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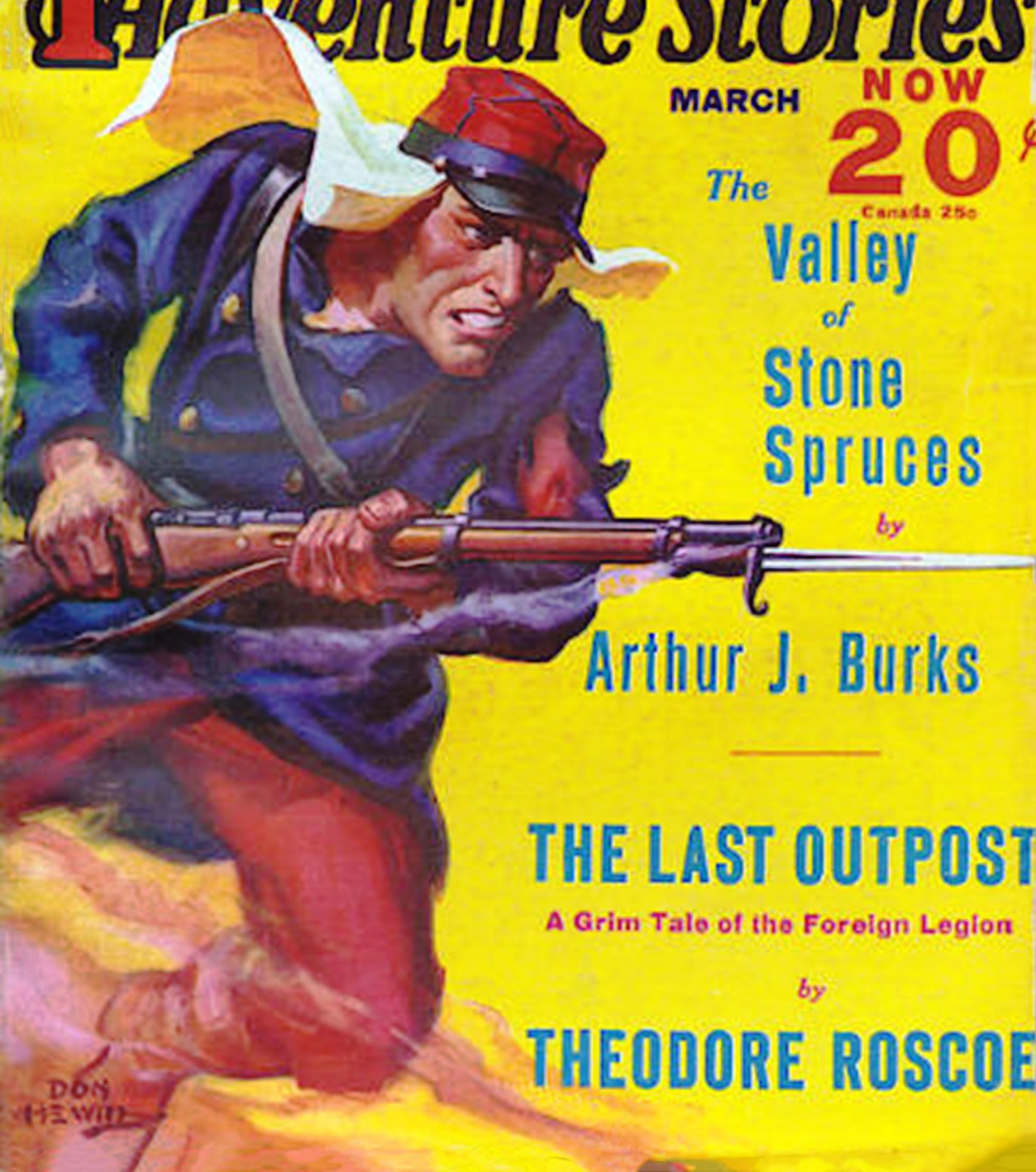
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THE LAST OUTPOST

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by

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Inside front cover



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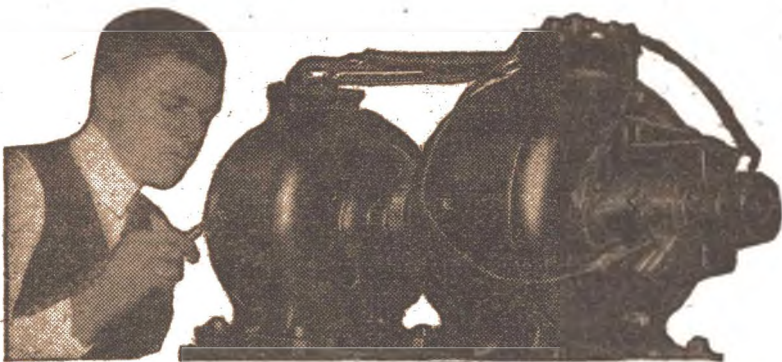
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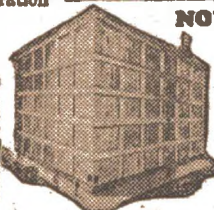
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This month we have reduced the price of the magazine from twenty-five cents to twenty cents. We quite well realize that there is a business depression in our country at this time, and we hope that this price concession will enable a few more readers than otherwise might have been able to buy FAR EAST Adventure Stories to buy it now. We haven't cut down the quality of stories in the slightest. On the contrary, we have secured additional famous authors who have never before appeared in the pages of FAR EAST Adventure Stories, to contribute stories for the forthcoming issue.

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(Coming Up Announcement on Page 81)



Action Adventure East of Suez

FAR EAST

Adventure Stories



VOLUME TWO

MARCH, 1931

NUMBER 3

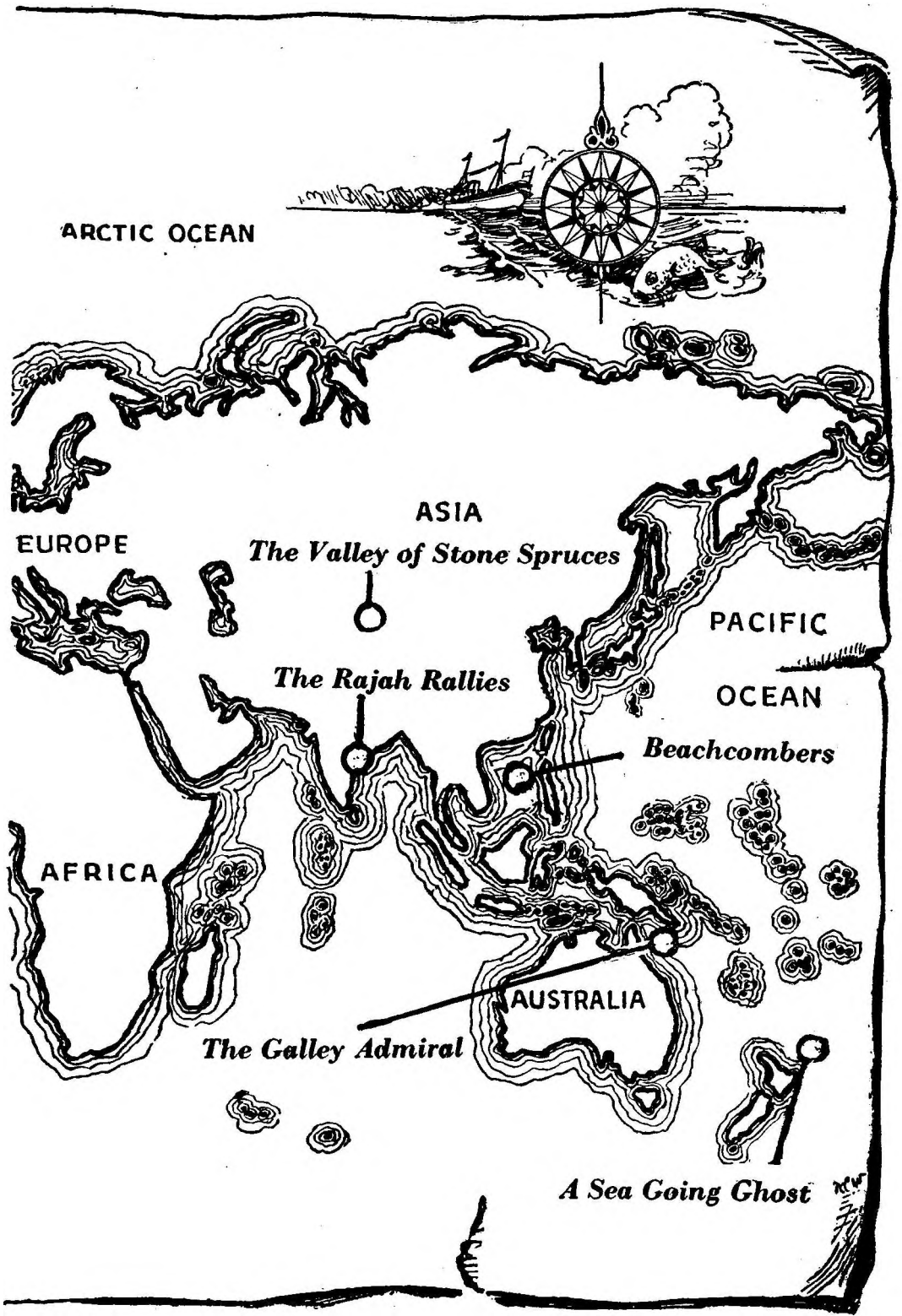
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The Last Outpost

A Breath Stilling
Tale of the
Foreign Legion



By

**THEODORE
ROSCOE**



BUZZARDS WHEELING against the copper sky foretold the story; then the ragged column of Legionnaires debouched

slowly from the red ravine, trudged up the sandy slope, and saw. Beyond the dune, the desert swept over the rim of the world, a brown flat blistered sun-baked pan. A pan on which a frowsy object cooked. For all the world a chunk of burnt cake, charred black under the savage white sun. Devil's cake, left there to burn.

All that was left of Fort Avant-poste made an ugly scar on the sweep of brown. The smoke-stained walls leaned up out of the sand, the gate was a mound of white ashes, the roof was a skeleton of burnt timbers tot-

tering weak above the ruin. The first wind to whisk out of the Sahara would level that fire-eaten shell, yet it might stand forever, protected by the bank of Atlas cliffs and the ridge of dunes. Now it baked in silence beneath the sizzling glare of dawn. The breathless air shimmered, and thin lariats of dead gray smoke struggled up from the husk of black timbers, uncoiled and drifted straight up at the sky.

It was hot as the hallway to Hades, yet every Legionnaire in the column felt chill water on his cheeks as he glared at the ruin below. A string of muttered oaths ran down the line, and the tall Frenchman, mounted in the lead, passed a hand across tired eyes.

Too late!

Once again, too late. One might better, by the Saints!, have an honest job in a mortuary, than play undertaker in the cursed Foreign Legion. A map of wrinkles creased some of the stiff sternness from the officer's face. It was not according to rule, but he swung in his saddle and spoke to the Legionnaire nearest in the line of march.

"*Alors, Smith, we arrive for the burial. We are beaten, again, it would seem. The Touaregs have been here before us.*"

Something in the face of the man he addressed stopped the officer's speech. An angular, odd fellow, this Smith, with a build that suggested a spring ready to un-snap, a face burnt the hue of an old saddle and with about as much expression, eyes like little blue stones, and crisp red hair. But the French officer had surprised an expression on that leather mask, now. The eyes were fixed in a queer gaze as the soldier yanked the *kepi* from his brick-colored head, and pointed its visor at the smoldering shambles on the desert below.

"Forgive me, *mon capitaine,*" came the lazy drawl. "But I think, perhaps, you are mistaken. Had the desert tribes attacked that outpost there'd be tracks and trampled sand. Can't say a wind swept sand over the tracks, because there hasn't been a wind. A wind would have knocked down that burnt-out roof. The air down there is quiet as rock. That sand is unmarked and smooth as a carpet. It isn't right, you understand."

The Legionnaire captain understood. So did the rest of the column. Shouldering their *Lebels* with oaths and curses, they marched uneasy feet toward the somber ruin that had once been *La Legion's* farthest outpost on Sahara. It was, indeed, as the tall tough American had remarked. The sands around the razed outpost gate were untroubled. Nervous oaths

whispered, again, down the column. If the Touareg Arabs—the dreaded masked tribesmen called "Forgotten of God"—had not conquered this garrison, who, Name of Heaven!, had done so. There were ghosts in that blazing white sunshine, then, and the ruin on the sand was a devil's cake, indeed.



THE SCUFFLING heels of the Legion *brodequins* did little to break the immense silence, and the echo of a nervous whinny from the captain's horse lived only as far as the back cliffs. Automatic in fist, the French officer rode to the fire-felled outpost gate; drew rein. The horse curveted uneasily. Closing up, the Legionnaires caught their first whiff of abomination; gasped in the reeking, unhealthy air. One of their number pointed a shaky finger, and the others, looking, saw a black face staring down at them from the top of the outpost wall. One saw it had once been a white face. But the outpost had been on fire. And there was the Sahara sun.

There were other dead faces of various expression and hue posing on the outpost parapet, and the sweat coasted down the cheeks of the Legionnaires as they moved among their comrades of this smitten garrison. A squad, there was, lounging on that awful wall, awaiting burial; and it was a little yellow-whiskered Legionnaire who made the first real discovery.

"See, by the bones of Saint Jules!" he squeaked. "This man has been shot in the back, my comrades. In the back!"

It was so with that man, and it was so with the others who leaned, dead guard, over the wall, their sightless eyes watching for the Touareg. Shot in the back. Each one. Smith, the Yankee, and Yellow-Whiskers the Dane, and the French officer examined

those unseeing guardsmen. Smith produced a stubby Legion trench-dirk, and the dirk dug loose a bullet. The Legionnaires crowded and glared at the tiny lead pill nesting in the Yankee's palm.

Sacre!

That slug had been fired from a Lebel rifle! Death, indeed, had not come from the Touareg. Death had struck from the outpost, itself. Those unsuspecting guardsmen of the garrison had been standing there on that wall and some unsuspected enemy behind them had dropped them one, two, three! Sniped fast before the victims could turn about. Plugged them like a marksman would plug dummies on a shooting-gallery shelf. The Legionnaires who found them groaned out loud.

"Treachery!" The word snapped like a lash from the tall French officer's teeth. Spinning on his heel, he glared at the black doorway of the fire-gutted barracks hut at outpost's end. "There you have it! The murderer was a man of this garrison. *Regardez!* you dull sons of camels. He stood in that doorway and shot these men on the wall. There were only a few stationed in this demon's sink. One squad, a lieutenant, a commandant. Find the commandant—"

Those soldiers never wanted to go corpse-hunting in that haunted desert outpost. The Sahara beyond the wall was too silent an onlooker. The cliffs of the Atlas Mountains were like brooding thoughts hardened into red stone. Breath of decaying wood and bones fouled every shadow, and the sunshine, slanting through the ravished framework of bastion and roof, turned green. But soldiers of the Legion are men of diversified talent, and burial service is no small part of their lot. Led by the gaunt American, Smith, clutching guns tight in wet fists, they poked their shy heads through the barracks door. It was there they found the body.

Three things had found that body before, the third and second need scanty mention. Suffice it to say, the buzzards had finished the business which the combined heat of fire and Sahara had started. It might have been a man sprawled there—it might have been almost anything. What with the ashes and feathers it might have been anybody. But the handle of a Legionnaire's dirk (the thing to find that body first, you understand) jutted from the ribs. And the sightless eyes of the open jawed skull seemed to glare at one outstretched hand. Something glittered, caught in that fan of bones—a gold ring left on a finger.

Panting, the French officer extricated the stubby knife from the ribs and gently slipped the ring from the finger. There was a name stamped on the handle of the dirk, and a name stamped in monogram on the inside of the tiny gold loop. The crowding Legionnaires gasped and glared. The tall French officer swore.

"The name on the ring," he whispered, "is Archambaud Duval! Captain Duval was the commandant, here." The officer's eyes sparkled hotly at the circle which waited, breathless, about him. "You comprehend, you dogs? And the name on this knife, the name which reveals the owner of this murderous dirk—" his voice snarled low, "that name is John Brown. John Brown, the American lieutenant of the *Premier* Regiment. The second in command at this outpost—"



IT WAS not surprising that Legionnaire Smith, himself an American and just down from Sidi-bel-Abbes, should give the loudest oath of all, and demand a look at the murderer's weapon. "Brown! The American officer! You think—he—murdered this Duval and the whole garrison and—" A treachery

beyond conception. Yet, there were the tracks of a lone man dropping south across the sands toward the end of the world; and swearing vengeance and rage, the Legionnaires followed the trail. Smith raging along in the lead.

Unfortunately the footmarks were lost ten miles south of the fort; lost in the wide-swathed trail left by a camel caravan which seemed to have moved towards Tiznit. Back in the fire-razed outpost, the Legionnaire officer swore an oath. "Never to rest until that traitor, that *salopard*, that *voyou* who could shoot a squad in the back, that villain who would stab his commandant to death, that murderer who would set fire to his garrison, desecrate the Tricolor, sneak away to escape the hand of justice—never to rest until that fiend be captured dead or alive!"

"Dead or alive!" The somber shout of the Legionnaires echoed their captain's oath. "We will catch the fiend behind this carnage!" And it was the American, Smith, who swore loudest of all.

Again, it was Smith who volunteered to carry the body from the barracks, wrap it in kindly bunting, place it in the last of the newly dug graves. The gold ring was there on the skeleton finger, and the staring skull with its mouth a-gape was veiled by the flag of France, as the soldiers helped lower the murdered to rest. Once more, it was Smith who piled guardian rocks over the fresh mound; working so hard at the dreary task that his face dripped water and gleamed like a pallid melon in the glow of the setting sun. It was almost as if this Yankee wished to expiate the murderer's crime.

Then the tall French officer planted a sign atop the mount of dark rocks.

"Here lies Captain Archambaud Duval."

The tall French officer stammered a prayer. The tall French officer

cursed out a requiem. "The whole Foreign Legion will be after him. He cannot possibly escape. A thousand tortures fall on his murdering head. For soon this assassin, John Brown, will meet justice and pay——"

The Legionnaires fired the salute. Sadly they made the about face, and grimly they marched away. That desert under a rising, pale moon was a place of illboding and gloom. But there was that Legionnaire, Smith, singing softly, deep in his throat. Here was no time for singing; but the gaunt chap had always been queer. The Legionnaires who thought it queer he could sing just then, would have thought it queerer had they known the song Smith sang. An old American ballad it was—an old, Yankee, Civil War song. Once he stopped this monotone crooning, and the yellow-whiskered Dane behind heard him mutter stern words.

"Dead or alive! An' Lord help me, I hope it's alive!"

Then he went on with the song.



THE BARRACKS of the Foreign Legion post at Bibawan was about the most cosmopolitan hall on earth. Here were Germans and Belgians, Greeks, Turks and Danes—the lion fighting side by side with the tiger, the pauper at the side of the prince. Here were all classes and all names; and if the classes were not "right," neither were the names. In the Legion you may call yourself Spinoza when your name is DeWitt; you may change your name from Apflebaum to Knute. In the Bibawan barracks there were all sorts of names; there was even a Legionnaire named Smith.

An odd, queer fellow, this American named Smith, gaunt and angular with winky eyes and crisp red hair. A Soldier of the First Class, he had served four years of his five-year Legion impoundment, and

won himself something of a record. This record told of certain achievements of strength and valor: The time the Yankee had caught an enemy bayonet in bare hands and snapped it in half as if it had been a twig; the time the Yankee had beaten up a corps of mutinous Arabs in Meknes; the time the Yankee had wrestled with and broken the wrist and punched black the eyes of one Iron-Face Francette, the toughest dive-owner in Fez. No Legionnaire could march as far and as fast, shoot straighter or beat him at such merry games as *meine und deine* and "hurl the boot." And none could touch him at "bossing the bottle," either.

