance of getting a car?"

Maya looked at me.

"We've got to get out of Berlin," I explained. "A plane can't land here."

"I thought we'd use the trains," she said.

"And so we will, if necessary. But a car—if no general alarm is out—would be easier."

"It would," nodded Ernst, "and the car is fairly simple to obtain. But gasoline—ah, that is something else."

He rose to go. "I have finished my message to our friends in America," he said. "I am having it printed on linen. You can sew it in your coat. *Auf Wiedersehen.* I return with the bombers—if they come."

He went out, and I locked the door after him. His idea of my carrying a message from the Black Front to exiled Germans in America was inconvenient, but I had to agree. I would have agreed to anything to get out of this blighted land. The knowledge that I had the list of names, that I held the power to wipe out Nazi agents and secret sympathies throughout America and the British Empire, made me impatient to be off.

Even playing "scat" with Maya to pass deadly monotonous time no longer held my interest.

"Let's go to the roof," I said at last. "If I stay in here any longer, I'll start cutting out paper dolls."

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* With every wave-length listened to by both German and French, two repetitions of the Swiss call-letters were enough before starting the message and no repeat.

She handed me my vest, into which she had skillfully sewed the silk strips.

"Eric," she said, as we went up the hallway stair, "is this a trick of Osfried's? Perhaps he has not made a general alarm, hoping we will be careless, and be easier to capture."

"He's clever enough to think of that," I admitted. "But he'll be looking in Bavaria. He won't think of us as staying here."

"He's a devil." She put an arm through mine, and we stood together on the roof, looking up at the stars. The mist and rain had blown away and the air was clear and sharp, and the stars pulsed like naked hearts. Around us Berlin was a silent dark mass, brooding and sullen. We stood thus for several minutes, saying nothing.

And then I knew I had to tell her.

"I love you, Maya," I said. "Probably I won't get another chance to tell you. So—well, this seemed the moment."

Far away, a banshee siren wailed, its steel voice climbing like the mad outcry of a lost soul. She waited until it and its mates had cried their warning.

"From that moment in Paris I knew something had happened to me," she said. "Since then I have thought of the Biblical sentence; I may not have the exact words, but the meaning is: 'Thy ways shall be my ways, and thy people shall be my people, forever.'"

The piercing blades of the searchlights shot skyward, and by their light I kissed her for the first and, perhaps, the last time. My first kiss, I mean—the others had never counted.

We stood then, hand in hand, we two against this mad world, and we waited and watched for the first flame of anti-aircraft fire to tell us from which direction Britain's bombers came this night.

THE ugly red eyes of the bursting shrapnel lit the sky to the westward. Fifty, a hundred guns. Their thundering roar drowned out the drone of motors, and I never knew the British had got through until nearly overhead they let go magnesium flares that dropped earthward to light up their targets. Twenty flares descended on their parachutes, and spread a ghastly white light over a darkened and silent city.

I thought anxiously: "What have they brought for me?"

Maya knew our only hope depended on those invisible bombers above. She clung to me tightly.

I saw one bomber, high up, pinned in the scissors-grip of moving searchlight beams.

I heard a sullen roar beyond the Spree. A red glow sprang up there. The bombs had come. Were there also the pamphlets that England had dropped nightly since the war's beginning?

WE waited. Planes went overhead, grimly pursued by searchlights and the flash of bursting shells. Maya and I moved under the cornice of the roof's pent-house. Chunks of shrapnel casing or shrapnel bullets falling from that height could brain you where you stood.

For what seemed eternity the planes moved back and forth over our heads, making their runs to set their bomb-sights, then dropping their sticks of bombs.

They were striking to westward, but the roof clattered many times to the impact of shrapnel and broken casing.

Then in the light of a new flare that hung less than five hundred feet up, I saw three white objects sailing down. Slow, back and forth like falling leaves. They struck on the roof.

"The pamphlets!" I half-yelled and sprang out to pick them up.

"Oh, Eric, watch out, the shrapnel!"

I ignored her cry and got the double-folded paper about as big as a geography. I seized her arm. A chunk of shrapnel banged on the roof as we darted breathlessly through the door and clattered down the stairs. We raced into the room and turned up the light.

My hands trembled as I unfolded the double sheet. I spread it on the floor. We dropped to our knees. Maya's head was against mine as we read.

The first page was a piece about the blockade—how it had beaten Germany last time and would beat her again. I turned inside. Nothing but a plea that the world had no hatred for the German people.

"Oh!" cried Maya. She seemed about to burst into tears.

I turned to the last page. Here were several small items—and my code at the bottom!

"It's here, Maya—look!" I cried.

I transliterated it for her. It read: *"Message received. Situation understood. Midnight following receipt of this—unless sharp change in weather—ships will be over Stendal and Elbe River valley to eastward. Morse message in this code by flashlight and indicate location of nearest*

landing-spot. Ships will descend low as commensurate with safety to pick up message. If fog or weather interfere formula will repeat night following. Good luck and hold on."

"They're coming, Maya," I whispered. "We've got a chance now. We can make it."

"If only Osfried doesn't come first," she shivered.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ERNST came in at two-thirty with a copy of the pamphlet. We held up ours.

"*Gut!*" he smiled wryly. "Soldiers are out now picking them up, forcing the poor German folks to surrender those they picked up. The truth is not wanted here—now."

"Ernst," I said, "Stendal and the Elbe River are about one hundred and twenty kilometers from here. We've got to be there by midnight tonight."

"*Ach!*" he rejoined. "The Hamburg *Autobahn* passes very close by. The railroad is on the other side of the river. But the railroad is out. Your enemy Osfried would be watching all *Bahnhofs.*"

"So," I said calmly, "we've got to have a car."

"That is easy," he said. "But since talking with you, I have been racking my brain to find a way to get gasoline."

I looked at Maya. "Got any ideas? It's only about seventy-eight miles, and twenty liters would take us."

"Practically only big Party members have cars now," she sighed.

"Aviation gasoline—or is it too closely guarded?"

"As much as your life is worth to try," said Ernst grimly.

Five gallons of gasoline! You could buy it for a dollar in the United States. It was as precious as blood here—and the one obstacle in our path.

I thought of walking. It was out. We'd never make it in time. I swore at the British, and yet I knew that was as close to Berlin as they would dare risk it.

Maya had no ideas. Ernst was willing but helpless.

I said suddenly: "Maya, how did you get that car you came in to Dachau?"

"Why—" She hesitated. "Why, I just went to the Propaganda Ministry garage and said I wanted it to go to the airdrome."

"Nothing to sign? No questions?"

"Of course not. I'm known in the Radio Propaganda Bureau."

"And if you went now," I mused, "what would happen?"

"Osfried!" she said.

"But would he?" I argued. "He hasn't put out an alarm. He's looking somewhere else. Maybe he doesn't even know you're with me."

She made no comment. I went to her, put my hands on her shoulders.

"I'll go with you," I said. "I'll dye my hair, put on the Storm Trooper uniform. It's a chance. It's a terrific risk. But without a car, we're lost anyway, and the very boldness of it may pull us through."

I could see I was persuading her. "When would be the best time to try it?"

She thought a moment. "At eight o'clock tonight Josef Shilkauer, who likes me, is on duty. He wouldn't question if Osfried hasn't spoken out; and—he might warn me if he has."

"Then eight it is," I said. I gently thrust Ernst out of the room. "We've got to get some sleep, bombers or no. Bring the message after daylight, and I'll take it."

He shook hands all around gravely.

"This is madness, what you try. But the blessed God watches out for fools and lovers. *Gute Nacht.*"

He went out, and we set ourselves to endure the intolerable hours that had to be lived.

Somehow they passed. I made a dye out of Maya's mascara and brought a passable swarthiness to my face and hands with a black brew of alleged coffee. I put on the Storm Trooper's uniform and the coal-scuttle helmet, covering most of my face, aided the disguise. Maya spent her time swiftly altering the uniform to make a reasonable fit.

Ernst came in the morning with his: "Message for America."

"Tell them too, Erich," he said, "that there will be peace*—soon, I hope. We shall demand it if we have our power."

* Briefly, the Black Front aims were: the abrogation of all the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles, the re-admittance of Germany to the concord of European powers; the establishment of an enduring peace by a four-power conference of England, France, Italy and Germany.

He brought food, and we forced ourselves to eat, not knowing when we should eat again.

Ernst said: "On the road off the *Autobahn* to Stendal, to your right, is a fishing-hut that belongs to a comrade. You know the location, Maya. And it might be a place to hide—if you get that far."

"Thanks, Ernst," I said, "and we will get that far."

"If we do," said Maya, "I know the place—in the pine woods."

"Then," said Ernst, "I go. The police press us again, and we must move—always move."

He shook my hand gravely, kissed Maya's and walked out. I never saw him again, either; like the other flitting figures of a silent gray people, he came into my life, gallantly risked everything for me—and vanished.