Obviously a champion at soldiering, Smith the Yankee might well have run things in the ranks. It was his queerness that held him apart from his companions, and held them away from him. Those who enter the derelict mess of the Foreign Legion of France are supposed to tell nothing of their pasts, and, therefore, most of them tell. One of Smith's oddities was that he did not talk much; never told. You would see him in a smoke-fogged corner of the *caserne*, a bottle for a companion; the bottle doing all the talking. As often you would hear him sing, and the song was invariably the same—a throaty, solemn drone unknown to his European comrades. Singing and drinking, then, but talking little. If you talked to him he would yawn.

"And that," grumbled Yellow-Beard the Dane, "is the strangest thing of all about that American camel. Always he is yawning in your face like some skinny cat waked from a box beneath a stove (as truly these cursed Legion quarters are). Yawning at mess, at drill, on parade, and in battle. Even in the face of his officers he yawns. Do you think they take it for insolence? Saint Christian of Aag, believe me, they do! A dozen times he has done the *plute* for that,

and twice been buried *en silo*."

The little Dane turned fiercely on the new recruit from Meknes. "Do you think this Yankee cares for Legion punishments? But no! They bury him up to his neck in sand and march him with millstones on his back, and he yawns just the same. As tough as a piece of rawhide, I guess. Look, the corporal passes and he yawns. The corporal yawns, too. See the Yankee grin? For four years I have watched him do that trick, and he has played it ever since we marched as recruits in a detachment south from Sidi. But never think he is sleepy, that one. I think he is never asleep. A silent one, that Smith. Of him the Legionnaires know nothing save he is American. Smith? Do you believe that his name? Bah. Every American to join us will name himself Smith. But once there was a Yankee called Brown—"

"Brown!" The recruit from Meknes exclaimed. "You mean that assassin the whole Legion talks about? All over Morocco I have heard the name. John Brown, an American lieutenant in the *Premier* Regiment from Sidi. Shot his garrison in the back, stabbed his commandant, burnt Fort Avant-poste—?"



YELLOW-BEARD the Dane pointed his pipe-stem at the wall. Among other things, a *caserne* in the Foreign Legion is something of an art gallery. The wall in question was plastered with billings and pictures and posters; and the new recruit peered through the smoke. A grewsome gallery of pictures, it would seem, for the heads of *La Legion* were aware of psychology. There were pictures of tidy little piles of bones; pictures of raggedy white men being tortured by Arabs; pictures of firing squads. These wore the uniform title:

This is What Happens To The

Deserter.

Prominent among these subtle object lessons was an especially large poster, faded and worn, but of unusually bold legend. The recruit from Meknes read out loud.

"Reward For the Apprehension. Dead Or Alive. Wanted For Treason, Desertion, Murder Of An Outpost Garrison, Stabbing Of Superior Officer. John Brown, American. Former Lieutenant Of *Treizieme Compagnie de Marche, Premier Regiment, Legion Etrangere*. While stationed in Fort Avant-poste, Lieutenant Brown assassinated, most treacherously shooting in the back, the entire garrison; crowning his infamy and dishonor by stabbing to death Captain Archambaud Duval, setting fire to the post and fleeing south into Sahara. It is believed the assassin joined a Bedouin caravan heading for Tiznit, as continued flight south would have meant death by sun. Any information leading to his capture, or his apprehension alive or dead will bring high reward. John Brown, American. Height and weight measurement given below. Hair, blond. Eyes, blue. Distinguishing marks: "X"-shaped scar over left eye. "V"-shaped scar on right cheek—"

"See for yourself the photographed face is handsome enough in spite of the scars," the Dane dourly observed. "But the soul of the man must have been raw meat. Very well I recall the day we entered the burned fort and saw his devilish handiwork. Corpses in a row on the wall, dishonored by lack of burial. The outpost a charred ruin. Four years ago it was, but it seems as clear as yesterday, and I still remember the horror. There was the body on the barracks floor, with a knife where the chest had been. We would never have known, but the ring was there on the finger. And there was his name. Archambaud Duval. Poor Duval! But the knife in the ribs wore the

assassin's name, too. John Brown! And there were the tracks leading out of the fort. Tracks that were smothered by a caravan trail which pointed north.

"We spread the alarm from Ain Inifel, and in two days the whole Foreign Legion was after him. How the Legion did hunt! Arab *goumier*, black Tirailleurs, Spahis, Berbers and beggarmen; the whole of North Africa got up on its hind legs and hunted, for rewards offered are large. Every soldier and mendicant searched like hounds, raked town and valley and mountain-top. Not a trace have they found of that villain. Pouf! He has vanished like a puff of smoke in a storm. Not a single solitary sight has been had of that devil-spawned murderer, John Brown—"

The recruit from Meknes was impressed. "*Fichtre!* And how does this Yankee Legionnaire named Smith take the deviltry of his countryman? Did he, too, join the hunt?"

The Dane spat an oath. "Did he? Believe me, no man among us hunted as hard. This American even went so far as to volunteer his service in interpreting any letters the assassin might have left in his duffle stored at General Headquarters. Anything to find a clue leading to the murderer's possible place of hiding. Smith the Yankee was like a wildman, so anxious was he to trap his traitorous countryman. And what do you think?"

"It turned out that Brown and Duval had been fast friends before the murder, making the killing doubly foul. The colonel at Headquarters gave Smith a free hand to examine any of Brown's stored possessions and papers. Nothing could be found of further interest, save that Brown had enlisted in Paris where he had been living for several years. Also an item showing that before his Legion enlistment Brown had been a dentist. But Smith the Yankee was able to do nothing with this informa-

tion, and the assassin was never caught. That is the strangest of all, I think. That a man so marked with scars could make good his escape in a country that is sharp-eyed enough to spy a mole on a dragoman's elbow—"

"You are quoting me, Yellow-Beard," a slow voice drawled, and the red head of Smith the Yankee leaned low through the pipe-smoke. The gaunt Legionnaire's eyes blinked, and he looked at the recruit and deliberately yawned. When the recruit answered with a yawn, there was a chuckle all around. "Th' Dane's stealing my ideas," Smith went on. "It was me who always thought it cursed odd about that assassin John Brown, as they call him. There's his mug on every barrack wall between France and the Equator. There's his face scarred heavy on cheek and eyebrow. Those scars would stand out like red lights. Yet nobody's spotted that face to this day." The American Legionnaire tugged a fat bottle from his tunic pocket and drank for emphasis. "But with luck, my comrades, the villain will be caught. I hope I catch him, an' I hope he's alive."

"I heard the new captain from Oran talk about the same thing today," the Dane informed. "He claims this John Brown made his get-away long ago. Nobody in officers' mess voiced a different opinion. They don't talk back to this captain from Oran. De Troumaine is his name, and I have heard of him before. It appears he was a deserter from the Spanish Legion, and joined us three years ago. An Andalusian Spaniard they say he is. He came out of the Riff country and enlisted with the French at Oran. They saw he was an officer, but as he admitted himself a deserter from Spain they put him in command of a penal battalion. Now he is appointed to command us, and a mean looking captain he is. De Troumaine the Tiger, they named him in the penal corps."



SMITH THE Yankee dropped his bottle in his pocket, clapped on his *kepi*, lounged against the poster-plastered *caserne* wall and grinned. "De Troumaine the Tiger?" he chuckled loudly, his leather face splitting in a grin. "So that's what they call the new captain from Oran, is it, eh? Well, I saw this De Troumaine on the drill field today, and I didn't think he looked so tough. These Spaniards are given to wild boasting, and this imported captain had the look of a gigolo to me. Gold buckle on his belt and gold spurs on his boots, and a set of whiskers big enough to scare a Russian. Tiger? He looked like a mouse—"

It was funny how the American's speech grew louder word by word. Perhaps it was the pitch of his voice. Or perhaps it was the quiet that had come over the crowded room. For a Legion barracks to be silent is sheer phenomenon, and the silence in this stuffy *caserne* was suddenly like magic and soundless as stone. Every voice in the room, save the voice of Smith the Yankee, had been stilled. The gaunt American blinked. Then the sound of a hand clapping his shoulder was loud as a pistol-shot. The hand spun the Yankee on his heels, and he found himself facing the crimson countenance of the captain just down from Oran. The officer's beard jutted like electrified wire. His raisin-like eyes bulged with rage. For a moment his tongue wouldn't work; then his voice came harsh as a spate of nails poured out on an iron floor.

"So you think this De Troumaine a gigolo, eh? So you believe he is given to boasting? I heard you, you red-skulled *salopard*. I was passing the door and I heard you. Sacred stove! I think one hour of the *cravaudine* would serve you well for such traitorous talk. One hour with your wrists lashed tight to your ankles and

your back bent in the hot sun will teach you what manner of captain I am. Perhaps you did not know that I, De Troumaine, was your commandant now. May I turn into a paper mill if I won't prove it. I sentence you to one hour at *crapaudine*; and what do you say to that?"

The crowd of Legionnaires sat like sticks of wood. A pin dropped on the floor of that room would have made a crash. That's why Smith the Yankee's yawn was so preposterously loud. Do you think he was dismayed by his too-harsh sentence to punishment? Not Smith. Blinking cheerfully at the furious officer, he let his mouth gape wide open; he stretched lazy arms; and he yawned squarely and prodigiously in De Troumaine's knotted face.

And before he could control his tricked muscles, the new-appointed captain yawned back. The room tittered; then gasped. Face violet with fury, De Troumaine had snapped shut his involuntary gape with a curse. Smith the Yankee cursed, too. De Troumaine's dark hand flew to the pistol at his belt. The American's fist grabbed the knife in his waist-sash. The smoky air was tense as a poised rapier blade. Something had to happen right then. And it did!

The shrill, blatant blare of a bugle tore the waiting quiet to shreds. A fat Legionnaire plunged through the barracks door. Somewhere a gun popped smartly, to be echoed by a concert of gunfire.

The fat Legionnaire screamed and danced. "*Aux armes!* The Touaregs attack!"



"THE PEOPLE of the Veil." "The Blue-Masked Devils of the Desert." "The Forgotten of God." The Touareg! Names to strike chill the stoutest of hearts; send a creep down the bravest of spines. And a tribe to live up to its

names. Treacherous, fearless, ghastly cruel, mounted on *mehari* racing camels, armed to the teeth, these desertmen would strike like a thunderbolt from Back of Beyond, the terror of Arab and white man alike, the scourge of the Sahara.

As lightning sometimes strikes from the blue, the Touareg struck Bibawan. The desert around the outpost had been calm. Suddenly the storm. "Yah, Yah, Yah Allah!" rose the scream. Thundering camel-pads. Fogs of brown dust. Then the flash of red gun-flame; the crash of long rifles; the *hooooo* of a hailstorm of lead.

"*Aux armes!*" and the bugles were screaming. Already the guard mounted on the outpost wall was thinned. The German on the corner bastion was dead. A little Swiss next in line squatted quiet with a hole in his throat. One of the guardsmen who had rushed to crash shut the gate leaned on the giant bolt, bleeding, while his companion spraddled flat on red sand. Bullets and yells shrieked over the wall; the ponderous gate trembled under a thousand pounding shocks; and an old Frenchman with a Santa Claus beard ran around in a circle with his hands on his stomach.

Spilling like loosed water from the barracks door, the Legionnaires raced for the embattled wall.

Smith the Yankee, Yellow-Beard the Dane, and the young recruit from Meknes ran shoulder to shoulder, Lebel rifles swinging in their fists. The drill field howled with bedlam. Cursing non-coms bawled unheard orders. Somewhere a *Chau-chat* automatic rifle began to hammer. The Legionnaires milled, scrambling for their places on the firing-steps. Already a cloud of bronze powder-smoke and dust bulged low in the sky, and above the rapid crashing of guns could be heard the wailing of wounded men. The Yankee and his companions, on the wall near the gate,

flung their rifles to shoulder and poured a leaden stream at a gray and shrieking whirl that streamed in a steady swirl about the fort. As if the attackers were the rim of a monstrous spinning wheel and the outpost in the center was its hub. With the rim of the wheel closing in.

The hot smoke lay a choking fog. Through rifts in the metallic haze, the laboring Legionnaires could catch glimpses of flagging cloaks, ghostly animals, bobbing, white, bandage-masked heads. Gun-barrels gleamed like needles through the gray. Tongues of scarlet flame flickered out of the fog. High above the demoniac roaring of conflict rose the spine-chilling battle-cry. "Yah! Yaaah! Yah Allah!"

The men on the outpost wall were automatons. Aiming, firing, loading. Loading, aiming, firing. The Lebel barrels grew hot. Sweat wriggled down twisted faces. Shoulders ached under thumping gun-butts. Ejected shells flew like popped corn. *Kepis* spun, riddled, from dodging heads; and heads sunk, riddled, on heaving chests. Oaths in forty tongues lashed defiance at the enemy. There were cries for water, cries for ammunition, cries for God. At intervals a sodden shape would tumble from the wall, leaving a gap in the blue line. The line would close up. A sheet of flame blazed steadily at that screaming, tightening wheel-rim.

Drenched with sweat, panting, Yellow-Beard the Dane turned to glance at the Yankee beside him. There was Smith lounging on the wall like a fisherman leaning on a bridge of the Seine, calmly sniping at the shadows in the whirl below. A smile on his lips—an inscrutable, far-distant smile, as if his thoughts were ten thousand miles away. A bullet tore his *kepi* from his brick-colored head, and he never jerked a muscle. And the Yankee was humming. Bones of Saint Christian, he was humming

that quaint American tune of his. The Dane could just catch the sound.

"Fight!" screeched the Dane. "The devils close in!"

Smith nodded. "But we're giving them hell. They won't take us, thank God." The rifle in his hands jumped and spouted flame; and he slammed fresh cartridges in the smoking chamber. "We can hold them off, Yella-Beard. Lucky for me they came just when they did. Old De Troumaine would have taken a pot at me, maybe. He may try a shot at me while I'm up here, too. Have you seen the louse—"

"At the south bastion," the Dane shouted back. "Working with the machine-gunners. The safest corner in the fort."



SMITH GRINNED, and his Lebel roared. Somewhere out in the smoke-whirl a green pennant flagged and dipped. The American's rifle crashed; the pennant described an arc, and a white-robed figure tumbled out of the haze. A scream coiled up out of the smoke, then, and the enemy guns blazed with redoubled fury. For full five minutes the inferno flamed. Stabbing flashes of scarlet fire. Ear-splitting smashes of sound. The Legionnaires slaved at their posts, pumping their guns in deafening concert. Sheets of bullets sped criss-cross over the wall, going and coming. The Tricolor over the headquarters building in the center of the outpost fluttered in rags. The air whistled, exploded and rang. Bullets screamed and men screeched. Yellow-Beard the Dane saw Smith the Yankee stand, laughing, in the teeth of the raving din. The American's red hair was pasted in curls on his forehead. Thin rivulets of sweat wandered down his chin. His tunic, torn open at the throat, was soaked to his spine and chest. He was working, now; but the grin never left his

lips. It made the little Dane want to shiver.

"See that?" The American swung about to reload his scorching Lebel, and pointed a thumb at a tiny hole in the wall near his head. He laughed. "That bullet never traveled all th' way across th' fort from the other side of the desert. That bullet come from *inside*."

The Danish Legionnaire gasped. "My God, you do not think——"

No time to think, right then. The Touareg charge came like a thundering flood. The Forgotten of God hit the Legion wall like a catamaran; piled up on the shivering gate like crashing surf. The guns of *La Legion* let go, pouring sheet after sheet of flame at the boiling turmoil on the wall. Yellow-Beard the Dane, and the recruit from Meknes and Smith the Yankee, stationed near the gate, worked like wildmen. A tumult of ghosts flailed at the gate. The bandage-masked heads bobbed and dodged in the cotton-thick smoke. Brown hands shot skyward. Lean knives gleamed. Long-barreled rifles spat whips of white flame. "Yah, Yah, Yah Allah!"

Up the wall they came; and the Legionnaires drove them down. And again. Daggers sang up out of the bedlam of cloaks and turbans. Steel glinting through the air. The recruit from Meknes went spilling from the firing-step with a blade in his throat. Yellow-Beard and Smith fired together at a giant tribesman whose hands were on the parapet, and the creature dropped, shot to sponge, on the sand. A wraith with a torch came looping out of the bawling mob. The fiery ember soared high over the outpost gate and dropped like a star somewhere within the walls. Another firebrand came over. The Touareg attack fell away under a storm of shot, and in the lull that followed a yell went up from a corner of the fort.

"The headquarters house! *On fire!*"

The Legionnaires hollered, then. Barracks, headquarters and other huts clustered in the middle of the fort were built of ancient planking that would be like tinder under that searing Sahara sky. Already the roof of the headquarters house was spouting yellow flame. An elbow of black smoke crooked up from the fired timber, and a little puff of sparks floated against the sky. Another breath of wind and the blaze had jumped to the barracks. In three minutes the center of the Bibawan Outpost was a crackling bonfire.

It was touch and go for the Legionnaires, with the Touaregs launching another assault. Smith the Yankee and Yellow-Beard the Dane found themselves working like maniacs, firing rifles too hot to clutch, throwing aside emptied guns, snatching weapons from the unresisting fingers of dead comrades, gasping, cursing, dodging knives, pounding at cloth-wound heads. The center of the fort was roaring like a furnace. The outpost gate burst to pieces under the charge. The Touaregs roared their way in like a tornado. Elbow to elbow, the Yankee and the Dane battled to stem the flood. It was needle-bayonet against knife, now; fist for claw, boot for boot; the men of the Legion literally caught between two fires.

Yellow-Beard dropped a shrieking *hadji* with a deft thrust under the heart. Smith broke a turbanned head with a swinging gun-butt. The tribesmen scattered; and a squad of Legionnaires, shirtless, torn, black-faced, their bayonets wet and dripping, came to the rescue. Another wave of yowling desertmen surged through the broken gateway, and the Legionnaires had their backs against the bonfire. Making a fence of steel around the blazing outpost buildings, the soldiers of France hung on. Bayonets stabbed and scythed and dipped.

The fire squalled.

A lieutenant with a crimson rag about his forehead plunged out of the boiling smoke and yelled at Smith. "The commandant is missing! De Troumaine! He cannot be found. I am in command, now. Hold on! The tribesmen will break——"

De Troumaine missing! Yellow-Beard heard Smith the Yankee voice a strange shout; saw him go plunging down the battling line of Legionnaires, pot-shooting as he ran. The Dane followed. Impossible to see through that swirling haze. The Yankee was forging a path toward the headquarters hut. The devil! Headquarters was going like a stove. Little fire-flowers blossomed along the plank walls and the roof was spitting crimson like Stromboli.

How Smith ran!

Once he stumbled over a bloody leg that reached from the shadows to trip him. Again he sprawled flat atop a vermilion false-face. A pair of Touareg devils tackled him, and the American flung them off like a panther flings off dogs. A hand swung out of the dense smoke, clutched around a scimitar. The giant blade chopped at the American's head. Yellow-Beard shot just in time. There was a soprano scream, a frenzied squall of pain, and the blade vanished in the dust. Smith turned his head, and Yellow-Beard saw a tremendous grin. The mad Yankee yelled.

"Thanks! Hold them back!"

Then the Dane was yelling, too. Yelling with sweat like ice-water dripping from his nose. For the American Legionnaire stood at the fire-wrapped door of the headquarters hut; pointed at a flaming window. The Dane glimpsed a face in that window. A face with a beard like electrified wire. A face with eyes like raisins and a mouth that bawled. The face of De Troumaine the Tiger. De Troumaine inside that blaze-roaring headquarters house.

The bawly face vanished. So did Smith the Yankee. One second he stood there on the threshold, laughing in the smoke. Next second he had plunged through the flame-curtained door.



THE SCENE was as near to hell as every human eye could witness. Yellow-Beard stood in the crackling front room; glared sweating with arm over mouth. Wreathed in tan smoke, the two in the back room stood face to face while the plank walls snapped and the floor crackled hot and the ceiling overhead rained confetti of sparks. Smith the Yankee and De Troumaine.

The grates of a smelter furnace would have been scarcely less hot; but the Dane could not leave for the life of him. Choking, he glared with bulging eyes. For Smith the Yankee was grinning like a skull and waving two slips of paper, already scorched, beneath the heat-curved beard of the captain from Oran. His eyes shone like embers and his voice was like a saw on cold iron, grinding above the shout of the fire. De Troumaine clutched a little leather bag in his fist, and his face was a parody in pink frosting. And what was the Yankee saying?