We did anything to kill time. I talked about America and what Maya would find. I told stories, stale jokes, anecdotes of my school days. Maya told of her father, and the slow pursuit of him and the original Black Front members by Hitler. We talked of anything but the risk that lay just ahead.

Then at half-past seven we set out to walk the distance to the mews back of Wilhelmstrasse where the Propaganda Bureau cars were garaged.

THE city was quiet and dark, and few people were abroad. These hurried past, fearing my uniform of the dreaded Elite Guard.

At the entrance to the garage I paused.

"I'll give you just ten minutes," I said, "and then I'm coming in." I tapped the black holster at my belt. She understood.

"It should be time," she said.

Before I could speak again, she turned and hurried through the door. Those minutes were plain torture. I told myself I had sent her to her death. That it was a stupid, mad blunder to try this way. I was tempted a dozen times to go crashing in. A man doesn't mind so much dying if he can fight back, go down in a flaming, glorious fury. But to be led out like a pig to slaughter—I found my fingers drumming a hollow tattoo on the black leather holster.

I was on the verge of going in when the big double doors rumbled on their tracks. Blackness was within; and then Maya hastened through it. She whispered quickly: "Osfried was here today. He was making inquiries. There is curiosity about the abandonment of the other car I had. But Josef is willing to drive me to Tempelhoefer."

Josef going! I started to protest.

"It is the only way we can get a car," she said. "I told him an attempt to murder me had been made. You are my guard. We can act later. But Eric, Josef mustn't be hurt."

"No, but—" I could say no more because the car came backing out, a low-slung Mercedes, and a man's voice said: "All ready, Fräulein Wirten."

"Remember, he mustn't be hurt," whispered Maya.

WE stepped to the car and climbed in behind. On the instrument panel a blue light burned. I saw a thin, hollow-cheeked youth. He frowned at me—none of the Germans liked or trusted the Storm Troopers.

We backed into the mews and turned toward the Potsdamer Platz. Here, I knew, he must head south—directly opposite to the way leading to the Hamburg *Autobahn*. It meant we must recross Berlin to the north with all its attendant danger. Maya felt me draw my gun. Her fingers bit into my wrist as if warning me to be careful. I waited until the Landwehr Canal at Blücher Place. Josef was conversing over his shoulder.

"The *Oberst-Leutnant* Osfried was very anxious to find you, Fräulein," he said. "He seemed curious to know why you had not arrived in Paris."

"Another mission detained me," Maya said lamely.

The man was driving slowly through the blackout. He wore just a little overseas cap of gray. I nudged Maya, mouthed into her ear: "Reach around to the right and grab the wheel."

"The *Oberst-Leutnant* said I must tell him the moment I saw you," Josef said.

I rose silently. The street was empty and black save for us. I brought the gun-muzzle down on his skull.

He stiffened, then slumped over the wheel. Maya's quick twist saved us from going into the curbing. Swiftly I seized his body and dragged it to the left.

"Get behind the wheel," I rasped. "Go wide around the old city."

Her silk-clad legs gleamed with blue sheen as she climbed over from the back.

"You—you haven't killed him?" she faltered.

"No," I told her, "he's just knocked out." I unscrewed the plastic ball on

the top of the gear-shift, thrust it into his mouth and tied it there with strips of my handkerchief.

"Pull up your skirt," I said. She did so, and I ripped her petticoat's hem, and with the pieces tied him hand and foot. "In the first likely place, stop," I ordered. "We'll put him in the trunk behind."

"Won't he suffocate?"

"No. I'll prop the lid open a bit."

She had swung right toward the Schonberg, and in the wood park paused briefly while I stuffed the unconscious garage corporal into the trunk-rack.

"Now," I said, "you know the way. Drive as fast as you can. If you're stopped, you're on your way to Hamburg on a special mission, and I'm your bodyguard."

One fact played in our favor from the beginning; a moving motorcar was almost automatically considered by troops as being an official car. All others were retired by lack of gasoline. Our car, besides, bore the mark of Goebbels' bureau, and Goebbels was feared as much as he was hated.

So we reached the famous Hamburg *Autobahn*. We had to average forty kilometers an hour, and I told Maya to push despite the dangers of the blackout.

My spirits were lifting with every kilometer. The roadway was smooth, magnificently banked for high speed. We passed some truck convoys filled with soldiers and material for Hamburg. We were nearing the winding Elbe.

IT was I who saw the two blue lights behind. At first I thought them part of the truck convoy. But they stuck to us even after Maya risked going sixty kilometers an hour.

"Perhaps it's a car for Hamburg," she reasoned. "Navy men from Kiel come this way on leave."

"Probably," I assented; "but keep her moving. It's getting near eleven o'clock."

The blue lights hung to our rear.

Were we being followed? I could scarcely credit it, for the impulse of any suspicious German would be to seize us at once. Yet we never shook off the blue lights.

We reached the road turning off to Rathenau, where we would cross the Havel River and then over the Elbe to Stendal. I stared behind. If the blue lights turned too, there could be no further doubt.

They turned. The car was pursuing us and now gaining.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

WE were trapped on this one road, for it was the only means of crossing the Elbe. So, knowing we could now not turn off, the car behind grew closer.

"Maya," I said quietly, "step on it. The car behind is a Gestapo car."

A little sound like a sigh escaped her. The car flew through the night. The blued lights barely lit the roadway ten yards in front.

We crossed the Havel, and here the road seemed straight and the speedometer needle hit the hundred-and-ten mark.

It was reckless madness, and the lights behind disappeared.

"Can you take it?" I said cheerfully in English. "We can't have more than fifteen kilometers to go."

In the blued dashlight, I saw her smile.

"I can take it." Her English was quaint, and it was the first time we had used the language.

We crossed the Elbe. Beyond, a farmer's high-wheeled cart loomed up. . . . A sickening screech of tires, a swerve, and we were back on the road. Maya drove superbly.

"The next turn-off to the right is ours," she said steadily. "Watch for it—I have to watch the road."

Even as she spoke, the motor suddenly back-fired, missed its rhythm, back-fired again, and a dead engine began to slow us up.

"Shove your clutch out," I cried sharply. "We're out of gasoline."

The indicator was at zero. She put the shift in neutral, and we drifted on momentum, but losing speed gradually. I opened the door. But there were no cans of gasoline strapped to the running-board. This was evidently a town car, there was no provision for long runs.

Before the car had stopped, I said: "Turn off—crash through those bushes."

She cramped the wheel. We plopped into a drainage-ditch, reared up on the other side. The radiator plowed into the thick brush, banged down two saplings. We went perhaps twelve or fourteen feet and stopped. I snapped off the lights.

"They'll go on by for a way and then retrace their steps," I said. "That'll give us a little more time."

I climbed out. As I opened the door for her, she half-collapsed into my arms. The nerve-strain of the drive had been terrific and for a while she was incapable of movement.

It was the roar of the pursuing car as it flashed past that aroused her.

"They won't take long," she whispered. "Our road is just ahead. And we've got to walk."

I flicked on the flashlight that had been in the glove-compartment.

"It's ten after eleven," I said. "How far?"

"Three kilometers, no more."

I helped her out to the road and paused only long enough to spring back the bushes to cover the car's rear as well as possible. Then I thought of Josef.

I lifted him out. He was still unconscious. But his pulse was steady, if slow. I carried him a hundred yards or so back and loosened the gag sufficiently so that with effort he could get it loose. He would be able to summon help, come daylight.

Maya was quite a way up the road when I joined her.

"Is he all right?" she asked anxiously.

"He'll have a headache," I said.

We turned off on a narrower macadamized road.

"They'll have to beat this section of the country, and that will take time—lots of it," I chuckled.

She smiled bravely and we trudged on. The sky above was clear and star-studded. They would come, those English. They had to!

ABOUT twenty minutes before midnight we reached a narrow dirt road. It climbed a small rise to the left that was covered with pine trees. Away to the right were flat lands leading to the Elbe. A ground mist hung here.

At the end of the road was a log cabin. The door was bolted, but I broke a window, crawled through and let Maya in. A flick of the flashlight showed a big fireplace filled with dead ashes.

"Excellent," I chuckled.

"Why do you say that?" asked Maya.

"I can signal up the chimney," I explained. "The pilots above can see it even better than in the clear, because the chimney will frame and widen the light. Also, nobody on the ground can see the signals."

I crouched and peered up the chimney-shaft. A rectangle of stars glittered through it. In the brief use of the flashlight I had seen a couch in the corner. I led Maya to it.

"Get a few minutes' rest," I said. "It won't—it can't—be long now."

She did not reply, but reclined obediently. It was as if the nerve-strain and the ride had completely exhausted her. I wanted a cigarette but dared not risk another light now. So I stood in the darkness, waiting, listening.

The planes that had left England at dusk should be coming now.

PERHAPS ten minutes passed; certainly no longer, when I thought I heard a noise outside. It was difficult to be certain, because the rustling murmur of the pines drowned slight sounds. I moved, however, toward the door, drawing my gun as I did so.

Without warning the beam of a flashlight covered me, blinded me.

"Stand where you are, you swine," came Osfried's triumphant voice. "Shoot if he moves, Hans."

Squinting against the white light, I could see Osfried in the doorway. Beside him, covering me with an infantry sub-machine-gun, was a Storm Trooper. Osfried also had his gun leveled.

"Back up and keep your hands high," ordered Osfried, with a mirthless smile. "The affair has come off perfectly."

To resist now, was stupidity. I backed toward the fireplace and let my gun fall to the floor.

To my right there was a sudden movement, and Maya flew across the room.

"Oh, Max!" she cried. "Thank God, you've come!"

She tried to put her arms around his neck, but he was too wary for that.

"First, *lieb' Fräulein,*" he said grimly, "you will have to explain what *you* are doing here!"

"I?" Maya shrank back. "I've been a prisoner to this man for days. He is not Wolff Braunen at all."

"I know that," said Osfried coldly. "How could you be his prisoner? Why are you with him? How—"

"But he sent for me," she interrupted wildly. "I was going to Paris. He telephoned from Dachau, said he needed me." She shrugged helplessly. "I thought it was Wolff. How could I know differently then? So I went in all haste."

"And why did he send for you?"

I listened tensely, hoping for a softening of Osfried's attitude.

Maya said: "Max, he was after something, and he got it. And someone ap-

parently warned him that the real Wolff—my Wolff—was in Berlin. He was using me as a shield to get out of Germany. Oh, Max, you must believe me."

"Did he force you to take that car tonight?"

"He threatened to kill me if I did anything to betray him." She began to sob, and this she did not have to fake. She was close to breaking. "I was afraid, Max. Oh, I was so afraid."

Osfried gave me a glance of hatred. "One more thing you will answer for!" But he did not let Maya get close to him.

I spoke now for the first time.

"How did you trace me here?"

I wanted to give Maya time to recover and think.

Osfried shrugged contemptuously.

"It is simple to follow the tracks of a car in the heavy dew. It is equally easy to follow footsteps—when the car is found."

Thank the Lord, he had not discovered that it was Maya who had driven.

"As long as you've got me, Osfried," I pressed on, "I'm curious to know why you didn't put out a general alarm—why you trailed me here instead of arresting me in Berlin."

"You'll find out," he promised grimly. "You know where the real Hagen formula is, and you'll tell me now, or I'll be damned unpleasant."

The real Hagen figures! Suddenly a lot was clear, and I could have laughed. "Why do you want them?" I said curtly.

A quiver of fury shook him.

"The real Wolff Braunen is dead—over forty-eight hours. Do you suppose I can face Himmler and say I was tricked? That I brought a British spy to the Führer himself?"

I understood then.

"You mean," I said, "that you're going to hush all this up. Wolff Braunen is dead. Very nice for you. You'll take the real formula to Berchtesgaden—and get the reward you wanted before."

"You are astute," said Osfried coldly. "I've got you here. No one is near except some soldiers I sent for, thinking I'd have to search this area thoroughly. But I can quiet them. Hans, here, will say nothing."

He shrugged impatiently. "Come, where are the real figures? Where are the Black Front lists you held out?"

It dawned on me that he was playing for a big *coup*. If I had had what he wanted, a promotion to wide power awaited him.

"What," I stalled, "can I expect in return?"

As I spoke, off toward Frankfort came the roar of anti-aircraft fire. And above Osfried's furious curse came the rising and falling drone of many airplane motors.

The British bombers were coming.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

OSFRIED was glaring at me. "Do you think I could or would do anything?"

"Then," I said, "I'll give you nothing."

"Zum Teufel!" he muttered. "We shall see to that. Hans, a blaze in that fireplace, *schnell!* I think he will talk and plead to do so."

A fire in the fireplace was the end! I thought of trying to jump that machine-gun. It was madness.

The thundering motors were loud, almost overhead.

Suddenly Maya sprang to life and rushed to Osfried—flung her arms around him.

"Max, Max," she cried. "He's got the papers. They're hidden outside. He hid them as soon as we got here."

Osfried did not push her away. "You're sure?"

She nodded. "Yes, he had papers. And he mentioned Mannerheim. He was planning to go to him. I did not suspect he was other than he was."

Osfried cried: "Then he *has* the right ones. Where?"

"He buried them outside—under a tree."

Her hands had crept down.

The thunder of the planes filled the room. I tensed myself.

"Bring him along, Hans," said Osfried. "You'll get a commission for—"

Maya's hand grasped Osfried's gun-arm. She wrenched the weapon downward.

"Quick, Eric," she cried.

In two bounds I reached Osfried, hurled him between me and the Storm Trooper. I drove a blow to the base of his neck that would have paralyzed an ox. Then I grabbed the gun, twisting it from his bent hand. As the Storm Trooper circled to open up at me, I fired.

The trooper sprawled flat. Osfried seized the instant to whirl. His hairless white hands seized Maya. She flipped through the air and smashed into me. We both fell, and it saved our lives. The Storm Trooper had cut loose with his gun, and a gale of bullets pounded the wall above and behind us. He was lowering the muzzle of the kicking gun when I fired again—twice.

The gun crashed from his suddenly limp hands. I leaped up and whirled. But Osfried was gone. Gone for help—gone to bring those soldiers he had summoned from the near-by garrison for his search.

I sprinted, trying to reach Osfried before he made the curve down the knoll. I got in two shots, but neither, I think, hit him. He vanished in the darkness.

I ran back to Maya. "You all right?"

She nodded. She was so pale I thought she would faint.

"Buck up," I said. "We can make it."

I snatched up the flashlight from the floor and raced to the fireplace. The motor drone was loud. The bombers were circling, waiting, observing the dark earth below. I climbed into the fireplace and held the flashlight upward. My thumb pushed the lock button. Then, by placing my left hand flat over the end glass to cut its light, I began to spell out the call for help.

I made it simple. "S O S," the beam spelled out. "BRITISH AGENT G TWENTY-ONE STOP LAND IN FIELD IMMEDIATELY DUE EAST OF THIS LIGHT DROP LANDING FLARE WATCH OUT GERMAN SOLDIERS APPROACHING *S O S S O S S O S S O S*."

I repeated the signals while the planes were directly overhead. Then the motor drone stopped. Then it started. The pilot was acknowledging that he had seen and accepted the signal.

I got Osfried's gun and my own from the floor and hurried to Maya. "They're coming down now," I said. "Let's run."

She had been at the window. As I dragged her away, she pointed.

"Cars coming, Eric," she whispered. "There are blued lights down the valley road."

"We can still make it," I cried. "We'll circle through the woods and avoid the road."

We raced out into the darkness.

On the road from the main highway were trucks—four, by their blue lights. Soldiers to make a cordon.

A dropped flare put a haunting brightness on everything. The motors were popping. I heard the distinct whistling sound that a plane makes when it is gliding earthward.

We pressed on. Once Maya stumbled and fell against me. She was trembling. We reached a dirt road, and the end of the woods around the cottage. I could hear voices back up there, see the glow of lights. They would be spreading out for the search now.

Maya tripped again; then she was leaning drunkenly against me. I felt something warm and sticky.

"Good God, you're hit!" I cried.

"A—trooper's bullet." She could barely speak. "I thought it was nothing, but—" Her knees buckled; she started to collapse. I held her, got the guns by their trigger rings, between my teeth. Then I picked her up and staggered toward the field now so brightly lit by the descending white glow. The big magnesium flares that the bombers release to illumine their targets made it as bright as day. And they revealed me not only to the bomber above but to Osfried and his men behind. I heard their yells of discovery.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THEY were cascading after me, and I could only run on, to the broadest part of the field. The plane was coming in from the east.

I heard the long whistle of dropping bombs. The plane would have to take on added weight in our bodies, and the pilot was dropping his bombs harmlessly since he was over no target. They hooted briefly; then there was a series of stunning concussions a half-mile or so to the east, and an upward shooting of white flame.

It helped me locate the plane that would be gliding in toward its landing field. Indeed, it was already banking.

A half-dozen flares lit the ground now, white smoke coiling upward to where the plane was leveling off for landing..

It was going to land facing into the light north wind, and it was going to land less than a thousand yards from where I struggled forward.

But from behind me roared the rapid crackle of rifle-fire. From the woods around the cottage where they had been

combing for me, men ran out in skirmish formation.

I heard the whicker of lead around me. But no bullet came close. Into the bright, dazzling light of the magnesium flares the big bomber glided down. She was leveling off right over my head.