"Want to know what I mean?" he was snarling. "Then listen to me! These papers, eh? One is a letter from my brother to me, dated five years ago! Written from Legion Headquarters at Sidi-bel-Abbes. He'd been on leave to Monte Carlo and won a fortune in gold from a Russian prince. He was carrying the gold with him; and I joined his regiment to keep an eye on the lad——"

A curse escaped from De Troumaine's teeth, and the Yankee's voice cut like a knife. "And this other paper is a bill I found in the property effects of Lieutenant *John Brown*——"

De Troumaine snarled: "In God's

name what has this to do with me! Let me by, you fool, before we both roast in this——”

The American laughed: “This John Brown was a dentist in Paris before he joined the Legion, De Troumaine. A dentist who had many friends. One of his friends was a Legion captain named Archambaud Duval. Do you know what this slip of paper is, De Troumaine?” The cords stood out on the Yankee’s face and tiny embers smoked in his hair. “It’s a bill, De Troumaine! A dentist bill that this fellow John Brown chanced to be carrying when he joined this dog’s army. A bill for eight gold teeth! A bill for eight gold teeth that he’d put in the upper jaw of Archambaud Duval!” A fount of sparks showered from the ceiling, and the Yankee wiped soot from his face. “And listen, De Troumaine. Listen! In that corpse we found back at Fort Avant-poste there were *no* gold teeth!”

The floor was smoking under Yellow-Beard’s boots, but he never stirred them an inch. He wanted to run, but he couldn’t run from that scene in the back room of the burning Bibawan headquarters. Outside the bugles were blowing and overhead the roof snapped like guns. But the voice of De Troumaine snarled brittle above the noise.

“What the devil does all this mean to *me*, you maniac! What——”

“But it wasn’t the body of Archambaud Duval! I guessed it the minute I saw. It was Duval’s ring and John Brown’s knife. But Duval had put them both there, himself. I think he’d shot down the garrison, himself. He’d done the foul murder. He’d taken what? Why, the gold, De Troumaine. Duval took the gold and burned the victim so nobody would guess out the murder. Made it seem as if he, Duval, had died. Then he fled for the south, joined a caravan, came back north, bribing silence. No man would be hunting *Duval*. John Brown

they’d be hunting—the Yankee with the scars on his face. But John Brown, my brother, was dead in the Avant-poste fire. I knew he could not do those murders. I knew he’d been slain for his gold. Duval took the gold. But he took too much gold. He took with him eight gold teeth——”

Smith’s face was pushed close to De Troumaine’s. His voice stabbed out sharp as a needle. “I’ve been looking, De Troumaine. Been looking. Yawning to make other men yawn. Not so bad, when you want to see teeth. And I knew Duval wouldn’t be fool enough to escape in a hurry. How better than to join up with Spain. Better yet to come back in the Legion. He masked his face with whiskers and he brought his stolen fortune with him, De Troumaine. But he carried too much gold at one time. *There’s the gold in your hand, Archambaud Duval. And I saw the eight teeth in your head!*”

Outside the bugles were screaming, and no-one heard Duval’s fierce cry. But suddenly the leather sack was gone from his hand and a stubby Legion knife in its stead. Yellow-Beard the Dane raised his rifle and yelled; but the smoke was thicker than fog. Sparks showered and a wall turned bright scarlet and somewhere there splashed liquid red.

“With your own knife, then!” came the Yankee’s voice; and Yellow-Beard heard the dull *zug!* Then the smoke swirled away, and the black beard wept wine on the sizzling floor. Smith the Yankee got out just in time, for the ceiling of the room had turned into flame, and the broad blaze fell with a blasting crash. Yellow-Beard was outside beating at his whiskers. Together they sprinted for the gate. The Touaregs were gone, and *La Legion* had gone after them.

The Yankee grinned at the Dane, and the Dane grinned back at the Yankee. They reached the broken gateway and saw they would have a

long race to catch up with the battle. Behind them the burning buildings collapsed in a fine spout of fire. Smith the Yankee stifled a yawn.



IMPOSSIBLE TO tell, for the raging fire had done its work. There was little of it left. It might have been a Forgotten of God, or it might have been a Legionnaire. It might even have been a captain whose name was De Troumaine. Again, it might not.

The Legion did its job with the spade, and the Legion marched away. Bibawan Outpost, as everyone (including a yellow-whiskered Dane) agreed, was through.

Yellow-Beard the Dane marched elbow to elbow with the gaunt, queer American named Smith. Smith's name made no difference, for you gave any name you desired in *La Legion*; the point was, the Yankee was odd. As he marched, he sang. And he sang the same song that he sang that night he marched out of Fort Avant-poste, years before. The European Legionnaires failed to comprehend, for the song was unknown to their ranks. An old song, it was—on old, Yankee, Civil War song.

“John Brown’s body— Lies a-moulderin’ in th’ grave—

“But his soul—goes—marching—on——”

“John Brown’s body—

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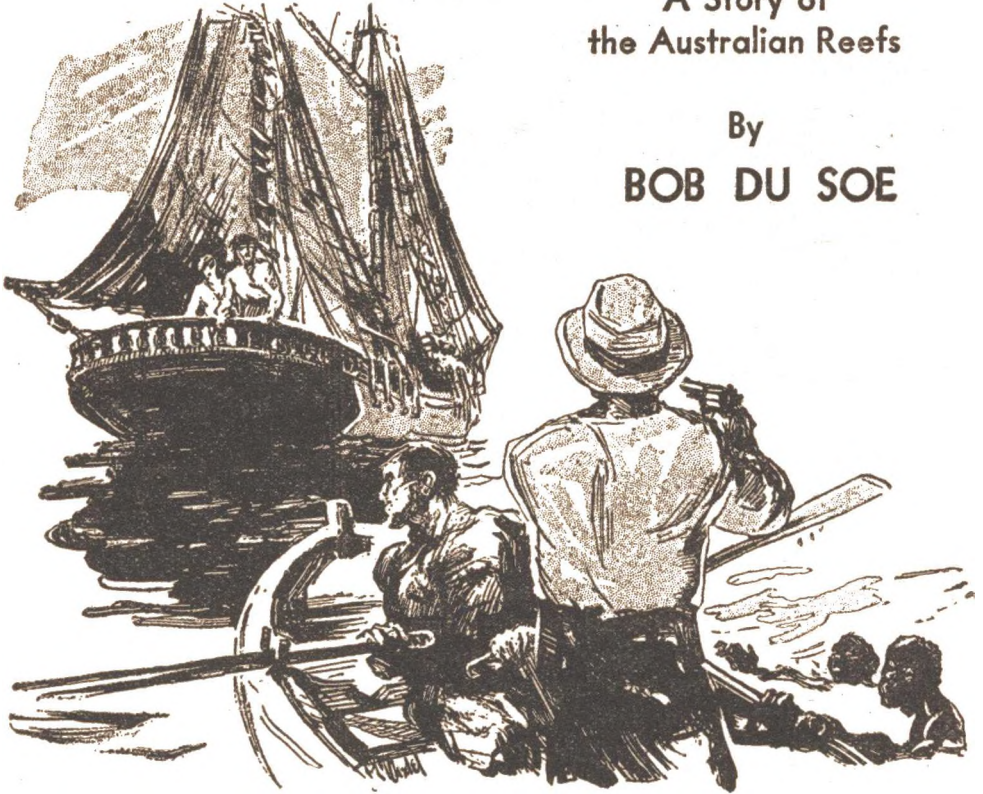
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NOW ON SALE

The GALLEY ADMIRAL

A Story of
the Australian Reefs

By
BOB DU SOE



SILENT, APPARENTLY deserted, the schooner *Hawk* swung idly at anchor in the lee of a low, wooded point, her bow pointed toward the open sea. For three days she had nodded lazily at her reflection in the calm, clear water with her sails but loosely furled and her deck in careless disorder.

The *Hawk*, however, was not deserted. Below, in the hot confines of her small cabin, three men mopped their sweating faces and discussed plans. A fourth, a thin, homely, little man lolled on the companion stairway, from where he made fre-

quent trips to the bow to gaze up the coast.

"We're not late, I tell yah." Captain Groder glared with malignant, twisted eyes at the two men across the cabin table. "She's been makin' them trips down to Malacca twice a year for the last six years."

"Well, it's damn well past the first of the month, that's all I was sayin'." The smaller of the two, a dark-skinned, thin-bearded man, tried hard to meet the crossed eyes of Groder. "If the girl has gone, we'll have the devil of a time tryin' to catch her. Why not raid the plantation and find out? What difference will it make?"

"A hell of a lot!" the captain snapped. "There's fifty blacks on that plantation, and what's more, Dorkin, I'm runnin' this thing and I don't need none of your advice."

"That's right," the third ruffian put in. "The Captain knows what he's doin'. Let him alone."

Groder turned to the man on the companion stairs. "What do you say, Ugly, any sign of her yet?"

"Naw," the little man muttered. "I just looked."

"Well, damn ye, go look again!" the captain roared, and punctuated his demand by picking up an empty bottle from the table and hurling it at Ugly's head.

Ugly Smith, as he was known on the *Hawk*, ducked. A flash of anger flamed in his watery, red-rimmed eyes. "You cock-eyed bully!" he growled. "If you hit me—!"

"Get out!" Groder rasped. A stream of oaths followed the man when he went to the bow to gaze up the coast for the hundredth time that day.

From all appearances Ugly Smith was as low-lived and devoid of decency as the others, but in truth he was of a much different stamp. He was the only one on board whose presence there was from necessity rather than choice. He was the cook and general flunky. And the circle of blue under one of his eyes gave evidence of the man-handling that went with his lowly position. It would have been hard to judge his age. The dejected, hangdog expression on his face, and the stoop of his once broader shoulders bore the mark of misfortune rather than age. His thin, brown hair, as well as the stubble on his chin, was touched with gray; but gray hairs, like stooped shoulders, are not always a proof of mounting years.

From the bowsprit of the schooner, Ugly searched the coast line for

a sign of old man Stovall's schooner, the *Nellie*. He was not interested in the act of piracy that was being discussed in the cabin. His one desire was to reach Malacca with a whole skin, though he had convinced the captain when he signed on at the port of Kraw that whatever happened enroute would make no difference. To make sure of the berth, he had even insinuated that there were shady deals in his own doubtful past that ought to add to his value.

He climbed down from the bowsprit and was about to return to the cabin with the usual report when the jib of a small schooner, and then the fore topmast moved out from behind another point of land in the direction he was gazing.

"It would serve the devils right if I let her get away," he muttered. Ugly had learned only that morning that it was Stovall's daughter and not the plantation owner himself who made these regular trips down the peninsula to Malacca, and the thing had disgusted him still more. The idea of robbing a girl, even if she was supposed to be guarded by her crew of natives, struck him as being about as rotten a deal as he had ever heard of.



THE CAPTAIN came running on deck with the others at his heels, when Ugly reluctantly called them, and in a very few minutes the *Hawk* nosed out of her hiding place and started in pursuit of their victim. They watched the sails fill on the distant schooner and then heel over in the stiff breeze. She headed straight to sea, and had considerable of a start on them, but the *Hawk* was a fast-sailing, topsail craft, and the handicap would mean but little to her in the long run to Malacca.

Driven to her best by the skillful handling of Groder, a few hours brought the *Hawk* much nearer her prey. An evil gleam crept into the captain's twisted eyes as he noted the gain, and his two companions expressed their satisfaction in grins and oaths. Ugly watched the grim race from the galley with increasing distaste for the whole cowardly affair. He had no doubt of the success of their attack, once the girl's craft was overhauled.

An oath from Dorkin caused him to glance out of the galley, and he laughed outright when he saw what had caused it. A balloon sail was being hoisted to the topmast of the craft ahead, and even as he watched, the clew was hauled aft and the sail bellied full. The skipper of the *Nellie* had apparently smelled a rat.

"Laugh, will yah, you mangy scum!" Groder cursed as he caught sight of the cook's grin. "Come aft here an' take the wheel! I'll show her she can't fiddle with me! Mind your course, now, if you yaw a foot, I'll break your empty skull!"

The captain went forward, and, after much cursing, he rigged a poor imitation of the balloon sail on the *Hawk*. Ugly, more interested in the other craft, forgot the captain's warning regarding the wheel until his attention was called to their crooked wake by a vicious kick.

"Git for'ard to yer hole, you scum!" Groder raved. "And don't look at me like that or I'll kick you humpbacked!"

Ugly had looked murder, without a doubt, and hatred burned within him as he went forward. He had submitted to the abuse of this brute about as long as he could stand it. He had tried once to face him and fight it out like a man, but a half-hour of unconsciousness had been the result and he knew better than to attempt it again. There were

knives in the galley, and a cleaver with an edge like a razor, but if he killed one, he would have to kill them all, and that was a little too much for a lone galley cook.

A moonless tropical night settled down on the racing schooners, and there was considerable uneasiness on board the *Hawk* over the possibilities of losing sight of their prize. Ugly would have enjoyed such a situation immensely, but the binnacle or cabin light loomed up on the craft ahead, as the darkness engulfed them, and Groder muttered an oath of relief.

Profiting by the girl's mistake, he gave orders that not even a pipe was to be lit, and then proceeded to pile on more canvas that he had cunningly kept out of sight during the day. The patched jib that he had used as a balloon sail was hauled down and a good one run up in its place. The patched canvas he rigged on the foremast with a jury boom to windward, and with another old jib he rigged a staysail, low down between the masts.

"Now, you little fool," he snarled. "Beat that with your old tub!"

Ugly Smith watched with the others, as the *Hawk* gained on the light ahead, but his intense interest in the race was entirely opposite from that of the others. He thought of a dozen ways in which he could easily hamper the schooner's speed, but no way in which he could escape the rage of Groder which was sure to follow.

Less and less grew the distance between the two vessels, and then the evil three prepared for the last move in their unsavory scheme. Ugly, too, was included in this, with threats of annihilation if he failed in his part, that of lashing the two schooners together when they met.

Silently the *Hawk* bore down to windward of her prey. Her bow

came opposite the other craft's stern, kept on to her quarter, and then, as her canvas cut the wind from the sails of the other, Groder spun the wheel and brought the two schooners crashing and grinding together.

"Lively with that line, you scum!" he bellowed at Ugly, and then for once in his wretched life the bully could find no oath to fit his rage.

Ugly, instead of obeying his orders, ducked into the galley, and, coming out with the cleaver, he raced for the foresail halyards. One blow with the razor edge and the heavy gaff dropped from the topmast with a crash, carrying the sail with it.

A revolver barked near the wheel, but Ugly paid no heed. He ran straight aft until he reached the main halyard where he swung again with the cleaver. Down came the main sail, burrying the furious Groder beneath it.

Dorkin leaped out from behind the galley, as Ugly turned and raced back toward the bow, but the flat side of the cleaver sent him sprawling on deck before he could reach for his gun.

At the bow, Ugly leaped into the air without as much as a glance to see where he would land. The fact that the *Hawk* was drifting astern made slight difference. Even the sea would be safer for him after the confusion he had wrought than the littered deck behind him.

He landed on all fours, a little surprised to find a solid deck beneath him, and looked up, square into the muzzle of a gun. A pair of huge brown arms jerked him to his feet the next moment, and pinned his own arms behind him.

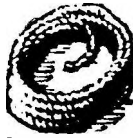
"Just what's the meaning of all this?" a clear, steady voice inquired, and, peering past the muzzle of the gun, hazily, Ugly beheld a young woman.

He had expected to find an Amazon in britches, with possibly a very unbecoming growth of whiskers, but there was nothing masculine about this woman before him now. Briefly, he saw a few strands of dark hair tugging to free themselves from beneath a knitted cap, a pair of dark eyes that looked him over scornfully and an extremely well formed chin that was firmly set.

"Don't shoot, Miss, an' I'll tell you all about it," he stammered.

"You needn't bother," the girl said coolly; "I haven't time to listen. Lock him in the lazarette, Pang," she ordered one of the natives. "See that he is well bound too."

"Just a minute, Miss," Ugly protested. "Those devils ain't licked yet. I only cut their halyards. It won't take 'em long to get under way again."



"YOU WERE the one who did that?"

"Yes'm, I cut them. I fooled the dirty tramps."

"What reason did you have for double crossing your own friends like that?"

"It wasn't that, Miss. I was never one of their gang. I was only the cook. I had a lot to settle with that cock-eyed devil, an' I figured that was a good time to start in."

"Why were they trying to board this schooner?"

"After your money, I guess. They knew you was headed for Malacca for supplies and figured you'd have considerable cash, or maybe something else like that on board."

"The brutes!" she said with scorn.

"Yes'm, Miss—Miss Stovall, worse than that. That's why I'm tellin' you they ain't licked yet by a long shot."

"I'm Captain Billy on board here," the girl corrected. "If you're so sure those men will try to board us

again, maybe you have an idea as to how we can prevent it?"

"Well, I hadn't thought about it, sir—miss, but we ought to be able to outfigure 'em somehow."

"Let him go," the girl ordered the native, and could not resist a smile when Ugly rubbed his arms and looked up at the big, brown seaman with vengeful eyes.

"First of all you'd better douse that binnacle," he advised. "Put out every light on board. That's how they followed you the first time."

"You're right," she replied and was plainly provoked at her carelessness. She promptly sent one of her crew to extinguish all lights.

"Now I've got an idea," Ugly declared. "Have you got a couple barrels we can lash together, a hatch cover, or something like that that will float?"

"How about the dory? What do you want it for?"

"Well, I hate to see you lose a good dory, but that's better than losing the schooner. If you've got a mast we can step in it, I'll show you a little trick I saw played by a poacher friend of mine, a long time ago."

"Yes, there's a mast for it, and a sail."

"Fine, captain, then all we need is a lantern and something we can rig for sort of a rudder."

"Are you planning to get away in it?" she inquired. "Because if you are, you're badly mistaken."

"No, no; there'll be nobody in it at all. Now let me get busy an' you'll see the idea ain't such a bad one."

Captain Billy ordered the natives to help him, and in a few minutes Ugly had the dory overside, the sail set, and a lantern lashed to the mast.

"All set, Captain," he announced.

"Head her about on a new tack an' we'll cut loose the dory. It's nine chances to one they'll follow that light when they get under way again, an' by the time they catch up with it, we'll be hull down in the other direction.

The girl spoke to the man at the wheel, and another ran to the jib lines. The next moment the schooner swung to starboard, the booms came over, and Ugly cast off the dory.

For nearly an hour their attention remained centered on the light as it grew smaller and smaller, and then suddenly the wind died out and left the sails hanging limp from the gaff.

"Now ain't that luck for you?" Ugly growled. "Just when we had 'em fooled good and proper, too."

Captain Billy took the situation as a matter of course. Her coolness from the very beginning, in fact, had been something for Ugly to ponder over. Women, as he knew them, did not go sailing around in schooners with native crews. Neither did they calmly grip a gun and stand by while a gang of ruffians tried to pull a piracy.

"It's a shame," she agreed, "but if we're becalmed, it's pretty certain that they are too."

"How'd we stack up if it came to a fight?" Ugly inquired. "With this crew you've got, it ought to be easy, hadn't it? There's only three on the *Hawk*, you know."

"I'm afraid numbers wouldn't count against bullets. My revolver is the only weapon on board, and I'm sure your friends must be well armed."

"Yes, they're well fixed that way, but please, Captain, don't call 'em friends of mine."

The girl smiled. "All right, I'll try not to. Do you suppose if I was to hand over the little money I have they'd take it and leave us alone?"

"I doubt it a lot. They'd think like as not you were holding out on them."

"Then if they catch up with us again, we'll have to make the best of it."

Ugly shook his head doubtfully and peered out over the still water. He had overheard talk in the *Hawk's* cabin that he did not mention. His mind was far from at ease.

Occasional puffs of wind drove the schooner fitfully along during the night, then gradually the gray dawn began creeping into the east. Ugly scanned the sea anxiously as the stars blinked out and the night lifted, then suddenly he groaned and all but swore. A mile off their starboard, her sails all set, was the *Hawk*. The girl followed his gaze and nodded grimly.

"Now I suppose we'll have some more of the same thing," she remarked. "And there's nothing to be done about it."

She had hardly finished speaking before the bow of the other vessel swung slowly toward them on a new tack.

"You don't happen to have any more canvas, do you?" Ugly asked.

"Not another stitch. I haven't been in the habit of fleeing from pirates."



UGLY WATCHED the *Hawk* settle to the faint breeze and shook his head. He knew she was a good sailor and that Groder knew how to coax her along. The longer he watched, the more anxious he grew until at last there was no doubt but that another hour would see their pursuer hard on their wake. He drank a cup of coffee, brought from the galley by one of the natives, and racked his brain for some scheme that would get them out of their plight.

The crack of a rifle and the smack of a bullet against the companion house brought him to sudden life. "The dirty swine!" he cried. "They're out to murder us all!"

Another crack of the rifle verified his exclamation and he dropped down behind the bulwarks.

"Keep under cover," he warned Captain Billy. "And you," he called to the man at the wheel "get down on your belly and steer 'with the bottom spokes!'"

The native moved to follow his suggestion, but he crouched too late. The rifle cracked again and the man slumped to the deck with a groan.

"Oh, the beasts!" cried the girl, and fired her revolver at the oncoming *Hawk*.

"Not yet," Ugly advised. "You're wasting lead at that range."

Another native took the wheel, crouching low as Ugly had advised, and the losing race went on. In less than half an hour the *Hawk* was directly astern, each minute bringing her nearer. A man stood up in the bow with the deadly rifle, and the second wheelman sprawled out on the deck.

"Damn the murderers! Damn 'em, I say!" Ugly raved, considerably handicapped by the forced gentility of his oath. "They got us now so we can't even steer!"

He ducked aft as he spoke, lashed the wheel, then ran for cover again.

"I'll kill the beast for that!" the girl snapped, and deliberately resting her revolver on the stern bulwarks, she aimed and fired.

A scream reached them, and the man disappeared.

"By Gawd, you got him!" Ugly shouted. "That's what I call good shootin'!"

"Was it their captain, do you think?" the girl asked, fighting to calm her nerves.

"No, it looked too big for Groder.

I think it was the one they called Steve."

Again and again the girl blazed away with the big revolver, aiming at the man at the wheel, but her luck failed to hold. Slowly the *Hawk* drew nearer, and then the firing started again from her bow.

"By cripes we've got to do something!" Ugly declared. "If there was only a decent wind we'd at least give 'em a run for it. I say, Captain," his eyes suddenly brightened. "Have you got any oil, any kerosene?"

"There is some in the lazarette, I'm sure—two or three cans."

In a flash Ugly was out from behind the companion house and down into the lazarette. He found three five-gallon cans of oil there as the girl had said—two partly full and the other about half.

"Give me a hand!" he shouted to one of the natives, and between the two of them, they carried the cans down into the cabin.

"Now a bundle of oakum, waste, anything!" he snapped, and while the seaman went to get it, he chopped a hole in the head of each can and started pouring the oil out the after porthole. He watched it spread over the water and drift back toward the *Hawk*, and then saturating the bundle of rags brought by the native, he thrust it through the porthole, set it on fire and dropped it. The remainder of the half empty can went into the water after it, and then he hurried up on deck.

The scheme had worked better than he had hoped for. The water was a mass of flames, and as he peered over the bulwarks, he saw the *Hawk* glide straight into it.

"Now's your chance!" he turned to Captain Billy. "They'll try to put it out an' when they do you can let 'em have it."

The girl watched for an oppor-

tunity and fired a half-dozen shots, but after one glance over the side, no one showed himself on the already burning schooner. The oil, clinging at the water line, had saturated the *Hawk's* hull from stem to stern so that as soon as the blazing rags touched it, it burst into flames. One look must have convinced Groder that his schooner was doomed.

"Oh, heavens!" the girl suddenly exclaimed, "I've used my last shot!"

"You've what!" Ugly gasped.

"I've no more cartridges. I was going to get some at Malacca."

"Good Gawd!" Ugly groaned. "Are you sure? Not a one?"

Captain Billy shook her head.

"Then we're done for. Look, they're putting off in the boat!"



GRODER WAS without a doubt deserting the *Hawk*, and he was making his escape none too soon. The flames, racing up the hull had already engulfed it. Smoke rose in a cloud and a tongue of flame caught the big main sail. The sight rather startled Ugly. He had meant to do exactly what he had done, but the actual accomplishment awed him.

"Oh, what a fool I was!" cried the girl. And she wrung her hands as she watched the small boat clear the burning schooner.

Ugly said nothing. He saw the dory head toward them; saw Groder stand up in the bow, a gun in each hand, and a sinking sensation gripped him in the region of his stomach.

"Isn't there anything at all we can even try?" Captain Billy almost pleaded.

"Yeh," Ugly decided suddenly. "Stay where you are and make out like you're going to surrender."

"What good will that do?"

"I don't know. We'll see. I'll tell you when I come back," he flung back over his shoulder, then motioning to the two surviving natives, he led them across to the bulwarks where Groder could not see them. He talked to them a few seconds, waving his arms to better explain what he wanted, and pointed excitedly to the water. The natives nodded eagerly, climbed over the bulwarks, and dropped into the water while Ugly hurried back to the companion house.

"What are they going to do?" the girl demanded.

"I ain't sure they'll do anything, but wait a minute and see."

"Give up, or damn yah, I'll drill yer through!" Groder roared, and leveled one of his guns.

"Look!" cried Captain Billy, but Ugly had already seen. The dory swung crazily around and nearly capsized. Groder went headlong into the water, and a long brown arm reached up and pulled the man, Dorkin, in after him.

"Drown them!" Ugly screamed. "Damn their blasted rotten hides, pull 'em down and step on their necks!"

The commotion around the dory churned the water into a foam, but the natives were having the time of their lives. First Groder and then Dorkin went down out of sight, their oaths cut short in a gurgle and their arms waving. Far too few of these duckings to suit Ugly took the fight entirely out of them.

"Bring them aboard!" Captain

Billy ordered, and the two natives promptly obeyed, each with the head of a man held firmly under his arm.

When they had dragged them on deck, they lashed them up and grinned like a pair of clowns.

"Good work!" Ugly declared. "Now take 'em down to the lazarette and lock 'em up. They'll get whats comin' to 'em when we drag them out at Malacca."

Groder sputtered and tried to curse, but he had swallowed entirely too much water. Dorkin could not even whine his complaint.

"Well, Mr.—Mr.—" faltered the young woman.

"Just plain Smith, please," Ugly volunteered.

"Mr. Smith, I owe you a great deal. I hope there is something I can do to repay you."

"I'll tell you, Miss—Captain, I mean," Ugly stammered. "If you know where I can get a job I'd sure appreciate it."

"A job! You're a cook aren't you?"

"Well, sort of a one, yes'm—sir."

"Then you can go right to work. We haven't had anything for breakfast but coffee."

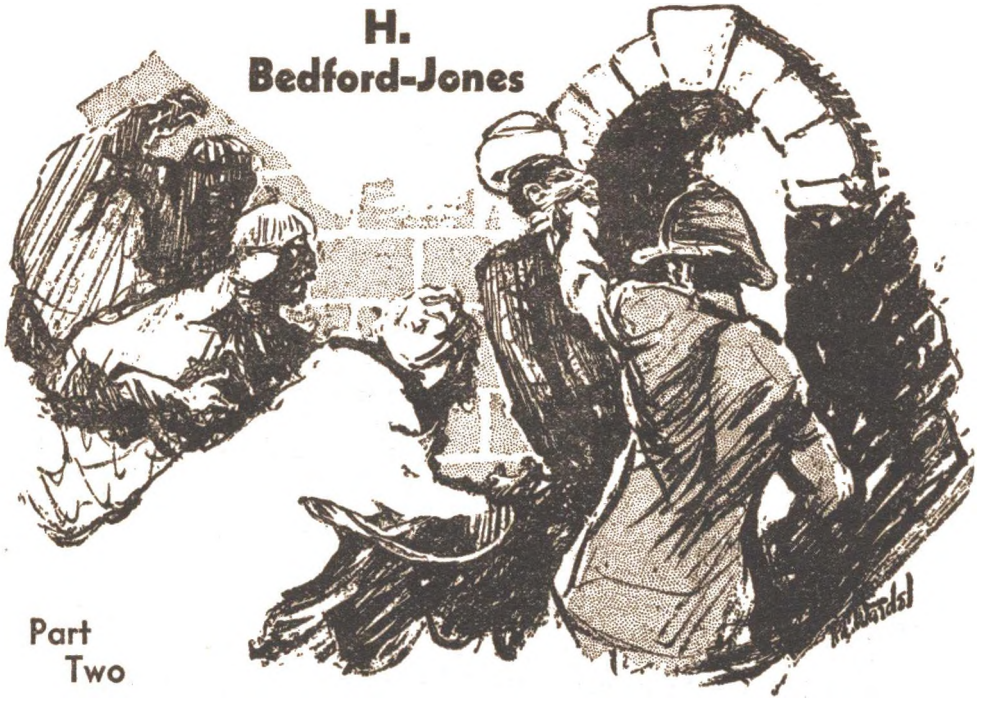
"You mean that, Miss?"

"Yes, I mean it, and I've told you once already to address me as Captain."

"Yes'm, Captain Billy, sir, an' I'm certainly much obliged." And, squaring his shoulders ever so slightly, Ugly went forward to the galley with a hint of new life.



H.
Bedford-Jones



Part
Two

GOLD of ISHMAEL

Further Adventures of
John Solomon in Morocco

Chapter Four

THE SEAL OF ISHMAEL



IT MUST have been startling to the passing Arabs to see a white man rise up over the top of that gate and come down in the street with a thump, but I did not pause to assuage their curiosity. My chief desire was to get away from there. Fortunately, after a twist and a turn I found that I was in the Rue du Tala, one of the few streets in old Fez that a comparative stranger

can recognize. I headed back down the incline, along the way I had come.

As it was long past banking hours, which are curious things in Morocco, there was no use in looking up my friend Souzane. My best bet was to head back for the hotel and get out of Fez as quickly as possible, so I made for the hotel on the hillside. It was with undeniable relief that I turned in at the entrance and found myself climbing to the terrace above, among the trees; here I was back where I could take care of myself.

When I got to the terrace, I took a table by the fountain, asked the manager to come out and join me in a drink, and enjoyed two long steins of beer while he explained that Keyes had awaited my return until after

lunch, then had departed with Miss Pontois. All of which I had already foreseen.

"What about getting to Meknez immediately?" I asked. He shrugged and said that I might get a bus somewhere from the other city, or a train from the French town.

"Nothing doing," I rejoined. "I want an automobile, and I want it quick, and I'm willing to pay for it. Do I get it?"

"In ten minutes, m'sieu," he rejoined, and went in to his telephone in the office.

It was probably only my imagination that told me the loafing Arab guides regarded me with curious glances, and I thought with satisfaction about the one fine crack I had given Ali. From my glimpse of him through the slot in the door, I had an idea that his eye was well blacked, and I hoped that it was. These slick young Arabs, with their half-French ways, are by no means so pleasant as the older generation; they have the vices of both races—which is saying a good deal—and apparently the virtues of neither.

The ten minutes passed, and another ten minutes, and a smiling Italian showed up and said my car was ready. I walked back to the Suissa gate with him, and we sent the Fiat hooting for Meknez. Emilio was a tough citizen, but he had a good smile and knew his way around, and he certainly could drive. We got in sight of Meknez before dark, and as we came into the French town we met the Hispano with Keyes at the wheel. Tom saw me, and I paid off Emilio then and there; then Tom and I went across the street and sat down at a table and had a drink.

"Did you pay my bill?" he asked. "I thought you had met up with some of your friends and were probably in the calaboose. Was just starting back to run you down."

"Jail is right," I told him. "So you weren't worried about me, eh?"

"Not a bit," he said cheerfully. "I've been busy."

"With Miss Pontois?"

"More or less. Look here, Hank!" and Tom leaned forward. "Somebody got into her room last night and robbed it."

"Yes?" I said. He nodded, frowning.

"Uh-huh. Solomon's in Meknez, all right, and you'll certainly like this fellow Dris; but it looks as though Maillot had got ahead of us. Jeanne had some sort of a document—"

"Oh!" I said. "Jeanne, is it? And I thought she was English!"

"Well, her mother was," and Tom chuckled. "You don't seem much interested in what it's all about."

"I'm not," I said. "Reason being, I know already. Also, I know what was written on the document and who stole it, and where it is now, and so forth, but I aim to have some dinner before I tell."

"Is that on the level?" exclaimed Keyes, staring at me. "Then hop into the car and we'll be in time for dinner. Hank, you useless devil, I believe you're telling the truth!"

I chuckled and let him pump questions at me, and gave him no satisfaction whatever.

We got across to old Meknez, passing up the Rue Rouamzine and then diving into the heart of the native city. Tom left the car at a garage, and led me up an alley.

"Our friend Dris is over temporarily from Algiers," he said, "and this outfit doesn't belong to him. He took it over, slaves and all, from some chap who owed him money. So don't do any talking in front of the slaves."

"The slaves are emancipated in Morocco," I said solemnly.

"Don't make me laugh, Hank! You know better. Anyhow, here we are; you and I will have the same

bedroom with only three walls. Arab style, feller—including dinner."

The rich men of Morocco have learned by sad experience that it does not pay to show your wealth to the world; thus, I was not astonished when we halted at a miserable little old door, which an Arab opened to Tom's knock. We came into a bare passage, which turned at right angles into one of tiles, and so led us into a beautiful old half-ruined palace—a place of cool corridors, courts with fountains open to the stars, glowing electric lights, old carven plaster-work, and tiled walls and floors.



DRIS EL BENOUNI met us—a handsome man, looking about thirty-five in his white-turbaned fez, with an eye as wide and cruel as that of an eagle, but always laughing, roaring forth jests, carrying out some mimicry in wonderful fashion. He must have been over sixty, for when his fez fell off his hair was stark gray.

"Welcome, welcome!" he exclaimed in French that was almost as bad as mine, and wrung my hand in a grip like iron. "This is a pleasant surprise—we were about to serve dinner! Another American, eh? Good, good! Can you eat with your fingers? Do you like Arab food? No matter; it's the only kind you'll get here, come along!"

He breezily ushered us across a court and to his own bedroom—a long alcove with a bed at each end, open in the center to the court, with rugs and divans thickly spread across the central space of the alcove. Here we found Solomon, with Miss Pontois, and the five of us settled down in a circle while waddling black women placed the huge round dishes in the center.

Not a word was said about our business; we might have been a cas-

ual group of friends, for all that appeared on the surface. Solomon sat pudgy and cross-legged, his blue eyes perfectly blank, and hardly uttered a word all during the meal. There were great dishes of lamb and chickens and other things, out of which we all ate with our fingers, native style, ending with a delicious dry *couscousu*. During dinner, Dris and Tom Keyes kept up a running fire of jokes and stories—and the more I saw of the Algerian, the more I liked him. He could have made a fortune on the stage, with his mimicry and tremendous fund of personality.

When the meal was over, we adjourned to a room opening on the main court, where coffee and the usual Arab mint tea were served. Then Dris took up his position at the arched entrance of the room, lighted a cigaret, and grinned at us. He had magnificent white teeth.

"In the name of Allah! Now let us find out what it is all about."

"And time it is that we did, if I says so meself," observed Solomon, who was whittling tobacco from his black plug. "Miss Pontois, suppose as 'ow you tell us about it. Talk in French, if you like."

The girl nodded coolly. I liked her detached, self-confident manner, and I liked her flashing smile as Tom held a light for her cigaret.

"Well," she said, and from her calm air I had the instant feeling that there was trouble ahead, "my father was French, and you know how French families save old papers. An ancestor of mine was a slave here in Morocco for twenty years. At the time the emperor Ishmael died, in 1727, he was a favorite slave of the old man's, and at Ishmael's death he escaped and got as far as Rabat. There he was caught, but the French consul ransomed him; he was an old man by that

time and of no great value, and they let him go home to France. When he got to Rabat, before he was recaptured, he hid in the ancient ruined city of Chella, where there are only vast walls and a few ruined tombs. Among his papers, to which the family paid no great attention, was one signed by Ishmael the emperor just before death. I have lost that paper, and therefore I've no proof of anything, so perhaps we may as well end the talk here and now."

She was half defiant in her attitude, but it changed in a hurry.

"You were writing letters last night, weren't you?" I asked, and she turned and looked at me for a moment.

"What of it?"

"While you were writing, a couple of Arabs sneaked into your room and took the paper. It bore the seal of Ishmael, right enough; and it also bore several lines of Arabic. Do you know what they said?"

"No." Her gray eyes flashed, lighted up suddenly. "Do you, by any chance?"

"Yes." I smiled at her. "Now go ahead with your story. I'll afford the proof."

There was a moment of dead silence in the room. Then she gasped.

"You—you haven't got that—that paper?"

"I don't need it," I said cheerfully. "It wouldn't do us any good if we had it. It won't do Maillot any good. Go on with your story."

She liked this straightforward talk, as though she had been a man; she was that kind.

"All right," she said, and drew a deep breath, and smiled. I read friendship in her eyes. "Do you agree, Mr. Solomon?"

"Yes, miss," said Solomon, and his blue eyes rested placidly upon her, then shifted to me. "We're all

friends 'ere, so to speak. But 'ow did you know I was at Casablanca?"

"They have the Casablanca papers at the hotel, and you were listed among the arrivals on the weekly boat from Marseilles, and I called up long distance to see if you were the John Solomon my father had known—and you were. So that's that. "Now," and she killed her cigaret with a business-like air, "we'll get back to that ancestor of mine. He said that just before his death Ishmael left a paper for his son, who had not yet arrived at Meknez, telling where his vast treasures were secreted. At least, that was supposedly what was in the paper. When Ishmael died, my ancestor took this paper from the body—he helped the taleb wash the body."

"One minute!" Dris el Benouni leaned forward, a tense and eager look in his face, and his voice struck upon the silence like a bronze bell. "Did he give the name of that doctor of the law in his account?"

"Yes," returned Jeanne Pontois. "I memorized the account, and the names with it. The name of this taleb or priest was Ahmed ben Belkasim."

Without a word, Dris came up as though galvanized, and without even putting on his yellow slippers, went away into the darkness. The girl stared after him, frowning, until Tom spoke.

"Go ahead, Miss Pontois. Si Dris is up to something, but don't wait for him."

"Well," she pursued, "this ancestor of mine could speak Arabic but he could not read it. He thought this paper told where the treasure of Ishmael was hidden. Meantime, he escaped with another slave and started for the coast. This other slave had actually been in the party which had buried the treasure at

Ishmael's orders. He was an Englishman, and neither he nor my ancestor trusted each other very much.

"When they were hiding in the ruins of Chella, the Englishman was dying. He had written out the secret of Ishmael's treasure, and he hid it in the Chella ruins before he died. My ancestor found the place, but was captured before he could get out the little box containing the secret; and he never did get it, either. He did not care, because he thought he had the secret, you see."

She broke off for a minute, then made a helpless gesture. "Oh, it all seems too hard to explain, so involved, so intricate! I was wrong to ask you gentlemen to help me in this—I can't expect you to believe me—"

"Don't you take it so 'ard, miss," spoke up Solomon wheezily, as he puffed at his old clay pipe. "We believe you, and it don't matter nohow about that 'ere treasure. The best treasure ain't what you'd expect it to be, as the old gent said when 'e kissed the 'ousemaid. You go ahead, just like that. What I'm interested in is this 'ere Maillot."

Before Miss Pontois could continue, Dris suddenly reappeared from the court. He was carrying a black-bound book, and he plumped down hard on his cushion, shoved his fez over one ear, and grinned at us.