I LEANED Maya against me, waved my one arm, shouted. A bullet smacked the ground. I ran on. She had weighed nothing at first; now she was like lead. My breath sobbed in my throat. I never could make it. My God, how fast that bomber went past! And after its wheels hit the ground, it shot down the field, even beyond the light of the flares. Vanished. It was out of sight. And behind me the soldiers closed in, the bullets were rattling thicker.

One hit my foot and tripped me, tore away the leather. Another bit a chunk out of my right thigh, and—oh, God!—it struck Maya. I did not know where; I only felt her body move to the force of it.

I dragged myself on another few yards. The plane had taken two thousand yards or more to land. I never could run that distance. I was all in now—I could go no farther. I had lost some blood and I was getting light-headed.

I had finally to stop. I placed Maya on the ground. We were outlined in the combined glare of the magnesium flares. I could see soldiers running forward. I got a grip on both guns.

I saw them coming. I saw Osfried, too. Whatever else you might say of the man, he had his courage. He was leading a group on the right, edging around to cut off my further retreat toward the plane. They knew now what was up, and had no intention of losing me.

I heard Osfried yell once: "Take them alive—if you can."

I began opening fire, steadying the revolver muzzle on one arm. Then behind me I heard a new sound that filled me with wild joy. The roar of airplane motors. I looked back swiftly. Three huge eyes seemed coming across the ground. The bomber had turned on her landing-lights, and these were making right for me.

Osfried saw it too; he must have called an order, though I didn't hear it, because he began to run furiously toward me, and the men with him took snipers' positions to cover his advance. Others closed in from the left.

It was all over now, I thought. I'd never make it; still, I emptied one gun at them, threw it down and started shooting the other. But revolvers against running men who know how to make themselves inconspicuous targets, and especially at a hundred-yard range, are bad. I didn't stop them, but a bullet whacked my leg above the knee and tore through the fleshy part. It was not, probably, a serious wound, but I couldn't walk any more now.

Then Osfried came—faster, since I no longer fired. I had only three bullets left and I wasn't going to miss any more.

I lay flat to the grass now, my body covering Maya. Osfried charged boldly ahead, toward us.

"Surrender," he screamed. "Do you want her killed?"

I dared not raise up to shoot because a stream of bullets from his covering fire zinged over me. The grass was long, but they knew where we were.

Osfried had yelled at forty yards or so. Now, as the huge bomber tore squarely for us, he was the supreme target, lit in the powerful landing-lights of the oncoming bomber. He could see me now, and paused so as not to get in the line of the German soldiers' fire.

AT that instant, as I was about to rise up and risk everything to get the first shot, I heard the smashing roar of machine-guns. Over, beyond, around me, white flashes creased the night. Tracer fire! The pilot knew my peril. He was smashing those German soldiers with the impact of his four Vickers guns.

He couldn't do it long; as soon as he stopped and the tail of his ship settled, he couldn't depress his guns. But he had a forward gunner with a swivel gun, and this thundered like cannon-fire as the plane loomed up behind me.

The gunner blasted those soldiers down as if they had been ten-pins. There was another rattle of gunfire, and those on the left either fell or turned and ran like mad. Only Osfried, who had been so close to me as to preclude him for a target, was left upright. And mad with hate and fury, he bounded forward toward me. He had raised his gun. We fired at a range of ten yards, he and I, and neither of us could miss.

I saw his face, in the blinding glare, pop open like a ripe orange. I felt the whack of lead, a blinding pain, then numbness in my side. When I could see again, Osfried was down. He lay not five feet away, and his hands still twitched as if groping for me.

Things began to get black. Then I heard footsteps, a cheery British voice.

"Here," I called weakly. "Look after her—she's hit."

Then the world blacked out and I heard nothing more.

THERE was a terrific racket in my ears when I later knew anything at all. And I found myself terribly cramped, for when I tried to lift my head, I banged it against something. Not a hard bang, but I was so weak I fell back. I opened my eyes later.

Over my head was a big gash in some metal, and through it I could see a gray cloudy sky. Beside me a man in a helmet that had a mouthpiece attached to it smiled. The motor roar was so loud you couldn't talk. He held out a slate. On it he had written: *"Cheerio, England below. Land in a few moments. Your lady friend is excellent. I'm Forsythe, the ruddy bomber."*

He waved his hand and patted my shoulder. He erased what he had written and scratched again: *"You've got three nasty wounds but you'll take another whack at them yet."*

I was in the narrow bomber fuselage somewhere between the nose and the tail. There were bomb toggles around me. The cut in the top had evidently been made by a chunk of anti-aircraft shell. Beyond Forsythe I saw the skirt and the slender silk-clad legs of Maya.

Forsythe had erased the slate and was writing: *"Jolly little scrap. The chappie with no hair was quite dead, and we attended to another twenty-five of the beggars."*

He grinned. I grinned back.

He wrote: *"Saw your light up the chimney. Morse code. Jolly fine idea. Have you got what the brass hats want?"*

I nodded. He grinned delightedly. I saw Maya's slim legs move, and when my eyes went there, Forsythe wrote: *"Two flesh wounds. Shock and loss of blood. Lovely girl, and I congratulate you. She wanted us to leave her and take you."*

I tried to move, and Forsythe put aside the slate and helped me. As he got me alongside Maya, the motor drone died away to a firecracker popping; then the fuselage dipped and a whistling sound rose.

Forsythe put his mouth to my ear.

"Coming in home now. Solid comfort in a minute."

I looked at Maya. Her half-lidded eyes were staring around, apparently trying to adjust herself to the surroundings. Then her glance reached me. Her one arm was hurt and she couldn't move it, but the other came up and around my neck. She pulled my head down. I felt the warmth of tears on my face.

Thus we remained, locked in each other's arms. We heard a hooting sound and then the rumble of some machinery, apparently the landing-wheels going down. A moment or so later the floor of the plane leveled off beneath us. There was a slight bump—then a firm one. The motors roared briefly. We taxied quite some distance. Then the motors ceased to fire.

Forsythe undogged a door. And outside we heard cheerful English voices.

"Nice trip? Drop your sticks? Hope you gave Fritz what-for. He was nasty enough over here last night. Up London way."

Another voice said: "We got your radio about the two wounded passengers. Here's an ambulance. And an Intelligence chappie—a brass hat—is here."

Maya heard and clung to me. "They'll take you away," she whispered. "What will happen to me now?"

NOW I knew the fear that gripped her, a fear greater than our escape had ever caused. She was an expatriate, an exile so long as Hitler ruled, a woman without a country. She felt forlorn, lost.

I said gently: "Maya, we'll have to separate for a while—to get patched up. After that we're going to the States—New York—as fast as we can."

"But I am a German," she said. "They will—"

"As my wife," I said, "nobody will stop you—question you."

Forsythe came to carry her to the stretcher.

"Then," she whispered, "it is still us—you and I—against the world?"

"There never was a doubt," I told her.

She waved from the doorway.

"Eric, Eric," she called, "I'll get well quickly—I'll be all that you think me—I promise!"

They took her out and then came for me. The dawn was breaking over the lovely green English hills. I leaned back and closed my eyes. I had a lot of tomorrows to dream about, and I figured I'd earned them.

Short novels by Hugh Pentecost, Fulton Grant, and Robert Mill will replace the book-length novel in our May issue.

Desert Bomber

As told to RALPH MICHAELIS

"THE bomber command," writes Vincent Sheean in REDBOOK, *"have not caught the popular imagination quite so much as the fighter pilots, the knights of the air battle. And yet the bomber's work is in many ways much harder and more dangerous, and in the long run, if the war is to be won, it must be largely by his efforts." Here is a fact story from a bomber in Libya.**

MY squadron had instructions to go and bomb a certain Italian airdrome inside the Libyan frontier; and we took off in the usual cloud of sand. An airplane takes much longer to get off the ground into the rarefied atmosphere of the African desert, than it does in England or France; and as long as it is running along the ground, it raises huge clouds of sand. The fellow in front of me ran for about a quarter of a mile before he got off the ground; and I had to wait for more than five minutes before the sand-cloud he raised had subsided sufficiently for me to take off.

It is always a thrilling sight to see an army going into battle, with its apparently endless columns of tanks and armored cars and lorries, and guns, and marching infantry. From several hundred feet above the battlefield, and through the clouds of sand that rose from all over the desert, we could only distinguish dimly the vague forms of vehicles and men emerging like ghostly shadows. The desert was as alive as an ant-heap.

And the sky was full of planes. There were heavy bombers, and medium bombers, all loaded up with destructive souvenirs for the enemy; and fighters buzzing around like a lot of hornets. We kept our eyes skinned for enemy planes, but never saw one. Soon we outdistanced the ground forces; and once over enemy territory, there was practically no movement to be seen on the ground.

Our rendezvous at the airdrome we were going to bomb was at ten minutes past zero hour. That is to say, we were due there ten minutes after the first bomber set the ball rolling. Flames were already leaping from hangars and buildings when we approached the target, and the surface of the airdrome was pitted with bomb craters.