"My friends, here is the chronicle of Zayyani, and now I am going to see what he says in regard to the death of Ishmael," he exclaimed, and thumbed over the pages of the manuscript, which appeared to be beautifully written old script. His hand shot up suddenly into the air. "Ah! Listen to this—he summoned his son Ahmed—death carried him off—ah! The taleb Abul Abbas Ahmed ben Belkasim el Amiri washed the corpse, and prayers were said—' And there you are, my friends!"



DRIS SHUT the book, and we looked at one another, chuckling over his triumphant and eager expression. Jeanne Pontois stared hard at him for a moment, then flushed a little.

"So that proves what I said, eh? Very well. Three months ago my father died, and our home was broken up. I had to sell everything. I had often spent hours over these old papers, and with what money came to me, I came here to Morocco hoping that I might find this treasure. It seems silly, I know, yet—well, why not? Stranger things have happened. I brought the document bearing the seal of Ishmael, but I did not dare to show it to anyone or get it translated.

"I went first to Rabat, meaning to visit the Chella ruins and find the little box left there by the Englishman. Captain Maillot was at the hotel, and was very nice to me, but I did not—well, things happened," and she flushed again. "I felt that people were always watching me wherever I went, and so I waited. It may have been foolish of me, but I had the feeling. Then I copied words from the document and asked Arabs what they meant—two or three of them. One of the words proved to be 'treasure.' Another was 'search.' You see, I did not dare show the whole writing to any one person. I was afraid of the Arabs, and I feared the government might seize whatever I found—"

She broke off, and reached for another cigaret.

"Quite right, too," put in Keyes, as he held a light. "The present sultan is the lineal descendant of old Ishmael, and he'd claim anything sure as shooting. What's more, he'd get it, unless somebody got ahead of him. But go ahead."

"That's about all," said the girl

quietly. "With that terrible feeling that someone was always watching me, I left Rabat and came over to Fez, hoping to throw it off. I could not. I was certain that I was followed everywhere. And that's all."

"Beggin' your pardon, miss," spoke up Solomon quickly, "but 'ad you said anything about that 'ere treasure to Maillot?"

"I'm afraid I did," she responded. "Nothing definite, however. I asked him about Ishmael's treasures and so forth. He said they were never found."

"Nor were they," struck in Dris. "Listen! Ishmael ruled for sixty years. He was avaricious, grasping, and bled his whole realm to the bone. In that time, he hoarded unheard-of treasures, which were never found. Well! Would I give any of this treasure to our puppet French sultan, if I found it? By Allah, I would not! Ishmael stole it from my ancestors, among others, and if I found it again, I'd keep it!"

"Well, you ain't found it," said Solomon in English, which Dris did not understand. Then, to my astonishment, the pudgy little man broke into fluent Arabic. Keyes gaped at him, and so did Dris, but the Algerian presently nodded as to some question. Solomon turned to Jeanne Pontois. "And, miss, did you 'ave any paper telling where to find that 'ere box in Chella?"

"Only in my head," she responded. "I destroyed the memoir left by my ancestor. Perhaps I should have destroyed the document, too—"

"No," I said. "It won't do any one any good, that I can see."

This interposition shifted the general attention to me, and Keyes chuckled.

"So Hank Smith steps into the breach, does he? Go on, feller! I'll bet a dollar you're throwing a big bluff."

I sketched what had happened to me that same morning, told of my escape, and then went on to tell of the conversation I had overheard in the corridor, and related what Ali had said about the document. Jeanne Pontois listened with a frown of astonishment.

"Then—it didn't tell anything about the treasure!" she exclaimed in disappointment. "It just gave the riddle, unless Ali kept something back—but no, there was not a great deal of writing on the document—just four short lines, and the round seal of Ishmael—"

Keyes leaned forward and struck in his oar.

"Si Dris, you're a scholar; suppose we reconstruct this document. Evidently it's a rhyming verse, and if you can get a copy of Ishmael's seal in any of your books—"

"By Allah, you are bright at times, for an infidel!" exclaimed Dris with his flashing smile, and he darted off across the court. I looked at John Solomon. He was scraping out his pipe and seemed absorbed in the task.

"Aren't you interested?" I demanded.

"Not a whole lot, sir," he returned calmly. "Looks to me like that 'ere document ain't neither 'ere nor there, so to speak. Miss Pontois, if so be as you and me could 'ave a bit o' talk together, leaving these two gents out of it, I'd be werry much obliged."

We stared at him, then rose.

"You've got your nerve!" grunted Tom. "Come on, Hank, we'll look at the stars."

We strolled out to the fountain in the center of the court, wondering what Solomon and the girl were talking about. Presently Dris showed up, bearing books and writing materials, and then Solomon got to his feet.

"I ain't as young as I was," he

said wheezily, "and I'll be gettin' to bed, if you'll 'ave the goodness to excuse me. Mr. Smith, you and me will be takin' a little trip in the morning, just like that. Goodnight, sirs and miss, and 'appy dreams!"

He toddled off, a queer little figure, as though he were supremely uninterested in the matter. The three of us gathered about Dris, who took up a split-reed pen and questioned Miss Pontois, trying various words and combinations. Then, as she recognized the two words which she had herself copied and had translated, he had the clue and soon completed the verse itself.

From one of the books, he obtained a copy of the famous seal of Ishmael. This he rapidly drew in upon the paper, and an exclamation of delight broke from the girl.

"That's it—I believe you have it exactly! Still, it doesn't make sense. 'My shade is in my treasure; nay, my treasure is in my shade!' I don't see what it can mean."

"What about the seal?" suggested Keyes. "Translate it, Dris."

The Algerine did so, putting the translation into French for our benefit. In the center of the seal were the words: "Ishmael, son of the Sharif of the line of Hassan; may Allah render him victorious!" The outer oval bore the inscription: "Princes of the blood of the Prophet, Allah wishes above all things to cleanse you of all evil and to purify you."

There we had the thing complete, or so Jeanne Pontois believed. Certainly none of us could make head or tail of the riddle, if riddle it were—yet there was the document reconstructed which Ishmael had left for his son, presumably to tell him the hiding-place of his treasures.

According to Dris, these must have been so vast as to beggar

imagination. Ishmael had not only wrung treasure out of his own people and Jews with relentless tortures, but he had brought whole caravans of gold-dust from the Niger country and had seized the hoards of previous and contemporary rulers. But Dris could make nothing of this riddle.

"Allah upon it!" he cried out angrily. "I believe the only wise man of us all is Solomon Effendi! I shall follow his example and go to bed."

So did we all. Keyes and I shared one of the Arab bed-rooms, with three walls and no privacy, and as we undressed, Keys chuckled amusedly.

"Well, Hank, we know what it's all about—and that's all we do know. How did our friend Solomon connect up with Dris, anyhow?"

"Search me," I replied. "Where's he going with me tomorrow?"

"Ask me something easy. I've got an idea that there's more to all this than a hunt for buried treasure, Hank." Tom lowered his voice. "I'll bet you a dollar it's a political game, and a big one."

"I don't give a hang what it is," I said, climbing into bed. "Shell out my twenty thousand francs before you put your pants under the mattress, will you? And did you discover who was doing that shooting at us on the highway, and why?"

Tom grunted. "I asked Solomon about it and he only chuckled, then said to cheer up, that we'd learn to catch bullets in our mouths and spit 'em back before we got through with this job. And darned if I don't believe he meant it!"

If I'd been able to foresee the outcome of my next day's trip, I'd have shared his belief.

Chapter Five

AN UNFORESEEN EVENT



I WAS up and out early the next morning, and strolled out in the street, expecting to get a little air before the rest of the party were up and dressed, and ready to depart for Rabat. Everything seemed quiet and there was no hurry to make our departure, so I took my leisure time about getting back to the hotel.

I was just getting ready to turn the corner on my return to the hotel when I heard a shout issuing forth from one of the alleys that led off the street. I started to retrace my steps and investigate when I heard another shout from Tom Keyes, who had run out of the hotel and was making for the garage.

"More of Maillot's dirty stuff," I spoke to myself and ran over to where Tom was going. Then I heard Solomon's voice. "Hassan! Hassan!" I looked back over my shoulder and saw that he was beckoning to a hooded Arab wearing a brown jellab. A squad of soldiers was in the distance behind him.

"What's up?" I blurted out at Tom Keyes. But he didn't answer, instead shook his head and pointed down the street. Then he beat energetically upon the garage doors, which were finally opened by a sleepy Arab.

I dared ask no further questions; but to run up against such happenings left me rather dazed. I got the car filled with gas and oil, and ran her out. Solomon was just coming down the street, Miss Pontois with him, and at their heels an Arab wearing a brown jellab, the hood

pulled up over his head—the boy Hassan.

The three of them piled into the rear of the car, Solomon snapped out the one word "Rabat!" and we were off. Dris was already striding back toward his own house.

"Past the mellah," said Hassan in his clear, soft voice. He spoke excellent French. "To the left at the next corner—that's it! Out past the Berrima gate. Right."

Then he leaned back between Solomon and Jeanne Pontois. She looked white-faced and anxious, but her eyes were gleaming and she was even smiling a little, as we shot out the gate and on to the farther gate beyond, no one molesting us.

"Looks like a lot of soldiers around," I observed. "On our friend's account?"

"Yes, they'll be looking for 'im all right, dang it!" said Solomon. "Now, me lad, what's behind it? Politics?"

"Captain Maillot, I think," said Hassan's voice in reply. "He and my father were enemies. They hoped to get both me and my father in prison and seize all our property."

"Do the French act this way?" I said.

"It was not the French. They will be told that we were plotting against them," said Hassan. "Maillot and the pasha are acting together—with both of us in prison, who could do anything? The French can be fooled easily."

"Stop here—we're out of sight of the gates," said Jeanne Pontois. "He's hurt, you know."

I pulled up at the side of the road. I began to like Jeanne; she was cool, efficient, and knew just what she was doing. She and Hassan got out, and he showed a couple of nasty wounds, which she bandaged very neatly. Then Hassan got in with Solomon, and she joined me in front.

"His father," she said to me in English, "is a powerful man in the south; the idea was to nab father and son while both were in Meknez together. Hassan has been going to a French school there, you see. I don't know what Solomon expects to do; of course, if we help him get away, we'll be responsible—"

"Do you care?" I asked, with a sideways glance. She laughed a little.

"No! And I don't believe Mr. Solomon does, either."

"Right you are, miss!" came the wheezy chuckle of Solomon from behind. "I expect as 'ow we'd better speak French, for 'is benefit." And he continued in French which was considerably better than my own. I began to feel more respect for the pudgy little man. "My son, all eyes will be seeking you ere nightfall; is that not true?"

"All eyes in this land, my father," said Hassan. "Both Arab and French seek rewards."

"Good. You do not know of me?"

"Last night we heard of you, sidi," said the boy. "There is an old man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He was talking with my father last night. He said that in the house of Si Dris el Benouna was a Nazarene named Suleiman, and that he had heard of this man in Port Said when he made the pilgrimage—that this Suleiman was a great wizard and a friend of righteous men. This morning, having nowhere to fly, I came to you."

"You might have done worse," said Solomon. All this while, we were speeding along on the paved road to Rabat and meeting no one, since the hour was early. Now Solomon and Hassan talked together in Arabic, and as they talked, Jeanne gave me a look.

"Do you know why we were going to Rabat today?" she asked.

I shrugged. "Things have happened too fast."

"And they're a-going to 'appen faster, if I ain't mistook," said Solomon from behind. "Mr. Smith, this 'ere is a-going to be a werry ticklish game, and if so be as you want to get out of it, I won't blame you."

"Save your breath, John," I said over my shoulder. "Tom and I aren't quitters."

"Werry good, sir."

With occasional correction or help from Hassan, he proceeded to set forth an astonishing story. Some years previously, Maillot had taken lands and a castle—Kasba Helal by name—from Caid el Biskri, and was now confirmed in his ownership. El Biskri had a good deal of influence among the mountain tribes, and like the present sultan, was a direct descendant of the Emperor Ishmael; therefore the French kept a close eye on him. He had now been denounced for alleged conspiracy and plotting, which meant the finish—if they could grab Hassan also.

"Now, miss," and Solomon spoke to Jeanne in English, "this 'ere is nip and tuck. When we planned to get that 'ere little box, I didn't figure on what's been and turned up. It would 'elp us a mortal lot if you'd leave that 'ere box to us, and go slap on to Marrakesh with our friend here, who could drive the car for you."

As he explained, no one would notice Hassan if he acted as chauffeur for Miss Pontois; and it seemed that he would be temporarily safe if he could reach Marrakesh. Now I understood why we were going to Rabat, and it was something of a blow to Jeanne—she had evidently set her heart on finding that little box herself. However, her hesitation was brief.

"Certainly," she said. "I'm to

take the car and leave you there?"

"Just like that," said Solomon. "Mr. Keyes is a-going to Marrakesh by train, with Si Dris. You'll find them at the Dar ben Daoud—the House of the Son of David. It's a place I've been and rented. You'll 'ave to drop us like a 'ot cake in Rabat."

"Very well," she agreed quietly, and that was that.

To tell the truth, I was glad we were to lose her; she was altogether too efficient, and made me uneasy. She was nice enough, and pretty sane for a woman, but you never can tell when a female will fly off at a tangent, so when it comes to real work they are better off at home. It is when they get to taking themselves too seriously that trouble begins.

It was about ten o'clock when we came over the hill and saw the buildings of Rabat ahead, with the white structures of Sale gleaming off to the right in the sunlight. We shot across the river, and then Solomon touched me on the shoulder.

"Now, then, Mr. Smith, stop the first taxicab you see and we'll change cars."

There was none in sight, but at a word from Hassan I turned and headed in for the patch of bare ground and ruins where the Tower of Hassan rises—that marvelous minaret of a twelfth-century mosque which is one of the great sights of Morocco. There, sure enough, a couple of taxis stood waiting, so I drew up.

We all got out, Hassan crawled under the wheel, and Miss Pontois got in beside him. Then, with a short farewell, the Hispano shot off, and Solomon and I started toward the taxis. He took my arm and chuckled as he pointed up with his pipe.

"Look at that 'ere Tower, Mr.

Smith!" he said, pausing. "It's been a-standing 'ere for eight or nine 'undred years—one of the beautiful things of this 'ere wicked world. It's seen kings come and go, and Christian slaves pass by the thousand; and where are they? There it stands, and 'ere we be, you and me; and what's the answer, says I?"

"The answer is," I said, looking up at the beautiful square minaret, "that we think ourselves important, John; but we're like the cactus growing around that tower."

"Right you are, sir; and now let's get a taxi. If I ain't mistook, we're a-going to 'ave some werry sharp work ahead; 'cause why, there'll be someone watching them 'ere Chella ruins to see if we show up."

"I thought you weren't interested in the treasure?" I said.

He chuckled wheezily. "No more am I, sir; but there's a mortal lot o' people in Morocco as are werry much interested in it! What means a lot to others don't mean much to me, as the old gent said when the 'ousemaid sued 'im for breach of promise. But 'ere we be—and now we'll start the ball a-rolling, sir, and a bloody ball it'll be afore we're done."



HE CLIMBED into the taxicab. I told the driver, a hirsute Frenchman, to drive us to the Chella gate and there wait for us, and we started off—we had to go across town.

"There ain't but one thing to do when we get there," said Solomon, who was shredding tobacco into his old clay pipe. "Until I give the word, sir, you keep anyone from bothering of me; then quit. That's all."

We chugged across town, taking the boulevard out past the old walls toward the little private mosque of

the sultan. Across the parade ground shone the white palace; I remember half a dozen of the sultan's bodyguard, huge black men in their flaring red uniforms, were having a time of it with two mules hitched to a caisson—the mules were fighting. Then we swept away, back to the gate of the Zaers—the gate in those great crenelated ramparts of the middle ages.

Great as those ramparts had seemed, they were suddenly dwarfed by the tremendous vista of Chella, as it broke upon us ahead, down the rolling ground. That massive Persian gateway is the most impressive thing in Morocco, with its oddly shaped octagonal turrets rising into the sky and the lines of enormous walls running off to right and left—huge, reddish, imposing, and from a little distance apparently uninjured by the centuries.

"Right 'ere the Romans 'ad a city," said Solomon, as we crossed the ravine and drew in under those mighty walls. "Sala Colonia they called it—well, 'ere we be, sir."

We got out, before the gigantic gateway. A mile away on its hill across the valley shone the white government buildings of the Residence. No one seemed to be here. As usual, Chella was empty, deserted.

We entered the gate, took the little turning, and were inside the walls. Here, where had been a vast city, was nothing—absolutely nothing except bare ground. Not even a ruin, except those of the tombs down by the river. Solomon turned to the inner gateway, and halted at the entrance. From his pocket he had produced a folded bit of old yellow vellum. It was blank.

"Now, Mr. Smith, don't you let no one pass," he said warningly.

I laughed. "Nobody's in sight," I said. "Go ahead; you're safe."

He disappeared, and I lighted a cigaret. Yet, oddly enough, I felt a singular sense that we were not alone. When John had spoken about the treasure, something queer had flashed over me—a feeling as though this pudgy little man were about to set in motion some vast force. It made me laugh, yet there it was. And now, as I looked around this amazing emptiness where a vanished city had stood within these enormous walls, I felt a peculiar menace, as though some unseen danger were at my very side.

And then I saw them.

Three Arabs and another in the rumpled khaki of a French native regiment; four men sauntering toward me down the line of ruined walls; whence they had come, I knew not. Casual natives, apparently, for they were talking and laughing as they came. I waited there outside the entry of the tower chamber.

They approached, threw away their cigarets, the soldier heading straight for me, smiling; but I had learned that these smiling Arabs are often deceptive in looks. He came up and motioned for me to get out of his way. I laughed and stepped in front of the entry.

"Go away," he said, halting, and his smile vanished.

"Be careful, soldier," I said. "You do not enter here."

"Is that so?" and he sneered. "Then, by Allah, look out!"

He reached out with a vigorous shove, but I was balanced and ready, and did not intend to hit him more than once if possible. So, as he lunged forward, I evaded his arm, and he met my short-arm jolt beautifully. It took him just over the belt.

He was out of it, but the other three were into me, flapping robes and all; and, if I had entertained

any notion that Arabs could not fight, they showed me differently. Two of them got me against the wall while the third tried to get past, but I tripped him and landed my boot in his face. A fist took me under the jaw and staggered me, and with that the soldier came to his feet and jumped in, a knife in his hand.

"All right, Mr. Smith," came John's voice.

I retreated, and they halted in the entrance, as Solomon came and stood beside me. In his hand he was holding what looked to be a little snuffbox of wood.

"Well?" he said in French. "Do you gentlemen want to come in?"

The soldier, who was still groggy with my first punch, flourished his knife.

"We want what you have found here!" he cried out.

"Very well, take it," said Solomon calmly, and held out the box. The soldier took it, the three others peering over his shoulder as he opened it. I saw a paper with writing on it in the box, and turned angrily on Solomon.

"What are you giving it up for? Hang on to it! I'll cover your get-away—"

"Now, now, Mr. Smith—it ain't worth fightin' for, I says," and Solomon held a match to his pipe. He seemed entirely calm and at his ease. "Perhaps you gentlemen would like to see where that box came from? There is no treasure, as I can show you—"

The four Arabs did not know what to make of his placid manner. They glared at us suspiciously, then came into the old tower-chamber with its earthen floor and its walls of ancient earthen bricks. Solomon showed a spot in one corner, four feet above the floor, where was a small hole, with debris scattered on

the floor. The soldier went over to it eagerly and explored with his hand. Then he turned, as Solomon puffed at his pipe and addressed him.

"I'll have you arrested for this," he said calmly. "This is robbery."

"Try it, m'sieu!" The soldier laughed, as did the other three. "We have not robbed you; we have taken what belongs to our ancestors. But now I think that we might as well rob you and take your money—"

Then he changed countenance suddenly and stepped backward. Solomon's left hand had come up and an automatic was covering all four of them.

"Get out of 'ere, Smith!" he said in English. "And do it quick!"

I could not fathom whatever scheme he might have in mind; but luckily, I had learned that he was no fool. I did not stop to ask questions, but walked out of the place. After a moment Solomon joined me. His gun was out of sight, and he was puffing calmly at his pipe as we walked around to the great entrance and so through it into the noonday sunlight.

"Did you get the box back?" I asked. Solomon chuckled wheezily, then lifted his hand and wiped sweat from his eyes.

"No, sir, I didn't," he returned, and caught my arm as I stopped in astonishment. "Come on, get out of 'ere!" he exclaimed. "Touch and go, that was—lucky there wasn't no white man along o' them blighters! Come on, sir. I 'ave a mortal lot o' things on 'and to do."

Well, I gave him up! To let them go with the little box, when he had a gun in his hand, was past my understanding. I was too disgusted to speak.

"Go back to the Hotel Transatlantique," he said to our driver.

"The Transat? Right, m'sieu."

We made the city gates and returned as we had come, past the parade ground before the sultan's palace. Neither of us spoke until we were passing the Gare, and then suddenly Solomon laid his hand on my knee, and I turned to see those placid blue eyes of his twinkling.

"Now, sir, don't take it so 'ard, as the old gent said when 'e kissed the 'ousemaid!" he observed. "Mr. Smith, sir, I've been took and plunged 'ead over 'eels into this 'ere business without no warning, so to speak. I've got none o' me own friends 'ere in Morocco, and I ain't as young as I was. There's you and Mr. Keyes, that 'ere young Hassan, and Miss Pontois—no more—"

"You forget Si Dris," I put in, rather touched by his appeal.

"No, sir, I ain't forgetting of 'im," said John. "But Si Dris ain't a-going to move in the open; not just yet. When 'e gets Mr. Keyes settled in that 'ere palace in Marrakesh, sometime today, Si Dris will be gone for a week or so on an errand for me. And that 'ere Mailot, sir, is a werry dangerous man, just like that! If you and me are alive tomorrow night, sir, we'll be werry lucky."

"Bosh," I returned. "But why go to the hotel? When we were here, a card was delivered to us—"

"Yes, sir, sorry I am to say it, sir, but some o' them gents what was a-going to 'elp me, they got orders to quit, just like that." I fancied that an expression of chagrin flitted across the pudgy, blank features, then was gone. "But, as I was a-going to say—oh, dang it!"

"Well, what's the matter?" I asked, as he broke off suddenly.

"I was just thinking as 'ow Mr. Keyes and Si Dris might 'ave some trouble getting out o' Meknez—but

that can't be 'elped now." He leaned forward and spoke quickly in French. "Here, driver! Go to the Bureau des Postes—the main one!"

We swung around a corner and drew up before the postoffice. Next door was a stationary shop, and here Solomon bought some envelopes. We then went into the postoffice, where he addressed an envelope to Jeanne at the Marrakesh address; then he sealed it and registered it, and turned to me with a chuckle.

"Do you know what was in that 'ere envelope, sir!"

"Naturally not," I said. "I didn't look. What it was it?"

"That, sir, was the blessed old bit o' wellum as was in that 'ere wooden box I found."

"What?" I exclaimed. "But you handed it over to them—"

"Just like that," and he chuckled again. "And on the wellum as I brought with me I wrote a werry different message, sir. We 'ave to gain time, sir—"

"By glory!" I said slowly. "But how did you know the place would be watched?"

"I didn't, but I 'oped it would be. Now let's us go and 'ave luncheon, sir."

We did. And my eyes began to be opened in regard to this pudgy little man beside me.

Chapter Six

THE HOLY MAN FROM THE HILLS



knows what might have happened—well, who knows what might have been? Perhaps it was the hot sun on the walls of Chella, perhaps not; but we had barely risen from the luncheon table

and crossed into the coffee salon, when Solomon staggered and then collapsed.

I got him to an upstairs room by the little stairway off the salon, and he refused to have a doctor called. He lay there looking up at us, a pitiful little old man.

"It's me 'art—I 'ave these 'ere spells at times," he said faintly. "In me left weskit pocket, sir—the pills —"

I found a tiny vial of nitroglycerin pills. He had an aneurism which came on at times, and in fifteen minutes he was much himself again; but wheezily declared that we must remain here until the morrow at least. Any exertion when one of these attacks was upon him, would only be dangerous and would do no good. I let him sleep, and finding that among the tourist guests there was a doctor from Paris, I asked him about it.

"By all means he must remain here in bed today, m'sieu," was the decided response. "No, there is nothing anyone can do in such a case—complete rest is imperative. Tomorrow? Yes, if he feels like it."

As a matter of fact, I discovered later that Solomon had scarcely slept since meeting us in Casablanca; he had been on the go continually, and now he slept the entire afternoon away. And, while he slept, things happened.

I sent Tom Keyes a telegram at the Dar ben Daoud in Marrakesh, trusting it would reach him, explaining the delay and giving our address. Then I went out for a walk, and the first person I met was that same chap Ali who had trapped me in Fez. I was delighted to see that he had a beautiful shiner, and the rascal had the impudence to grin at me insolently as he sauntered past. I came back to the hotel in a

thoughtful mood; they had us located, sure enough.

Solomon was sound asleep. I loafed about the patio, got off a couple of letters from the writing room—and was on hand to receive a telegram. When I read it my heart sank:

"No one has arrived here; the house awaits you.

Hamet ben Omra."

And there I was, in blank ignorance. Evidently this Hamet was a caretaker who knew that Solomon was to have this palace, and had sense enough to receive telegrams and answer them, which was some comfort. Miss Pontois could not reach Marrakesh before sometime tonight at the earliest, or perhaps tomorrow; I was uncertain as to the distance.

I went into the salon and tried to read the morning papers, but found nothing of interest in them. Then, looking out at the patio and the little entrance, I saw a singular thing. An Arab stalked in at the gate, with two followers; these squatted down and waited, while he went on to the office. He was a wild-looking creature. He wore rags, his head and breast were bare, long hair tumbled about his shoulders, and his sunken, dirty features were lit by two wild gray eyes—nothing strange in a country where half the people are descended from Christian slaves or blond Berbers of the hills.

After a minute the Arab doorman came up to me. He was excited and nervous.

"M'sieu," he said, "there is a man to see M. Suleiman. He is a very holy man from the hills, named Hajj Muhammad—"

"M. Solomon is ill and asleep," I retorted. "Was he that wild animal who just came in?"

"M'sieu!" The doorman was hor-

rified. "He is a saint, very holy, and he—"

Just then the saint stalked in and stood looking at me. He spoke in Arabic and held out a small gold ring. The doorman took it and gave it to me.

"He says that M. Suleiman sent this to him from Meknez, m'sieu. He says that your friend is not asleep."

"I'll go and see," I said.

On the way upstairs, I examined the ring. It was old and worn, and graven in the face, like a seal, was the symbol of two interlaced triangles—the Seal of Solomon. I remembered what Tom had said about John getting into trouble if he used this symbol in Morocco, and grunted to myself as I stepped into the room.

I found Solomon awake and looking much like himself.

"There's a wild bird wants to see you, John," I said, and gave him the ring. "Says you sent this to him—"

"Dang it! Not Hajj Muhammad?" Solomon came to one elbow.

"Yes. The doorman says he's a holy man, but—"

"Bring 'im up 'ere, sir, and quick about it!"

John's voice brooked no argument. I went back down and got the saint and the doorman, and they came up to the room. There we found John sitting on the bed. The saint stalked in and gave him the usual salutation, which John returned. Then Hajj Muhammad squatted down on his hunkers and stared at John, who was fumbling with his pipe. The doorman, who was tremendously impressed, told me afterward what was said—it was all in Arabic.

"I have come to look at you," said the holy man abruptly, "and to ask you questions."

"Ask, in the name of Allah!" returned John. "I also have a ques-

tion to ask you."

"By Allah, I am defiled by sitting in this house of infidels!" and the saint spat on the tiled floor. "Tell me, first, why is man born?"

"By the will of Allah," said Solomon, and the saint grunted at that.

"Why, then, does he die?"

"Because he is a man."

Again the holy man grunted. "What is man, then, the day before his birth?"

Solomon stared at him with his expressionless blue eyes, and the gray eyes of the saint blazed back at him fiercely.

"The day before his birth," said John, "man is as the seed in the hand of the sower."

"And what is he five minutes after death?"

"What Allah wills."

"I see that you are not a fool," said the saint, losing his fierce look. "What desire you of me?"

"There was a man whose mother was widowed," said John slowly. "He sent to the great King Suleiman asking for help. His message—"

"That has nothing to do with me," and Hajj Muhammad came to his feet, but as he did so he made a certain gesture to Solomon, perhaps of caution. "The air of this house stifles me, and it bears the poison of infidels; may it be accursed! Save your questions for another day."

"As you like," returned Solomon. "The Dar ben Daoud in Marrakesh is no house of infidels, but it lacks servants who can be trusted."

The saint showed yellow fangs in a grin.

"Peace be upon you!" he said, and stalked out, with the doorman after him.

"Go down and see what 'appens below," said John to me, and I followed.

Nothing happened, however. The

saint walked out, thrust his feet into the slippers he had left at the door, and strode away with his two ragged followers after him. I stood at the gate to see if anything took place, but in vain; it was there the doorman, standing beside me, spoke in an awed voice of what had been said upstairs, and asked what it all meant. I knew no more than he, and said so.

Solomon was whittling at his tobacco plug when I came back into the room, which was red with the sunset light. I told him about the telegram and asked who this holy rascal was.

"Well, sir," and John chuckled, "these 'ere saints are mostly mad, but they 'ave an uncommon lot o' power in Morocco. That 'ere gent could walk into any 'ouse or shop from the sultan's palace down, and do what 'e wanted, and they'd consider it an honor, just like that!"

"You didn't get far with him," I commented.

"You wait and see," and John chuckled once more. "With that 'ere doorman present, 'e wasn't doing no talking, not 'im! It'll be all over town inside an hour that 'e was 'ere to see me, and what 'e said. That's why 'e 'ad the doorman 'ere. But don't you worry, sir; 'im and me understand each other, as the 'ousemaid said when the old gent up and kissed her."

"Well," I said, "what's the program now?"

"What time is it?"

"Five thirty."

"Dang it, I've got to 'ave money—"

"I have your twenty thousand francs—"

"No, keep it; that 'ere don't count." John filled his pipe and lighted it. Hm! Banks are closed, but everything else is open for another hour or two. Werry good.

Mr. Smith, sir, you speak to the 'otel manager, just like that. If so be as there's a branch of the Credit Lyonnais 'ere in town, I want the manager 'ere inside o' ten minutes; or Barclay's Bank will do, either one."

"Do you think he'll come?" I asked skeptically. "You know these bank managers—"

"If 'e gets word that unless 'e comes, 'e'll up and lose 'is ruddy job inside o' two weeks, then you'll see 'im right 'ere to find out about it," said John. "Get that 'ere message to 'im, sir, and leave 'im to me. Then you pop downtown and buy me some things—dang it, I lost me bag! I want a toothbrush and pajamas and the 'ole blessed works a man needs—"

"All right—no time to waste, then," I said.



I WENT down and located the hotel manager. He listened to what I had to say as though it dazed him, as well it might; the managers of branch banks in Morocco are little tin gods. When he slyly suggested the English bank, I told him to go ahead, and he grinned.

"I will get him, m'sieu, and heaven help your friend M. Solomon! This Englishman is a lion, an autocrat, a personage!"

I shrugged and went off about my business. I wanted to get back and see what happened, for I began to be afraid that poor old Solomon was a bit off his head.

However, my purchases took time, and the carriage and pair of horses I employed was no racing equipage. It was well after dark before I had everything Solomon needed, and a few things I needed, and was headed back to the Transat.

When I got there with my two

handbags, the hotel manager threw up his hands.

"He is upstairs now, M'sieu—and there is another gentleman waiting. Will you see him?"

I would, and I did. He was a Frenchman, and the local agent for Fiat and Renault cars, and he said that he had brought the car M. Solomon had ordered. It was a whopping big Renault, and was sitting right under the salon window. I walked over and looked out, and whistled. There went eighty or ninety thousand francs at one crack—if true.

For a minute I was pretty well knocked out, for it certainly looked as though John were somewhat balmy. Before I could think up what to say, however, down the little stairway into the salon came Solomon himself, and with him an extremely affable Englishman, who shook hands cordially as John introduced us, then nodded to Solomon.

"The cash will be here at nine in the morning, sir," he said. "Meantime, issue any checks you like, and they will be taken care of. If our Marrakesh correspondents can be of service to you, call upon them; I shall write them full instructions in the morning."

That was one miracle, and the next happened when John wrote out a check for the new car and told the scraping and bowing agent to bring it around at nine-thirty in the morning. When we were alone, I looked at John, and he chuckled.

"I 'ave a bit o'brass 'ere and there, sir; don't take it so 'ard," he said. "Dang it, I'll 'ave to go back to bed—me 'eart ain't as good as I thought it was!"

I got him back upstairs, and opened up the bags, and when he had climbed into his new pajamas John went to bed and said not to

disturb him for dinner because he wanted to sleep and be in shape by morning. My own room adjoined his.

I got shaved and then was starting downstairs when the doorman said a man wanted to see me. He was a Frenchman, and very apologetic but extremely firm. He said that he wanted me to come along with him to police headquarters and show my passport and whatever papers I had—a mere matter of formality. His card showed him to be a special agent, and he was very polite about it, so I got my papers and accompanied him out to his car, without disturbing Solomon.

Beyond the bother of it, I paid little attention to the matter. More than once I had been called upon by the *Service des Etrangers* to account for myself; visiting journalists who make no secret of their occupation are liable to be looked upon with a jealous eye, for under the surface Morocco is seething with radicalism—the French colonists hate the military, and there are plenty of disaffected elements among the Arabs themselves, as witness the fighting that has been going on for years in the south and east. In certain parts of Morocco, indeed, every automobile must be rigorously accounted for by telegram, and if the tourist neglects to wire ahead so that the police may meet him and give him the once over, then it is just too bad—for him.

Supposing this to be the usual sort of summons, I chatted with my guardian and paid little heed to the surroundings. When we halted, he ushered me into a room where a very slovenly Frenchman with a huge mustache sat at a desk, then left us alone. Trying hard to be impressive, the Frenchman, whose uniform collar bore the Seal of Solomon, showing that he was in the

sultan's service, nominally, took up an official paper and glared at me.

"You are M. Smeeth?"

"Yes," I said, and anticipating his request, laid down my passport. He looked through it and then lit a cigaret.

"This does not bear the '*bon pour Maroc*' visa," he said.

"Which is a dead letter," I commented. "No foreign passport needs it. This was stamped when I came into the country."

"Yes?" He smiled in a nasty way. "It does not show that you have had it okeyed by the Chief de Region anywhere in Maroc. Yet this should have been done within three days of your arrival in each place."

"More nonsense," I said, a little angrily. "You know perfectly well that this isn't necessary with tourists."

"Yes?" He smiled again. "I believe, m'sieu, that you drove an automobile from Meknez to Rabat this morning?"

"What of it?" I asked.

"Then you have the required International Touring Card which the law demands of each driver?"

"Now, my friend, listen to me a moment," I said. "I don't know whether you're out for graft, or whether you're just trying to show your authority; and in either case, I don't care. I am a journalist, and as such I'm accustomed to getting rather politely treated by French officials; as such, also, the little bluff of your official position doesn't impress me at all. I've broken your technicalities just as everyone else breaks them, and I'll go right on doing it as everyone else does. And you'd better like it. Since you don't want to be polite, you'll find that I can be as nasty as you can—and perhaps with more result."

An untactful speech, certainly, but

I was preparing the way to come around gracefully and slip him the ten-franc note he probably wanted. However, in this I was sadly mistaken.

"Very well, m'sieu," he said coldly. "You are under arrest—"

"I'm what?" I cut in. "Look here, I want to see the American consul, and your superior—"

"I regret that neither are available," he said, and looking me in the eyes, smiled again. "It is very sad, but you must wait in jail, until we have investigated matters. Perhaps there will be further charges against you—"



AT THIS moment the door opened. Into the room came a man who wore an aviation helmet and leather coat. He was Captain Maillot, and he went straight to the desk without a glance at me.

"Your pardon, m'sieu!" he exclaimed. "I have just landed from Meknez, and there is a matter of the utmost importance—"

Maillot turned, looked at me, and then started in astonishment. A smile came to his face.

"Ah! Why, it is the friend of M. Keyes!" he exclaimed, and put out his hand in frank cordiality. "A pleasant surprise, M.—Smith, is it not?"

"This gentleman," said the official at the desk, "has been guilty of certain infractions of the regulations governing foreigners, M. Maillot. I am about to place him under arrest."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" Maillot's brows shot up, then he winked at me. "I beg of you, my dear fellow, be reasonable! As a favor to me, let us say—a personal favor. I know this gentleman and can vouch for him. Perhaps, if I may have a word with you in private—"

The official rose and, with a nod, stepped outside with Maillot. I stepped forward to the desk to see what kind of a report the mustached frog had on me—and then my eye was caught by two names upon a telegram that lay open. I had time for only one glance; a rattle at the door warned me and I stepped back again as the two re-entered the room. The typed words swam before my eyes and I scarcely heard what was said, for an instant. I can still see the words:

“—Keyes, American, jumped from train, temporarily at liberty. Dris el Benouna, native, killed resisting arrest—”

Just a fragment, no more; but enough to shock me, stun me, set my pulses leaping in hot anger and yet send the cold chill of warning down my spine as well. Keyes and Si Dris must have started for Marrakesh by train, certainly. Merry, laughing Si Dris—

These thoughts, beating and hammering through my brain, were stilled by the voice of Maillot. He was smiling, and it was a cruel smile that sat in his eyes, though not upon his thinly curved lips.

“Suppose we go to my place for dinner, Smith—you’re technically under arrest, but this gentleman will waive the matter. Eh?”

Oddly enough, some shade of meaning in his voice gave me warning, awakened my brain to life in a flash, showed me just where I stood. After all—had not his dramatic entry been timed to a nicety? Of course. I was taking part in a very clever little game—technically under arrest, eh? Si Dris had been murdered, poor Tom was a fugitive. Solomon was back there at the hotel, sick and alone.

There were just two things I could do. I might resist and see what happened; or I might play the game and try to use my brains. I chose the latter and wiser course.

“That’s very good of you,” I rejoined, with a smile. “I’d like to use the telephone, if I may—to let my friend know where I am.”

“Oh, the fat little Englishman?” Maillot laughed. “By all means, by all means!”

I took the instrument from its rack on the desk and asked for the Transat, and in a moment had the manager on the wire.

“This is M. Smith,” I said, and glanced up to meet Maillot’s gaze as I spoke. “Kindly tell M. Solomon—wake him up and tell him—that I am dining with Captain Maillot; and—I may not be back.”

Maillot’s eyes changed, narrowed, rested alertly upon me as I laid down the instrument.

“So!” he exclaimed. “You realize that fact, eh?”

“I’m not a fool,” I rejoined, and smiled. “Are we to have a pleasant dinner or not?”

He broke into a short laugh and drew my arm in his—a friendly, cordial gesture.

“Of course, of course!” he said, and waved to the official. “*Au revoir, mon ami!* Come along, my dear M. Smith—ah, you are no fool indeed! Here’s my car—”

A two-seater stood by the curb outside, and Maillot took the wheel. As he drove, he chatted amiably of his little establishment here in town, of how he had just come from Meknez by military ’plane, and so forth—still playing the game of having rescued me from arrest. Yet all the while, he knew that I knew the truth. I had had my choice between actual arrest and going with him.

And was it his hand which had struck elsewhere that same day?

What madness, what show of force or threat, what utter desperation, had caused the laughing Si Dris to resist to the death, had sent Tom Keyes plunging from a moving train? Well, at least I did not intend to let this smiling Frenchman have his way with me. He was altogether too cocksure of himself, too certain that he held Henry Smith in the hollow of his hand.

We had just passed the new church and were heading for the new quarter of villas, when I twisted around in my seat beside him. No other car was in sight.

"Hold on!" I exclaimed sharply. "Slow down!"

"Eh?" Startled, he peered forward and put on the brakes. "Why?"

"So we won't go off the road, of course," I said, and swung on him.