A big bomber was overhead—several thousand feet above us; anti-aircraft shells were bursting all round him, but he flew straight on to his target, sometimes flying through the smoke of the bursting shells. I saw his bombs go down, like a handful of gravel in the distance. There was a tremendous upheaval as they burst. A hangar seemed to split down the middle, and the contents came showering up through the shattered roof. There were wings of airplanes, and engines, ladders, jigs, beams of wood and clouds of dust and sand; and as the débris settled, great flames shot up and clouds of sparks.

His task accomplished, the heavy bomber threw his plane hard over in a climbing turn, to avoid the heavy anti-aircraft fire that was being concentrated on him; and a medium bomber from my own squadron went in. He was flying a good deal lower than the heavy fellow, and he was getting everything the Italians had to throw up at him. His plane was just rocking through the bursts.

It is always an uncanny feeling to watch another fellow doing a show, and know that you are the next to go in—and to get what he's getting. I glanced at the clock on my instrument panel. We had another minute and a half to go, and then we would be for it. I looked down and contemplated my bomb-aimer's feet and hindquarters, as he lay on his tummy, peering through his bomb window in the floor of the nose of the machine. Just then a terrific report behind me, and a tremendous kick under the tail, reminded me that the enemy was fully appreciating the situation.

I yelled to my crew to hang on, shoved the stick forward, and dived down onto

*For this Real Experience department, Blue Book is glad to receive true stories of unusual and exciting adventure. They should be from one to four thousand words in length and we pay for them an average price of $50.

the target, making for a building that was still intact. Then hell was let loose at us. Shells were bursting all around and over top of us. Tracer bullets and "flaming onions" sizzled up and past us. A terrific bump, caused by a shell bursting close under the port wing, almost wrenched the control-column out of my hand.

I struggled to hold the plane in the dive. The ground seemed to rush up at us. The roof of the building for which I was aiming loomed up until it looked like the whole world in a distorting mirror. As soon as my bomb-aimer shouted "Bombs away!" over the telephone, I pulled out into a climbing turn, and zigzagged away to put the gunners off their aim. I heard my bomb-aimer say, "Got him a beauty!" but I was too busy dodging shells, just then, to look and see what had happened.

I shook off the worst of the anti-aircraft fire, and came back to have a look at the mess. But this time another plane from our squadron was doing his stuff. I noticed that our building was blazing fiercely, and that the anti-aircraft fire had slackened considerably. Evidently some of the guns had been put out of action.

As we hovered around, I caught sight of some lorries being hurried away up the road leading from the airdrome. So I dived on them, and let my gunners have a shot at them. They had a wonderful time, as the lorries bumped into one another, and the men tumbled and jumped off into the road. When we had finished with them we found that the bombing was over, and hordes of fighters which had suddenly appeared on the scene were diving on the airdrome and shooting it up almost at ground level.

Hangars and buildings were a mass of flames and smoke. Blazing airplanes lolled drunkenly all over the place. The ground was so pitted with bomb-holes that there did not seem to be more than a couple of feet between any of them. We went down to join in the fun, and my gunners singled out an anti-aircraft crew, who tumbled over like ninepins. By the time that the fighters and we had finished with them, there was not a gun left firing.

Airplanes were as thick in the sky as flies in the garden on a summer's afternoon, as we left the target for home. They were all ours. There was not a

single Italian in the sky. As we flew home, we passed several other airdromes that had been reduced to much the same state as the one to which we had been attending. Tanks and armored units still were tearing across the desert, enveloped in clouds of sand and dust.

I noticed now that the glass over the clock in the instrument panel had been shattered by a bullet, and there were some jagged tears in the port wing. When we got down, we counted twenty more bullet-holes in the floor of the cabin, between my observer and myself, and the bomb-aimer found one lodged in the pocket of his flying-suit. Otherwise there was no damage, and all our other planes came home safely from what we were told was a very good show.

Riders of

THE most exciting interlude in my life was my ten years of big-game trailing.... My game was man, the most cunning and dangerous of animals.

The hunt was an interminable one, sometimes pursued at night, more often confined to the day. Our ranging grounds extended from International Monument No. 1 West, close beside El Paso, to Monument No. 128 West at the New Mexico-Arizona boundary—a district roughly one hundred fifty miles in length, uninhabited except for a hardy few desert ranchers, desert wolves, sidewinders, huge tarantulas and our game, the border *contrabandista.*

Our usual procedure was simplicity itself: At four in the morning we saddled, making sure we packed a little grub, three gallons of water and plenty of ammunition. At five, after a few miles of mesquite and soapweed, we hit the International boundary at No. 1 West, just as the sun commenced to throw its first fingers through the Pass. With my partner Bob—soldier of fortune and ex-South African Mountie—watching ahead, I commenced to cut sign. Rocking along at a high trot, I watched the morning's story unfold. For miles we would ride thus, I with eyes to the ground, Bob keenly watching either side of the ancient three-strand barrier for trouble.

Without pausing, I'd note that late yesterday, Gregorio, the old Juarez wood-digger, had climbed the fence just beyond No. 3 West, and that a quarter-mile down the wire he had gone back with his few grubbed roots; that Abe Wilson's "silver hoss" was following the wire trying to get with a band of mares on the Mexican side, and that he had lately thrown a right front plate.

"Now what would Jess Mauldin's Isidoro be doing here on the Line six miles from Las Norias?" We pulled up. Jess was the section foreman at Las Norias, Isidoro Valenzuela one of his section-gang boys. Bob and I knew the track of every man, woman and boy in that vast wasteland—knew each pair of shoes.

"Pull up—we'd better look into this, Bob."

"Jess' boys got no business over here on the Line. An' after dark, too," Bob added after a moment's inspection. "Look! The wind dropped a little dust from that yucca bloom into the track. Wind blew up last night 'bout 'leven, died 'bout midnight." Bob was a light sleeper, and I always accepted his word about the night winds as straight dope. Kicking the fence down, we backtracked into Mexico for a couple of hundred yards. There Isidoro had sat down, waited for an *hombre* to come from the direction of Juarez. The can had been packed in a gunny-sack; the print of it, sack-enclosed, showed plainly between the men. Two cigarettes, one hand-rolled, the other "fabrica de Mexico" had been smoked. Then Isidoro had shouldered his five-gallon can of sotol, paid his Juarez *compadre* and legged it for Las Norias.

Wheeling our horses, we took up the track. In thirty minutes we hit the railroad, and it was there that our quarry sought to play the fox. Walking between the rails, he had streaked for home three miles away, leaving no trace on the cross-ties. Reaching deserted Arenas, he quit the track, the sign as plain as though Isidoro had written his name in the sand. He walked into the foreman's deserted house, came out behind, wearing a strange pair of shoes evidently cached there, slunk over to the workers' quarters. Twice we circled the place without cutting the outgoing sign, but finally we got it. Using two boards, Isidoro cast one before him, walked the length of it, tossed out the other and so worked his way to the tracks. The boards had been tossed many feet from the last using place, but Bob, with the eye of an old tracker and suspicious of every mark on the ground, had finally seen a faint

the Border Patrol

An old-timer in a little-known service tells of his exciting job.

By CHARLES ASKINS, JR.

scratch, made undoubtedly when the wily smuggler heaved the plank. Raising our broncs to a high lope, we swooped down on the luckless Isidoro, catching him between morning coffee and frijoles. The can, as yet untapped, was cached in a specially dug hole under the bed. Señor Valenzuela, despite a sandy twelve-mile hike the night before, was preparing to do a day's labor in behalf of the railroad. We saved him the trouble. With brown-skinned stoicism he laughed, and volubly inquired as to how we unraveled the tangled sign at Arenas. With equal good humor we informed him.

We seldom stumbled onto smugglers; they were too clever for that. Each day we rode patrol, but the game we came up with was almost invariably overhauled after many miles of grueling track-following. I have tracked surreptitious incomers as long as five days; followed them a hundred and fifty miles, in and out of towns, about Mexican pueblitos, through the mountains, across rivers, finally to end the chase with both pursuers and pursued ready to drop.

ONE morning we hit the sign of five who had come over, we figured by the frost, and the look of the track at the fence, about nine the night before. We unwound the trail fast, and in a couple of miles found where the "runners" had briefly rested. The sign of the gunny-sacked cans was plainly evident—also the butts of two rifles. "One a Mauser, the other an old crescent-stocked Winchester," Bob surmised. We took the trail into the Valley and found where the *contrabandistas* had loaded the cans, as well as themselves, into a light car with worn, mismatched tires. We estimated, both by the distance in miles and the rest-stops, that the smugglers made contact with the car about a quarter past four in the morning. We noted the day, their crossing-place and the direction of travel, and awaited developments. Three weeks later they "ran" again. We easily tied the second running to the first by the sign. Tracks have as much individuality as faces; to see a track once, is to remember it possibly longer than a face. Two tracks are never alike, even though made by feet of similar size with seeming identical footgear. To the expert, there will be minute differences instantly perceptible. We followed the smugglers into the Rio Grande Valley again two weeks later, saw by the sign that the same light truck had picked them up, noted a new front tire had been added, and went home already decided upon a course of action.