Not with my fist, of course; it is

a hard job, almost an impossibility, to knock out a man in such position, particularly when you are sitting at his left side—foreign cars are usually right-hand drive. But this was a crack old Jimmy Finerty had once shown me; a chopping cut with the edge of the right hand, and if it goes to the exact spot, your man is ready for the finish.

This one went to the spot—right to Maillot's adam's apple. He gave a gurgling gasp and crumpled up sideways. I grabbed for the emergency brake, then turned and hauled off with my left, just as his head jerked up and his hands went spasmodically to his pockets. My fist caught him flush under the angle of his big jaw, and that finished him.

So there we were. I had hooked a big fish—and did not know what in the devil to do with him.

(To be continued in the April issue.)

More of
JOHN SOLOMON'S

Adventures

will appear in the

April Issue

Watch for it on the Newsstands



Beachcombers of the Far East

The Lowdown
on a
Curious Brotherhood

AN ARTICLE
by
C. A. FREEMAN



BEACHCOMBER! The name is redolent of tropic isles, the roar of surf, and the soft murmur of the breeze through feathery bamboos. Mottles of gin in square faced form, brawny sunburned arms, and the inevitable white girl who brings about regeneration are also called to mind. But the real beachcomber is not in the least romantic. Particularly he who makes the Far East his habitat.

His range is from Shanghai on the north to Manila on the south and while occasionally the small islands intrigue him, he prefers the great seaports. For there the graft is better. Primarily the beachcomber is a panhandler. And always he is thirsty. Unlimited drink is the height of his ambition and by devious ways he obtains it. And the beachcomber may be a high class hotel beat or an inmate

of water front flop houses.

In Shanghai several groups of beachcombers club together and rent houses. Chinese servants are employed to keep the premises clean and to cook. And the beachcombers live and dress well. It is the Dean who enables them to dress. He is an Englishman who heads a mission and possesses an eradicable belief in his fellow men. To him the beachcomber is not merely a brand to be snatched from the burning, but a brother who needs aid.

And so the Dean maintains a tailor shop. To this shop come the cast off garments of the white community. And the Dean's tailors put them in shape. Any beachcomber who may apply is fitted out with a decent front in order that he may rustle the job which he pretends to be seeking. But often the front is only requested that it may give the wearer access to the

Astor House and other ornate hotels.

Nationality plays its part in the beachcomber racket, and the American element in Shanghai has the name and address of almost every American woman in the city. Our women are notoriously charitable and seldom turn down the appeal of a countryman who pours out a tale of hard luck. Needless to say, the beachcombers seldom approach the husbands, for these individuals, unless newly arrived, are hard-boiled and wise.

Putting the B on 'em is the beachcomber expression for begging. Sometimes the fraternity organize begging expeditions to up river towns, paying steamer fare to their destination. Then early in the morning they strike out in *'rickshaws*. The coolies who know the address of every white merchant, and that beachcombers are liberal, fairly gallop on their way.

Then their patrons invade offices and glibly sling their patter. Each man of course having a different tale of why he's on the bum in China. The town must be worked out by noon, for then the merchants and other whites gather at their clubs, and exchange bits of gossip.

"A white man touched me this morning," one will say.

"Yeah? Was he a red headed, red moustached man?" another will counter. "He got me too. Mighty smooth talker. In fact I half believed his yarn."

And the beachcombers eventually return to their haunts with plenty of money for *sam shu* and other liquid delights.

Many of the beachcombers possess monikers, and work novel rackets. For instance there is Hospitality Harry. His specialty is to visit mission hospitals through China, and to ask for treatment for the opium habit. Usually he is taken in, fed, clothed—and treated. Harry's re-

covery is slow but sure. Then a day comes when the interesting patient no longer feels the *yen*—and he thanks his patrons. Yes, he'll be on his way now. And he goes. Always with a few Mex dollars jingling in his pockets. Yes, mission hospitals are plentiful in China. And when they're exhausted there's French Indo China to work on.

Another notorious beachcomber is the man known as Dr. Goofey. In reality he is a licensed practitioner in Canada and the United States, but he'd rather bum than work. Polished, cultured, and widely travelled, Dr. Goofey is able to *put it over* anywhere and rates as a high class grafter.

Perhaps his most famous exploit was that which he pulled in Manila. Calling on the late Governor General Leonard Wood he stated that he had recently been the physician of the Lama of Tibet. And that the jealousy of the native medicine men had forced him to fly from the country in fear of his life.

The Governor General put Dr. Goofey up in the *Manila Hotel*, guaranteed his bill, and gave him fifty dollars. The press played the beachcomber clear across its front pages. Printed his picture. And then—the doctor was arrested for drunkenness. Beside, he was recognized by people from the China Coast. Later the high grade beachcomber was deported, and from the pier head in San Francisco declared his intention of returning to the Far East as soon as possible.

Beachcombers arrested in Shanghai, if Americans and receiving a sentence of six months or more, are sent to Bilibid Prison in Manila. There no white man performs manual labor, and conditions are ideal. On their release they may go to work, start bumming again, or ask for transportation to the United States. Usually they start along the familiar beachcomber lines.

There are within a radius of forty miles from Manila, forty gin distilleries. And gin costs but thirty-five cents a quart. Distillers will give any beachcomber a bottle provided he drinks its contents outside the distillery grounds. And Filipinos are the soul of hospitality. So the beachcomber makes the rounds.

If arrested he is usually sentenced to deportation, a matter of little importance to him. Army transports returning to the U. S. A. stop at Ching Wan Tao in China, and Nagasaki, Japan. And a beachcomber riding home against his will has slight difficulty in escaping. Japan, so strict about passports, merely laughs at the beachcomber. And he can go anywhere as long as he keeps away from fortifications.

Should the police arrest him, he is brought in front of his consul. And the consul merely ships him on to the next port. It's the best way to get rid of him.



BEACHCOMBERS IN CHINA and Japan have their king, a red-headed Canadian named Bennet. He is a man of education and athletic physique, and can handle the gloves like a professional. Bennet specializes in panhandling Britishers, and as his war record is of the best and he has papers to back his claims he is extremely successful.

The beachcomber king recently attempted to rule the roost in Manila but was knocked cold by a local champion. The fight was held beneath the shade of the famous *Gin Tree*, the beachcomber rendezvous at the Santa Lucia gate. And it was witnessed by a delighted audience of vagrants, soldiers, and policemen. Later the Canadian was deported, but escaped in Nagasaki and made his way back to Shanghai.

The beachcombers of Manila belong to what is known as the Funeral

Club, and maintain headquarters in a Filipino gin joint by the side of a popular funeral parlor. When a wealthy Chinaman dies, and Manila possesses a population of 80,000 Chinese, the undertaker hires a white escort. And the beachcombers find themselves performing work which involves only a short walk and brings in five dollars.

At the undertaking establishment applicants are bathed, shaven, and given new underwear. Then they are locked up to sober off. When the funeral takes place they walk beside the hearse clad in black knickerbockers, coats, and cocked hats. And they keep step with the band which leads the procession.

On arriving at the cemetery the corpse is removed from the hearse and the beachcombers climb in. The chauffeur steps on the gas and drives his passengers back to the undertaking parlor. There they remove their costumes, don their own clothes, and are paid off. When rich Chinks are not dying rapidly enough to suit the Funeral Club, prayers are offered to Chinese Deities, that they may bump off a gentleman of the desired type. On such occasions candles are burned, gongs are beaten, and much gin is consumed.

A peculiar system is followed in Manila in dealing with beachcombers. They are not arrested as long as they confine their begging to the port area, but when they move up town they are gathered in. Then they are given the alternate of six months in prison or of taking deportation. If they accept the latter they are at once released, and furnished with two meals a day and a place to sleep at Constabulary headquarters. Often a month must elapse before the departure of a transport. And the beachcomber continues to panhandle.

The U. S. allows \$25.00 for the meals of each deportee, but often this is not all used. Anything remaining

over when the deportee reaches San Francisco is handed to him. This money usually amounts to five or six dollars—enough to purchase much *smoke* along the Barbary Coast.

Along the docks of Asiatic cities the beachcomber solves the food problem by carrying a bucket with a line attached. Not being allowed on board the ships he singles out a sailor, shouts to him, and heaves the bucket. Usually it is caught and let down to him filled with the remains of the seamen's meals. In this way the beachcomber may select an English, German, French, or American menu and fatten on it.



RICKSHAW BEGGING, is a favorite pastime of the beachcomber. He will spot a party of tourists and block the way of the rickshaw coolies. Then he will politely panhandle. "You won't see a poor sailor starve on foreign soil. I know you won't. You're white"—is the usual spiel that brings in the money.

The beachcomber who really *hits the beach* and keeps out of the big cities is a far more loveable character than those who have been mentioned. He delights to lie in the shade, to guzzle cheap native drinks, and to consort with natives. Usually he speaks the dialect of the district he infests, and because he is white the natives tolerate him.

Often he performs menial tasks and becomes a water carrier for the village in order to satisfy his craving for liquors. But he will not work steadily. If he did he would not be a beachcomber. Certain beachcombers have the hermit complex, and live entirely alone in huts of their own construction. Such a man was Grady the hermit of Mindoro who continually wandered alone around the coast of the island begging his food from natives or catching fish if opportunity offered.

Sometimes the beachcomber takes a native wife and then his fate is sealed. Never will he stage a comeback unless forcibly removed from his surroundings. But other beachcombers at times abandon the game. And the miracles happen. Seven years ago a beachcomber in jail in Manila attracted the attention of a wealthy visitor. They talked and the visitor discovered that the beachcomber understood something of horticulture and the manufacture of perfumes. Today the former beachcomber is the proprietor of one of the largest perfume factories in the Philippines.

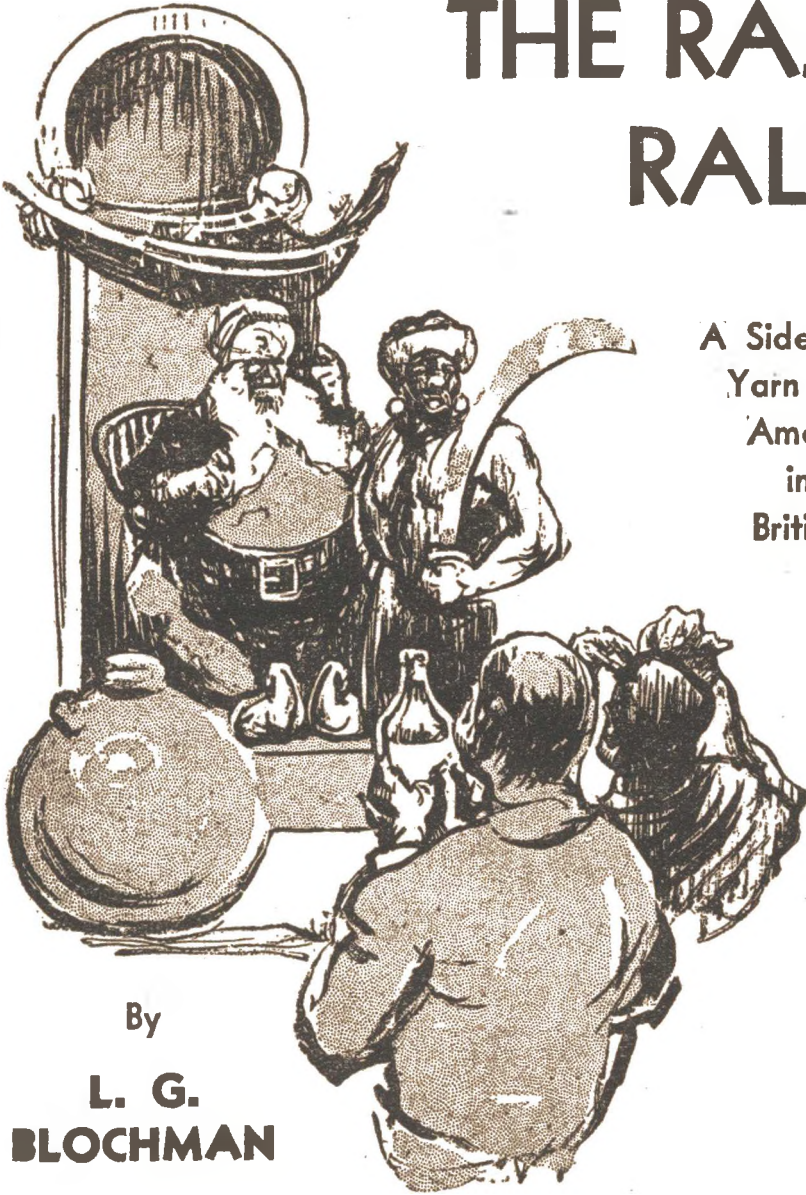
And how does a man become a beachcomber? There are many ways. If he is a sailor he gets on a drunk, and loses his ship. Then he must bum in order to live. And finally he comes to the conclusion that the game beats the hardships of the sea. Perhaps he becomes infatuated with a native woman and then sinks lower and lower in her society. Finally when all desire to work is gone he turns to panhandling.

As a usual thing the beachcomber lacks the nerve to steal, but if he is educated and possesses good clothes he manages to extract considerable money from tourists. He usually selects a visitor who comes from a town known to the beachcomber. Next he calls up the tourist and either brings him to the lobby or gets himself invited to the room. The rest is usually easy if the beachcomber's *line* is good. And the tourist comes across to the fellow townsman in hard luck. Sometimes it's money and sometimes clothes. But clothes are pawnable.

Taken all in all beachcombing is one of the lowest of all *rackets*. And those who follow it long usually die in a mission hospital or in a filthy native hovel. Only in the movies and in fiction is the beachcomber a romantic figure.

THE RAJAH RALLIES

A Side Splitting
Yarn of Two
Americans
in the
British Raj



By
**L. G.
BLOCHMAN**



DANNY DOLAN, according to an announcement signed by the stewards of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, had been ruled off.

Dolan was an American jockey who had come to India because somebody told him that there were

fortunes to be made racing in the Orient. Not only had he failed to realize even an interesting sum, but now he had been disqualified as well. He felt very strongly on the subject as he complained to Doc Wheely over a brace of tepid *chota* pegs in a corner of the Chowringhee Bar.

Doc Wheely, variously veterinary,

trainer, and book-maker, was the inventor of the tiny galvanic battery for stimulating horses on the home stretch, the use of which had caused Dolan to be set down. Although Wheely himself had been ruled off a dozen tracks, from Latonia to Longchamp, he was highly indignant over Dolan's misfortune.

"The inartistry of the thing shocks me," exclaimed Wheely, raising a pair of chubby hands in a gesture of disgust. "As Voltaire said, the crime is in being caught. How did you manage it? With those baby blue eyes of yours you ought to get away with murder."

"The damned thing started buzzin' in the weighin' room," said Dolan. "And first thing—"

"But I thought it was understood that you were to use it only in the Viceroy's Cup, that we were going to stake all—you your first offense against racing convention, me my small capital—on that one race. And here you spoil things six weeks ahead of time!"

"Hell, I'm sorry." Dolan's hairy, nervous hands were playing with his whisky glass. "But you see, Doc, this morning I got a cable from my kid brother. He says our old lady is pretty bad off in the hospital, with a thousand bucks worth of repairs needed. Well, all I had on me was a coupla dibs, and I wanted to make 'em grow into something I could send to the old lady—"

"Hm." Doc Wheely twisted the pointed ends of his mahogany mustache, small but dignified, and reflectively stroked his fleshy, pallid jowls. "Of course you realize that this little affair has discredited me as completely as it has you, so I am unable to help you financially. However, I was considering a plan to help myself this afternoon, and if you are not averse to going into the *mofussil*—"

"What's the game?" Danny Dolan stood up to all of his five feet five. He had bushy black hair and freckles that showed faintly on a thin, brick-colored face. Doc Wheely extracted a copy of *The Statesman* from his pocket, unfolded it to the Reuter page, and pointed to an item. Dolan read:

"BALIPUR, Thursday. — The death of the aged Rajah of Balipur, believed to be a matter of days, is expected to cause serious disorders here. The state is divided on religious lines over the matter of succession, as the old Rajah's liberal policies extended to choosing his wives from among all the most representative races and creeds in Balipur. Allegiance is directed chiefly to the two eldest of the Rajah's twenty-nine sons. Prince Chup Rao, the oldest, is a Hindu, and is therefore opposed by partisans of Prince Ahmed Ali, who, although two weeks younger, is a Mohammedan and is therefore put forward as rightful heir to a Mohammedan throne. An outbreak is feared."

"What's that got to do with us?" Dolan inquired.

"You like to fight," said Doc Wheely. "I have seen you in action in the Elphinstone Bar. As for myself, I worked my way through the College of Veterinary Surgery by fighting in preliminary bouts. Very well. For a consideration, we will offer our expert fighting services in this war of succession. You may yet be able to send that thousand to your ailing parent."

"Where's Balipur?" asked Dolan.

"In Orissa."

"Where's that?"

"Does it matter? Ah, I thought not. Then let us prepare."

Doc Wheely's preparation consisted first in packing a dozen bottles of Scotch in a valise, since Balipur

was a Mohammedan State, and the cup that cheers is forbidden by the Koran. Next he visited a second-hand shop in Dharamtolla Street, to buy two revolvers, ammunition, and a brilliant array of foreign decorations. A Chinese forger furnished a commission of Colonel in the Nicaraguan Army for Dolan, and papers showing that Wheely was a noted artillery strategist.



THE SAME night the jockey and bookmaker took a *ghari* for Howrah station and bought second-class tickets on the Madras Mail.

Howrah station was crowded with Indians of all races, castes, and shades of brown, rushing for trains, squatting on the cement floor and eating from brass bowls, or stretched out beside their baggage—packages tied in dirty cloths—sleeping. The second class compartments of the Madras Mail were also crowded with women in bright *saris* of red and green, fat Bengali *babus* in once-white *dhotis*, and lean, black Tamils. Not finding a vacancy, Doc Wheely halted Dolan in front of a compartment marked PURDAH LADIES ONLY. He peered through the window. The compartment was dark. Quickly removing the LADIES ONLY sign, he opened the door, pushed the jockey up the steps ahead of him, closed and locked the door, and ran up the window. The Madras Mail creaked and started.

When the train had passed the Chandmari Bazaar and began running through paddy fields, luminous with thousands of flickering fireflies, Wheely groped about the side of the compartment and switched on the light. Immediately he removed his white topee. Danny Dolan stood up and did likewise.

"We beg your pardon," said Doc

Wheely. "We thought this compartment was empty."

From a far corner of the compartment an Indian woman sat stiffly and regarded them with large, wondering eyes. She was evidently a woman of some means, for her lavender *sari* which was draped about her head and lithe body was shot through with threads of gold, and a large diamond sparkled on the hand that drew the *sari* across the lower part of her face. She was likewise a woman of some beauty, Wheely decided. She remained silent.

"You must tolerate us," said Wheely. "We will not disturb you."

The woman turned her head away.

"She probably don't know the lingo," said Dolan.

"We will not bother you long," repeated Wheely in his best Hindustani. "We leave the train early tomorrow morning at Balipur Junction."

The woman turned quickly and regarded the two men curiously, but she did not break her silence.

"You see," Wheely continued, "we are travelling on an important diplomatic mission. My friend is a distinguished personage, as you may observe—" He pulled aside Dolan's coat, disclosing a string of medals. "We have been called to Balipur on a matter involving a throne."

The woman continued to stare silently at the two men.

"She's probably deaf and dumb," ventured Dolan. "Let's have a shot of something."

He opened a suitcase, removed a bottle, extracted the cork, and passed it to Wheely. The jockey and bookmaker then passed successively from the stage of lip-smacking to one of garrulity, thence to a state of melody, and finally deep slumber.

Wheely was awakened by a hand on his shoulder. He opened his eyes with difficulty. It was day-light but

the electric light of the compartment was still burning. The Indian woman was standing beside him, a stately figure with her lavender *sari* wrapped about her.

"This is Balipur Junction," she said in perfect English.

Then she turned to open the door. Three peons in flat green pugarees and shining brass breast plates held in place by green diagonal sashes entered the compartment and juggled with the woman's baggage. Wheely shook Dolan.