In a fortnight we went into the sand country adjacent the Line and waited. Night came but no game. Next day we returned to our high pointing. Still no activity on the far side of the fence. The third afternoon of watching, two venerable wood-diggers came up from the south and commenced to grub for mesquite roots. Keeping out of sight, I continually swept the barren waste with my glasses. Empty of all life except for the two, it presented a desolation of sand and mesquite. Suddenly I swung the binoc's to the ancient *pelados* so industriously shoveling for *leña*. "There's no mesquite in that spot!" I suddenly recollected. The two were swinging ax and shovel with much gusto, but they were surrounded by yucca.

Evening came on with a rush. The sun slipped down behind the Potrillos; long shadows crawled beyond each mesquite; the air grew piercingly chill. The pair beyond the rusty barrier abruptly straightened. For long moments they looked this way and that. Quickly one gathered an armload of greasewood. In sixty seconds a tiny fire blazed. Straight toward the still-glowing heavens a spiral of smoke ascended.

In a matter of minutes a long line of men, a mile removed from the fence but coming directly toward us, could be seen. "Probably wait for darkness to cross,"

Bob spoke our minds. We waited, Bob with the patience of the old campaigner, I with the keyed-up anxiety of an over-trained quarter-horse.

It grew very dark. We listened. Unmistakable sounds of the *contrabandistas* drifted to us. Directly three of the riflemen eased through the squeaky fence; we counted the noises on the wire as they climbed through. "The guns," I thought. "Coming ahead of the *carga* to clear the way, just in case." In a matter of tense moments a figure drifted by within bare inches, silent as a wraith. He moved off, apparently not seeing us, and squatted down. The other two guns moved in on him. We could see nothing more of them. Time passed, Bob and I straining our eyes to pick up the trio.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

From three different directions, so as to catch us in a cross-fire, the gun-jiggers opened up. It was hot as hell for long minutes. Sand and sticks flew in my face, and I could see the flashes. The guns beyond the fence bellowed too. They didn't give a hoot whether they hit their own men or not; they wanted in on the fun. I slammed shot after shot at the orange streaks, and heard Bob rattle the bolt on his old issue rifle. A man yelled, and the *bandidos* ceased shooting. Bob and I were mad, so we poured a hot blast toward the fence.

Two hours later the liquor crossed, a mile and a half down the fence.

THREE weeks afterward we hit this gang again. The cards were stacked against them. We knew their route through the Valley. We waited them out against the side of a hill. At two-forty-five they came along, and we called to them to halt. The leader, a big outlaw called "El Indio," opened up. He took a charge of shot in the chest; a second blast hit him in the stern as he started to run; and as he passed Bob, the old South African policeman drilled him through both hips. A second gun-jigger lost a leg, and still a third died *en route* to the hospital. The line from No. 1 West to No. 128 West was comparatively quiet for three weeks after that. Then the remnants of the old crew tried to bushwhack us. The ambush paid off nicely—but not for the *contrabandistas!*

I hold brightest memories of those thrill-packed moments when guns belched muzzle to muzzle; but in retrospect I know now that the sign-cutting gave me the greater satisfaction. No man ever felt a great sense of well-being than came to me after those long, tiring pursuits when it required all the skill and patience I could muster finally to come up with the elusive long-walkers. The fellows we tracked were diabolical in their sign-hiding cleverness. They understood a trail with the inherent savvy of countless Indian ancestors; how it was blinded, obliterated, purposely made misleading; and to beat them at the game was keenest sport for me. I learned tracks from one of the best sign-cutters in the Southwest. For three years I was by his side daily. When the station eventually came to me, old Bill acknowledged that I'd handle it as efficiently as he did; I have never been paid more sincere tribute than that.

Not all the long-walkers we tracked were evaders of the tariff laws, by any means. A great many were Chinese, German, Italian and Spanish aliens seeking to avoid the immigration laws by surreptitious entry. These fellows were generally accompanied by a smuggler who knew the country, and had a savvy of contact-points for food, water and sometimes transportation. These border-runners pulled many a fast one on us. An old stand-by was to walk through the international fence backward, thus making the sign show the tracks headed south. Better than that were the slickers who bound their feet with sacking and came over, trusting that the interminable winds would brush out the slight imprints before the Line-riders passed. We caught two Germans who had ridden over on a burro. They were mystified to know how we suspected the jackass of toting them. Through the aid of the interpreter, I told them we knew that particular little jinny well, for she ranged along the Line all the time: that as soon as we saw she had straddled the fence, we noted the unusually deep tracks, sure indication she was loaded. Besides, I informed my open-mouthed captives, we could see that the burro was staggering under the huge load, further evidence she was packing something more than her usual quota of sand and fleas.

Wily crossers carefully dusted out their tracks with a handy mesquite, changed footgear as many as three times, vaulted the fence with a long pole, rode over in wagons, on horseback and by auto. One band drove a dozen head of stock, walking among the cows, and after quitting the fence attempted to haze the cattle back, thus effectively blotting out the

human prints. We came to recognize all the usual assortment of tricks and hugely enjoyed running down those clever coyotes who could evolve something new.

Of more serious consequence was the occasional determined border-runner intent on breaking through regardless of cost. During my years in the sand country, we hit three such bands. The usual procedure was to recruit a half-dozen of the saltiest gun-twisters in Juarez, buck the fence, leaving enough sign for a Brooklyn cowboy to follow, select a natural trap and patiently wait for us to poke our noses inside the loop. These affairs were deadly serious, and while I rode through three of them unscathed, I would not want knowingly to ride into another. Poor marksman though he is, the coffee-colored *buscadero* from south of the border does sometimes connect.

WE were lucky at times; there is no doubt of that. One morning Bill and I cut sign of four long-walkers. We tailed them at a killing pace, a pace so hot that Bill had to drop out, his horse gone lame. I kept the trail alone. After twenty miles of ceaseless tracking, I came upon a still warm fire. The fugitives had killed and eaten a rabbit, sure indication they were armed and at least one good pistol-man was with them. I pushed on, my horse, a gangly gray fresh out of the collar and as poor as a snake, already beginning to cave in.

I kept on. After forty miles on the trail, a trail that had taken me through lava country, hard-baked adobe flats, mesquite, sand and cactus, I sighted the quarry a hundred yards ahead, just quitting a shallow arroyo. Whipping out my cutter (I cursed the carelessness that had seen me leave my rifle at home), I swept down on the four, the six-gun going. Close as my shots spattered, I had no intention of hitting.

Surprised and scared by the screaming lead, the band milled like hawk-hit quail. I flipped out the empties and charged in, the old gray weaving. The *jefe*, a salty number name of Chato Saenz, went for his gun stowed inside his coat. I let him have my barrel squarely between the horns, and he dropped like a heart-shot buck. Resistance melted. I took a Spanish-made automatic from another, his nerve gone when Saenz crumpled. El Chato, the avowed leader, was smuggling the others in, all Spaniards that had paid him a hundred each for safe-conduct well beyond the border. Had these Line-jumpers seen me before I spotted them, it would have been a cinch to drop behind a mesquite and let me ride over them, drilling me from either side as I came on. But I was lucky. . . .

Sometimes the sign we followed led to tragedy—more often, however, we twisted circumstances to provide comedy. I recollect three *broncos* (wild ones) one morning who dodged us for thirty miles. So clever were they, that Bob and I decided they had been nabbed before. They doubled back, walked in each others' tracks, took off their shoes and wound their feet in cloth; tramped the railroad so as to leave no sign, hiked down the rut left by passing autos on a back road; never failed to hunt out every adobe flat, each *malpais* (lava country) and every rock-outcropping. We finally shortened the distance until we could see them about six hundred yards ahead. Seeing us (we traveled by car, the horses taken away), they broke into a run and gained the shelter of a *malpais*.

We came as close as possible in the auto and took up the sign on foot. For three hours we unraveled a trail that to this day stands as the hardest I've followed. Finally we overhauled our fleeing quarry. The leader made fight, and I walloped him over the head with my rifle. The long walk out eventually revived his fighting spirit, and he hissed rebellion to the others. The situation grew ominous, and I knew trouble was imminent. About that time a long-eared jackrabbit broke from cover and streaked across the flat. I levered three quick shots after him, and at the third report he spun end over end.

I ordered the staring leader to bring him in. Hastily he obeyed. Never before had he or the others seen running game killed. Although the three came from a country where game is plentiful, cartridges are so scarce that shots are never attempted at moving targets. The lesson in marksmanship made a deep impression. The grumbling ceased, and we proceeded to the car without further incident—not, however, without the eight-pound jack which I thoughtfully permitted the *jefecito* to cargo. . . .

The old Border Patrol is gone. In its place is an organization of bright young men—capable immigration lawyers, brilliant students and careerists. The fighting is for the most part done; the long rides, waterless camps and blistering days on an endless sign are no more. I have resigned.

Journey

THE sun had risen but was still blanketed by the whitish muffle that joins sea to sky. I waited upon the beach in Bali, seated upon a pile of cases, watching the sea-going praus.

Among the praus was the sturdy vessel that I had already inspected some time before at a small port on the coast of Java. The eyes painted on either side of the prow of this vessel held a sad and woebegone expression. But on board, several small brown men were extremely busy. I hailed them, and they waved back cheerily. The car that had brought me to the beach with my possessions at dawn had long since departed; but my only servant—a grinning but not altogether inefficient lad—had not yet turned up, bringing the box that contained all my personal belongings and civilized clothes.

We waited two hours more. Then I decided to abandon my servant and my clothes, rather than miss the trip.

The principal reason for my choosing to travel by native prau to the Celebes when small yachtlike passenger boats made the trip upon regular schedule, was that I wanted to collect sea-serpents.

It may come as a surprise to many that there are such creatures as sea-serpents. The warm seas of the Orient are the home of a number of species of snake that lead an almost entirely marine existence. They are moderate-sized poisonous snakes, with compressed tails like slender paddles to aid them in swimming, and they are met with right out in the open ocean miles from land. They are of considerable interest to science, naturally, not having been so extensively collected as land-snakes. I was eager to obtain some, and this one cannot do from a swift passenger-vessel running on a schedule.

At eleven o'clock, therefore, we let go the communally-owned shore-line, waved to the busy occupants of the other praus, hoisted two oddly shaped sails—the larger of canvas, the small one aft of split bamboo—and pushed off.

The prau was a very large one, with an immense pan-shaped central well-deck filled to the lip of the bulwarks with native merchandise.

There were bales of dried fish, dried sea-slugs on the way to the Chinese markets, dried fruits, bundles of goat hides, and an endless assortment of bales, bundles and rough crates bulging with undefinable produce. All these were neatly bedded down so that they formed a more or less level false deck flush with the edge of the vessel; and over them was spread a gigantic net constructed of pieces of rope, sharks'-hide and creeper ropes. This was pegged into slots on the gunwale, and upon it mats, rough tarpaulins and countless batik sarongs were stretched.

The two extremities of the boat were really small triangular floating houses, with three stories for'ard and four aft. They were constructed with watertight bulkheads facing the well-deck, which was nothing more than two great sides like those of a dinghy; these sides connected the two floating "houses." The reason for all this is not obvious, and was quite unknown to me at the time.

Everybody lived upon the cargo amidships, the poops being filled with a medley of ship's supplies like a chandler's warehouse, children in batik cribs, more dried fish, privately owned rice, and spaces covered with old pieces of corrugated iron upon which food was always cooking. I never learned the extent of the ship's company, for there were always more people asleep than awake, the children appeared to be interchangeable, and several of the women were more or less troglodytic, appearing only after dark. Superb seamanship and accurate navigation appeared to be the keynote of the vessel's progress, but I saw no instruments aboard, not even a compass; and yet we made a passage of approximately eighty miles across the angry and treacherous Java Sea.

The first days and nights were uneventful. No sea-serpents appeared. The life was delightful, lying under a mat parasol clad in a sarong, with one's bare feet stuck over the gunwale to catch the cool draft created by the vessel's progress. The nights were even more perfect. Nowhere in the world is the moon brighter or the stars more vivid than around the Java Sea.

in a Prau

A distinguished naturalist tells of a weird wild voyage.

By IVAN SANDERSON

The initial period of delightful laziness, however, gave way to one of intense activity. Sea-snakes became numerous, and many of the men as well as the captain became enthusiastic. Various methods of capture were suggested—hook and line, nooses, nets and other less probable devices. The captain plumped for nets, of which he carried an abundance; and since I was unable to enter the argument, and nobody had ever attempted to catch the creatures before, he won his point. Sail was dropped, and we drifted with great nets trailing in all directions. We caught innumerable fish and a small dolphin, and saw sea-snakes on both sides of the net, but caught none. It was while I was occupied with the dolphin that a small boy caught a snake from the bows with a circular Chinese casting-net. Excitement ran high, and the reptile was belabored. It promptly disappeared down a deep crevice between the cargo and did not re-emerge. This was considered to be the will of Allah, which it probably was, and so it remained there.

OPERATIONS recommenced, and went on for days with but little abatement of enthusiasm. I think everybody enjoyed the novelty of the game. We then plowed on through an area devoid of snakes and subsequently came upon another patch of brilliant red-and-black ones, and the process was repeated. The captain proved himself the man of the hour by landing and killing four of the snakes. We were much elated, and he decided to wallow in the placid swell during the whole night, so that we might have a chance the next day. Our agreement included an extra bonus for snakes caught during the voyage.

That evening a general holiday was declared; small oil-lamps were lit—a thing that had not previously been done; and after a communal meal, small bamboo xylophones and tiny shell pipes were brought out, and soft, melodious, liquid chants spread over the oily, heaving waters.

Everything was so soothing that when my work was completed on the day's catches, I fell asleep on the after poop. When I awoke, it was pitch dark, and there was a great commotion going on below. Groping in the dark, I found the rough companionway of bamboo poles and descended to the well; somebody ran into me headlong, and I bawled at them to find out what was afoot, but nobody replied. The sound of the big sail being hoisted came to me, and I made my way forward to interrogate some of the men. There was a slight drizzle falling. The sound of hammering came from both fore and aft, and the whole air seemed to be filled with a strange indefinable wailing noise. I reached the men and painstakingly put my questions in my best Malay. For answer I was shouted at in Buginese, Salayanese and sundry other languages, and so retired beaten to the after poop, where I kept my possessions, in search of a flashlight. When I reached the bulkhead and groped along toward the door, I bumped into more people, and making a plunge for the door, ran headlong into solid wood. Nursing my nose, I groped around. To my astonishment I found that the door had been completely boarded up with thick planks. I was dumfounded. Then I was hailed.

"Tuan Ingris, Tuan Ingris!" the captain's voice rang out of the darkness and the hubbub.

I found him on the after poop.

"What's the matter?" I inquired.

But all I heard was the oft-repeated and greatly emphasized word *"laut,"* which means sea. I began to grasp the significance of the company's behavior, for the ship was now heaving noticeably. I still wanted my torch, and so asked the captain how I could get at it. For answer he half dragged, half pushed me down a small hatchway into the stuffy interior of the poop.

Here a hurricane lamp burned, and by its light I descried the captain's family and several others, huddled together in a corner, looking somewhat scared. I unearthed my torch and returned to the little deck above. Men were working like demons, lashing the big sail fore and aft with endless additional ropes and thongs. Rain was now descending in a solid cascade, and a slight warm

breeze had sprung up. I clung to the heaving rail and watched proceedings, flashing my torch-beam here and there. The captain had disappeared.

Then it happened: More suddenly than one could have believed possible, and without previous warning of any kind, the rain falling through the torch-light turned suddenly at right angles, and a wind hit me from the port beam with a force that took my breath away. The great lumbering prau heeled over like a wallowing sea-monster, shipping a waterfall of inky water to starboard. She remained over at a dizzy angle, and during this interlude everybody scrambled onto the poops. By the time the sail had pulled the head of the vessel into the wind, and she had therefore righted herself, everybody except myself and the captain was below. Stupidly protesting, I was pulled below also.

AS my head sank through the little hatchway, a jet of solid salt water hit me in the face, smashing my head against the frame. I slithered down the companionway, and remembered no more for some hours, though my insensibility merged into a deep and fretful sleep. When I came fully around, with a lump on my head and a splitting headache, it was undeniably ten o'clock in the morning, and yet the small cabin was in total darkness but for the flickering and madly swinging lamp. The world was filled with an endless roaring, and my body rose and fell and rolled about so that I expected it to leave the hard deck at any moment. Around me, the company gripped each other and any stable object, bracing themselves with their toes against the timbers.

The presentation of a highly valued tin of tobacco to the captain won me the privilege of going above.

The first fury of the tornado had passed by. What was left was half a gale, and a sea churned up like whipped cream. Damp clouds raced across the sky, which had dropped to a few hundred feet above the mast; sharp pointed peaks of foam danced upon an immense steep swell. But the most amazing thing was that we were awash.

Instead of two feet of freeboard, we now had some six inches; water stood at the same level both within and without the gunwales. The greedy sea gurgled up and down between the bales of merchandise, and slopped in and out of the vessel as it wished. I was nearly an hour absorbing this fact as I stood incredulously watching the bales of dried fish, now swollen and soggy, rising and falling beneath the great net.

At sundown the wind vanished suddenly and the clouds rolled away, leaving a trail of thin white mist which hurried after them. A golden sun blazed out, illuminating an exalted sky, puffed with billowing white clouds. The crew began to appear.

Modern pumps in excellent condition, which I had not seen before, were uncovered; and for hours and hours seawater was spouted back into its own environment, and the vessel presumably rose gently—though the result, when the pumps began to gurgle far below, was not very noticeable, for the cargo was saturated and now extraordinarily heavy. An amazing medley of objects were raised aloft on lines to dry, the mats came out again, and acrid smoke belched from the poops once more.

It was not until next morning when I came to look for my notebook that I realized that I had left my precious snakes in the corner of the well-deck where I had worked. I ran to look for them. They had gone overboard, with every other movable object.

The captain was as sympathetic as I could wish and offered to return to the place where we had caught them. I looked at him in amazement; did he know where that spot had been, after running before a tornado and its aftermath for more than twelve hours? I asked him if he knew where we were.

He looked overboard at the sea; then he scanned the sky and replied simply, "*Mowou*" or, "Yes." And he did know, because a day later we entered the port of Macassar, the place to which he had guaranteed to take me.

BIDDING my friends farewell, I ascended the steep stone steps to the pier. My heart was heavy, for I had lost my clothes and failed to gain my precious sea-snakes. I encountered customs authorities, and went through the formalities; then I passed through a customs warehouse. As I emerged into the sunlight, I was greeted by a shout.

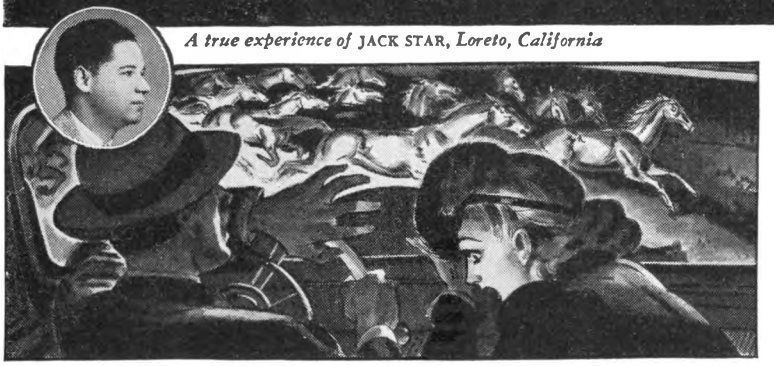
"Tuan, *Tuan!*"

I swung round. There stood my grinning servant, whom I had believed left in Bali. Beside him was my trunk.

I later discovered he had left by the mail-boat at his own expense at dawn on the day of my departure from Bali.

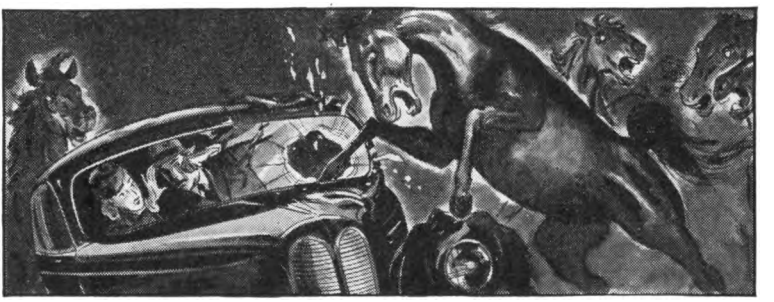
"THE ENRAGED BEASTS REARED TO CRUSH OUT OUR LIVES!"

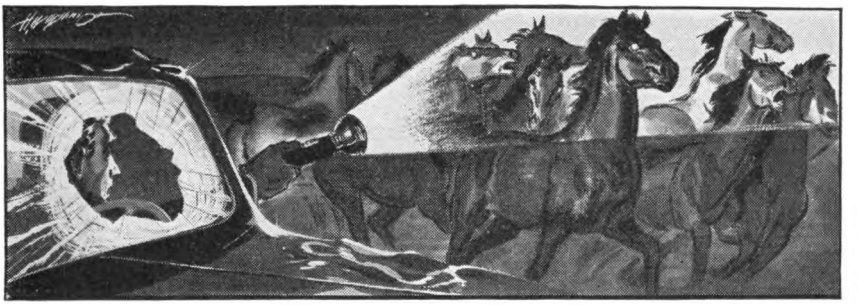
A true experience of JACK STAR, *Loreto, California*



"A HERD OF WILD HORSES galloped into our path as we were speeding across the New Mexican desert one pitch-dark night," writes Mr. Star. "Instantly, I jammed on the brakes! The lights went out as the car struck and careened off the nearest horses.

"PANDEMONIUM BROKE as the bewildered, enraged animals tried to kick the car to pieces! We cowered inside as their thudding hooves smashed lights, hood and windshield! It looked as if we were as good as dead!

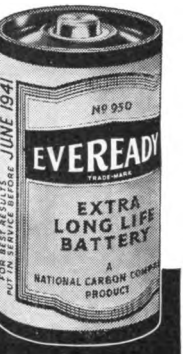




"THEN, GROPING FRANTICALLY, I found our flashlight, flashed its brilliant beam into the eyes of the nearest horses. Blinded, they hesitated . . . then retreated in a rout. Thanks to dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries, we came out of our adventure alive.

(Signed) Jack Star"

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.



FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* DATE-LINE

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide UCC *and Carbon Corporation*

Our Readers* Write Us—

A CANADIAN COMMENT

I do not know if you accept letters from outside the United States or its possessions, but since I have read the BLUE BOOK *in many countries, I am taking the liberty to write, especially since there is probably more demand according to population, for its purchase in Canada than in the country in which it is published.*

BLUE BOOK *appeals by its clean stories of fun, sports, and history-coupled adventures. I like the style of the majority of its writers. Good stories are too often ruined by crudeness in expression.*

Two changes might possibly increase sales by attracting new readers: A change in the size and cover design would place it on the magazine racks along with other high-class magazines. More care in the selection of cover scenes for the front would be advisable. Some cover scenes are good, while others make the magazine appear of the "pulp" variety—to readers not familiar with it.

As an example, my wife thought it to be a cheap magazine until I finally persuaded her to read one of Bedford-Jones' (another Canadian) stories. She now enjoys it as much as myself.

Sgt. B. G.
Royal Canadian Corps of Signals,
Kingston, Ontario

FROM A CLUBWOMAN

I have just discovered BLUE BOOK *and feel as Lt. Harry Rieseberg felt when he sighted the sunken city of Port Royal. Only, my discovery demands no hazardous adventuring to claim its full reward.*

I heard of BLUE BOOK *because of an H. Bedford-Jones story featuring figures prominent in theater history. But I read the whole magazine: Hugh Fullerton's delightful novelette, "The Banshee Comes to America." That new writer, Howard Rigsby, is keen, fresh and crisp in his "Unlike Leonardo." And the mystery novel, "One for the Money," actually made me take leisure time to finish it. The thrill of "Red Fog" and the modern war-thrill in "Golden Slippers!" Such variety!*

As director of a Little Theater Group, a club member and a homemaker, I have little time for leisurely reading. But I must have material for intelligent and colorful conversation, and must get it quickly and enjoyably. The finding of BLUE BOOK *solves my problem and eliminates at least three or four other magazines I have heretofore had to wade through.*

All this time I haven't known about BLUE BOOK! *Why doesn't somebody tell me these things?*

Mrs. A. L. Horton
Royal Oak, Mich.

A RESPITE FROM WAR

It is true that this country should awake to its peril. It is equally true that it should establish a mental and nervous equilibrium. Aviators do not prepare for bombing flights by constant brooding on their dangers, but forget them when they can, to keep their minds fresh and clear for action. Entertainments of various kinds were arranged for troops during the War of 1914-'18 for the same reason: To help maintain balance and morale.

It is difficult now to obtain a moment's respite from war and horror. Newspapers and magazines are full of it; radios shout it; newsreels picture it; everybody talks about it. It is necessary that we should take it seriously and prepare for it. It is no less necessary that we should sometimes forget it, if we would keep our nerves steady, our minds unjaded and competent, our morale high.

Give us, then, few war stories. Let us turn confidently to BLUE BOOK *as one sure source of that moment of relief and refreshment. Help us keep our balance.*

M. K.
Winter Park, Fla.

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*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestion; and for the half-dozen or so we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned, and all of them will become the property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed to: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York.

The response to our invitation has been so generous that we find it impossible to print as many as we should like to—or to give each one the personal acknowledgment it deserves. We therefore wish here to thank the many other readers who have written to us.

We specially desire for our Real Experience department true stories from the fighting men in training overseas.