The two Americans hastily collected their belongings as the Indian woman descended between two long strips of cloth, a sort of cloth tunnel that had been stretched to hide a *purdah* woman from the eyes of the curiously vulgar. All about the place were men in green uniforms with clanking sabres, and at the end of the cloth tunnel was a large, fiercely bearded Indian with a flaming red turban piled high on his head. He wore a long, black alpaca coat, on the breast of which hung a single decoration, large and sparkling. There was an air of position and authority about this bearded gentleman, a brutal massivity to the head, a cool, calculating look in the eyes. He was evidently someone of importance in Balipur. As he came forward a few steps to meet the woman, there was a manner of ownership about him, a positive condescension. Suddenly he stopped and stared, for out of the compartment marked, LADIES ONLY, two men emerged somewhat unsteadily—one small, wiry, bandy-legged chap, and the other large and a trifle flabby. The two of them seemed to be getting badly entangled with the cloth of the *purdah* erected for the lady in lavender.

The bearded Indian with the red turban barked an order, and immediately two aides seized Dolan and

Wheely.

The Indian women started to say a word in explanation, but she was cut short by an angry roar from the study in red and black, who accompanied his shout by a swift, resounding slap across the face. The lady staggered back a step.



THE SIGNIFICANCE of the scene suddenly dawned upon Dolan and Wheely. They had been seized for violating the *purdah* of this woman, the woman had tried to say a word in their defence, and had taken it on the chin as a result. Their chivalry was challenge. Without a word between them, their common thought set them in motion simultaneously. Together they swung right and left, twisted loose from their stunned captors, and together sprang for the distinguished looking, bearded brute who had struck a woman. Together also they collapsed in adjacent heaps, as eleven green-coated guards pounced upon them from all angles, bore them to the ground, and by sheer weight of numbers subdued the American pair already struggling with a hangover.

Battered and crushed, Dolan and Wheely were bound, loaded into a covered cart hitched to two milk-white bullocks, and driven off. After ten hot, jolting minutes they were unloaded in front of a massive building bristling with towers and minarets, marched along a dingy corridor, and searched. They were pushed down a stairway, finally untied, and locked in a cell.

For three minutes after the door closed upon them, neither of the Americans spoke. Then Dolan burst forth with a long and picturesque page of vocabulary in which not one word was repeated and not one fit to print. When he had left off suffi-

cient steam, he came down to such calm talk as: "This certainly was a swell idear of yours. What's it all about? What did we do? Why? When do—"

"Kindly desist," said Doc Wheely. "Is it my fault that we land in the same compartment with a *purdah* lady and her husband comes to meet her?"

"Sure it's your fault," said Dolan. "This was all your idear. Better give our consul a tumble so he can square things for us."

Wheely laughed without humor.

"There isn't a U. S. Consul closer than Calcutta," he said. "Anyhow consuls are too busy writing reports on the jute crop and going to Government House teas. A couple of renegades like we are don't rate attention. All we can do is protest when we are released. They have confiscated our baggage. Our Scotch is in custody. They had no right to frisk us thus."

"Did they take everything off you?"

"Everything but one silver rupee. As a matter of fact, they got that too, but by deft manipulation and rubbing against one of our captors, I managed to get it back. I was once a conjurer's assistant—"

Dolan smiled for the first time since they left the train.

"Look what I saved," he chortled.

He pressed his right arm against his body. A faint, shrill buzzing resulted.

Doc Wheely beamed.

"The Wheely Equestrian Galvanic Battery!" he exclaimed. "And they didn't find it. I told you it was beyond detection. I was sure those stewards were tipped off. The battery fits snugly under the arm, the wiring is cleverly concealed in the sleeve, the—"

"It's about as much use to us here as that rupee of yours," interrupted

Dolan.

"Ah, an idea!" exclaimed Wheely, raising a stubby finger. "I can use the rupee to bribe the guard and find out approximately where we stand. As Voltaire once said, 'Money talks.'"

Wheely stepped to a tiny, nose-high barred opening in their prison door, and howled for the guard. He shouted in his best and most profane Hindustani for fifteen minutes. When he sat down to catch his breath, Dolan said:

"Gimme that rupee a minute. We'll give 'em the Call of the East."

He took the silver coin from Wheely and let it fall to the stone floor. It struck with a distinct metallic ring. He picked it up and was about to let it fall again when a face appeared at the barred window, —a dark face, with a dark and roving eye, which greedily sought the source of the financial sound he had just heard.

"I want to make a *bundobust* with you," said Wheely, taking the coin from Dolan and holding it up. "Answer my questions and the rupee is yours."

The dusky guard was only too glad to talk. Who was the whiskered gentleman in the red turban? That was Rai Bahadur, Prime Minister of Balipur. The lady in lavender was his wife. She had given the Prime Minister no end of trouble; she was too modern. She had come back from Calcutta without waiting for proper escort to be provided. How long would they be kept locked up? Oh, they would be given a hearing in due time. Not long. A week or so, perhaps. It was hard to say. Whenever the Prime Minister could get around to it. Right now he was very busy waiting for the Rajah to die. After that there would be the cremation, the coronation, and one thing and another. Oh,

they would be well taken care of. One meal a day, at least. The guard snatched the rupee and disappeared.

Danny Dolan swore for ten minutes straight.

Doc Wheely sat suddenly with his head in his hands.

Night fell, stifling, mosquito-laden. Warm, rancid smells drifted through a tiny opening high in the wall. The faint echo of shouts of bullock drivers, the wrangling of coolies, and the yells of street hawkers told of a day ending. The clash of arms, the tramp of feet told of a guard being mounted. Then came a calm in which the only sound was the mournful twanging of some bizarre stringed instrument. In the far distance jackals howled.



DANNY MUTTERED.

Wheely was silent in the dark. Suddenly they both started, sat up, tense, listening.

"Gentlemen."

The word was spoken in a soft feminine voice, hardly more than a whisper. The sound evidently came from the barred opening in the door. Dolan and Wheely were on their feet, moving toward the voice.

"I am your travelling companion of last night," the soft voice continued. "I don't know who you are, but you were chivalrous in my behalf today. I appreciate your gesture, and I cannot let you suffer on my account."

"Oh that's all right," murmured Doc Wheely gallantly. "I guess we'll get everything straightened out in a few days."

"Not at all," insisted the voice. "My husband Rai Bahadur, the Prime Minister, suspects you have come to Balipur to interfere in the succession to the throne. Originally he had you imprisoned on my account. He found papers in your lug-

gage that convinced him you were dangerous persons, likely to stand in his way. He will do away with you."

"We're Americans," interrupted Dolan. "He can't do anything."

"You do not know Rai Bahadur." A note of alarm crept into the soft voice. "He always has his way. He has shut up the Rajah in the Sandalwood Pavilion, across the *maidan* from us, and the old man is dying of sheer boredom—"

"What can you expect of a man who can't drink on account of the Koran," commented Wheely.

"The old man is really dying," the voice continued. "He's been in bed for weeks, fed up with everything. Rai Bahadur encourages him in his maladies. All this discord regarding the heir to the throne is Rai Bahadur's work. The old Rajah is much loved by the people, and he could settle the whole matter by choosing during his life time. The people would respect his choice. But Rai Bahadur keeps the old man secluded, and fosters strife between the Princess, hoping the British will find it necessary to intervene. He will convince the British that the only way to preserve peace would be to appoint some neutral party, an outsider. Rai Bahadur would be the very man. Rai Bahadur, as the new Rajah, would found his own dynasty—"

"My dear Madame," said Doc Wheely. "It is Providence that has sent us to you. You certainly want to be Ranee, which you would be if your husband became Rajah. We are just the men to help his cause."

"No," said the soft voice, a little sadly. "I am only Nazuk, the Prime Minister's No. 3 wife. I count for nothing. And you—you must escape tonight. If you do not, by dawn you will be quietly executed—secretly, in order not to cause complications. Rai Bahadur is an expert at

making people vanish without trace. He will probably have your throats cut, and drop you in an abandoned well. Or he will strangle you and bury you under the stone floor of this very cell—”

“Fine,” muttered Dolan. “A swell break.”

“I will help you escape,” said Nazuk. “Listen attentively to my directions. You are now in the dungeon of the main palace. When you leave this palace, you must continue past the mosque and the Sandalwood Pavilion where the Rajah is dying. Then turn and cross the railway tracks beyond the station. You will come upon a mud hut standing alone in the midst of a paddy field. In it lives an old man who always wears a yellow turban. He is a friend of mine, and has been informed to look out for you. He has a *jhutka* in which he will drive you to safety—”

“Madam,” began Doc Wheely, “we are indeed—”

“Listen carefully,” interrupted Nazuk. “I may have to run at any moment, and what I have to tell is important. Put your hand to the bars. There. You have it? Don’t let it drop when I let go. Good. That is a master key to the doors of the palace. But be sure you open only the right doors. One mistake, and you will never get out alive. Remember what I say. Follow this corridor to the left. When you come to the end, you will—”

She stopped abruptly. There was a slight sound, like the swish of silks. Then came a harsher sound, the hollow tap of boots on the stone floor of the corridor.

Dolan and Wheely listened anxiously.

The boots resounded ominously through the dark. There was no other sound. Nazuk had probably escaped safely.

A glow illuminated the ceiling of

the corridor. The footsteps hesitated outside the door of the cell. Dolan nudged Wheely. Flickering light shone through the bars as the guard raised his lantern and peered in. He saw the two prisoners in postures of sleep. Dolan snored with great realism. The light dimmed. Footsteps resounded again, growing fainter as the guard walked away.

Dolan kicked Wheely.

“Well, we got the key,” he said, “but we didn’t get the directions for usin’ it. What’s the dope now?”

“Perhaps she’ll come back,” said Wheely.

“We can’t wait too long,” said Dolan. “They start cuttin’ throats around here before dawn—”

They waited, however, in vain. Nazuk did not come back. After an anxious hour, Dolan again kicked Doc Wheely.

“Let’s start openin’ doors,” he said. “And what odds will you give me that we don’t get to that little mud hut in the paddy field?”

“I have been thinking,” said Wheely. “I have decided it would be wisest not to make for the hut.”

“You mean we wait here till the sore-throat squad comes around?”

“By no means,” said Wheely. “I mean that since we came here for a purpose, we should continue in that purpose. Since we can leave this dungeon, I think we should try to see the Rajah himself, or one of the Princes, and offer our services.”

“And get our throats cut?”

“My dear boy, we haven’t a *pice* in the world since I gave our last rupee to the guard. Your mother is ill. You should send her that thousand and go back yourself. And you haven’t the first idea of how to raise a ticket. As Voltaire said, ‘Only the brave deserve their fare.’ We must be intrepid, Dolan. We must beard the lion and gather some moss—”

"Okeh," said Dolan. "If you feel so full of courage, there's nothin' for me to do but help you use it up. What's the game?"

"First we should get out of this dungeon and make a fresh start."

Dolan felt for a key hole, carefully inserted the key Nazuk had given him, turned it. He listened, then pushed. Slowly the door swung back. Dolan caught Doc Wheely's sleeve and started stealthily down the dark corridor.

"She said 'to the left.' We're correct so far," whispered Wheely.

At the end of the hall, groping along, feeling the walls, they found two stairways, one to the right, the other left.

"Let's keep to the left," said Dolan.

"She said 'Open only the right doors," said Wheely.

"Flip a coin."

"What coin?"

"All right. I won't argue. Go right. I'll follow."



THEY CLIMBED the winding stairs to the right. At the top was a small landing upon which moonlight fell from a high, small window. The eerie light illuminated two massive doors, one on each side of the landing. Dolan pointed to one. Doc Wheely shook his head. Again Dolan yielded, put his key into the lock, turned it softly. He waited a few seconds, then applied his shoulder to the door. It opened silently a few inches, then creaked loudly. Dolan quickly pushed it full open, yanked Wheely in after him, then closed the door behind him. They stood listening, motionless, embarrassed by the noise of their own breathing, certain that their heart beats could be heard half a mile. After three tense minutes, they moved. Walking down

a short, dark passage they suddenly came out into a large hall, vaguely and luridly filled with filtered moonlight. They were half way across the hall when Dolan stopped and sniffed. A strange disturbing sweetness caressed his nostrils. He looked at Doc Wheely, who also seemed aware of the perfume. He could make out great beads of perspiration forming on Wheely's forehead, and saw Wheely's eyes wide with unpleasant amazement. Following Wheely's glance, he made out, beneath a sort of arcade that supported a balcony, a series of silken drapes. Then, looking closer he saw human forms, apparently female forms, sleeping on piles of rugs.

"Good Lord, Dolan!" said Doc Wheely in a horrified whisper. "Do you know where we are?"

"Looks like it might be a harem."

"We're in the *zenana*, which amounts to the same thing. It's the women's quarters, Dolan." Wheely seized Dolan's arm. "We'll have to get out in a hurry. If they find us here, they won't stop at cutting just our throats. Quick, back the way we came. It must have been the other door—as I said."

Dolan was about to exclaim "Like you said?" but he did not. Neither he nor Doc Wheely moved during at least five minutes. Both of them must have seen the same thing in the same moment. Another human figure, but unmistakably masculine, huge, shadowy, muscular, standing between them and the way they had come. His arms folded across his chest, he was turning his head slowly from side to side, taking in the entire perfumed panorama. Once he looked full in the direction of Dolan and Wheely. They happened to be standing in the shadow of a carved pillar, but to their terrified imaginations, they were as visible as if a dozen searchlights were

trained upon them. They ceased breathing until the muscular shadow silently slid out of sight. Then of one accord they turned and hastened quietly in the opposite direction.

They traversed the length of the perfumed hall successfully and passed into a room that was pitch black. Danny Dolan, who was leading, slowed down, groped cautiously. The darkness was thick, impenetrable, still somewhat fragrant. Dolan advanced a few steps at a time. He heard a noise and halted. It was a light, tinkling sound, as of water dripping into water. He reached out his hand where he thought Doc Wheely should be, but grasped emptiness. He moved his arm about. Still nothing.

"Doc!" he whispered.

"Right with you," came the answering whisper from an unexpected angle.

Then followed a scraping sound, a muttered oath, a resounding splash. In the adjoining room, a woman screamed.

"Goddamned *hammad*!" sputtered Wheely, puffing, gurgling, splashing. "I should have known! Why do they have to bathe in fountains instead of bath tubs?"

A light sprang into existence far down the hall. Another scream echoed. Women's voices buzzed. Someone shouted.

"Come on, Doc. Snap out of it. Here I am. Grab me."

Dolan groped his way to the edge of the pool, held out his hands, closed them in Wheely's wet grasp, hauled him out, dripping.

More lights appeared in the *zenana*. The confusion grew. The two Americans fled, leaving a trail of water and wet foot prints.

They came to a door. Dolan unlocked it, looked out into a court yard, saw torches flashing back and forth, heard men's voices. Dolan

closed the door. The noise of pursuit was louder.

"Make tracks!" prompted Dolan.

Doc Wheely made them, and so did Dolan. They followed a tortuous, dark corridor, found another winding stairway, climbed endless stairs three at a time, arrived breathless against a great iron-bound door. Dolan's key grated in the lock. The door opened on more darkness. They stepped in, and Dolan locked the door behind them. The sounds of the chase seemed far away and fainter. Their sense of security gradually returned. Dolan released a great sigh of relief.



"THAT WAS a narrow squeak!" he exclaimed.

"But we're safe!" breathed the panting Wheely. "As Voltaire said, 'I'd rather be safe than president.'"

"Yeah," said Dolan, "but for how long are we safe?"

"Not for long!" boomed a sepulchral voice that filled the darkness.

Danny Dolan jumped. Doc Wheely wilted. A light sputtered, then flared from a huge brass lantern. The two Americans found themselves staring into the dark bearded face and cruel eyes of Rai Bahadur. The Prime Minister snorted, then sneered as he saw the dismayed surprise written on the faces of his two unwilling guests.

"I'm a such of a which!" Dolan finally stammered.

"An honor, I am sure, to find ourselves in the luxurious apartments of the Prime Minister," said Doc Wheely, still pale, but rapidly regaining his composure. He bowed with mock politeness, then straightened up, staring at something in a corner of the room. An angry frown creased his forehead. "Our whisky!" he exclaimed. "So this is what be-

came of our special blended Scotch! Of all the nerve!"

But Dolan did not follow Doc Wheely's outraged glance. He was watching Rai Bahadur. The bearded Indian was moving toward a small inlaid table, on the nacre top of which a revolver gleamed. Dolan leaped toward the weapon.

The Indian's brown hand closed on the gun first, but Dolan hung on too.

Rai Bahadur wrenched, struggled, then kicked Dolan in the shins. Dolan stuck, outweighed, overtopped, overpowered. He wondered vaguely what Wheely was doing as Rai Bahadur swung him off his feet and knocked his head against the wall. Dolan reached out with his free hand and grasped Rai Bahadur's neck, sinking the tiny metal point of an insulated ring that made up an important contact in the system of the Wheely Equestrian Galvanic Battery. There was a shrill, faint buzzing.

A muscular contraction like a convulsion ran through the Prime Minister. He howled. He flung out his arms. The pistol went spinning across the room. Then the Indian grabbed Dolan again.

Dolan again got a firm hold on bare flesh, and again the buzzing sound indicated that the Wheely battery was getting into action. Rai Bahadur howled louder. Dolan clung like a leech. Rai Bahadur yelled, writhed, twisted, then sat down abruptly, all a-quiver.

"Hassan! Yusuf!" Rama Singh!" he shouted.

A muffled shout and the tread of feet answered.

Doc Wheely grabbed Dolan.

"Come on!" he cried. "He's yelling for his guard. Let's get out. Here's a way."

Wheely disappeared through a door to a balcony. Dolan was about

to follow when he felt his right foot imprisoned, as in a trap. He turned his head to see a bobbed-haired Pathan giant stooping to yank his feet out from under him. The nether tip of Dolan's spinal column described a swift arc, ending with a thud on the floor. The Pathan giant then twisted his fingers in Dolan's hair, and was about to lift him thus when Dolan reached out and grabbed his nose.

There was an insistent buzzing, followed by much howling and what Dolan judged to be Pushtu curses. The Pathan giant released his double hold. Dolan scrambled to his feet and dashed after Wheely.

The two Americans got from balcony to roof with an agility that Dolan had not suspected Doc Wheely possessed. They wound in and out among towers and minarets to the other side, where they halted. Below, with a rumble of drums and clanging of gongs, the Balipur Palace Guards were being mustered. Green uniforms and green turbans formed patterns. Orange torch lights flashed on rows of fixed bayonets. Wheely nudged Dolan.

"Have a drink," he said. "While you were throwing the Bahadur, I managed, by deft manipulation, to get back two bottles of our Scotch from that crooked Prime Minister. I also borrowed a diamond-studded corkscrew—"

They had a drink. They went to the other side of the roof, and had another. They decided not to stay because the minaret of the mosque overlooked them; it was nearly dawn; and at dawn the *muezzin*, mounting the minaret to call the faithful to prayer, would be able to look full upon the fugitives. They returned to the original side, and had another drink. By this time they were so full of confidence that they boldly decided to get to the ground

and try to make the hut in the paddy field Nazuk had described to them.

By a miracle they got to the ground without detection. By another miracle they lay in a shadow, unseen while detachments of the guard passed within a few yards. After a half an hour and a few more drinks, by a third miracle they succeeded in sneaking past the mosque and starting for the Sandalwood Pavilion. At this point miracles ceased. Just before they reached the cover of the pavillion; they heard a yell behind them.

Without turning, they speeded their steps. Something whizzed past Dolan's head.

Directly before them, two guards came around the corner of the Sandalwood Pavilion, silhouetted against the paling sky.



THE TWO Americans dropped to the ground, instinctively rolling closer to the building. Danny Dolan, in fact, rolled into a small aperture at foundation level, and wriggled underneath the pavilion. Doc Wheely tried to follow, stuck half way, grunted, and was dragged through by Dolan.

They found themselves in some sort of basement, dark, with barely enough room to stand upright. They saw lights pass the hole by which they had entered, and wondered if they had been observed.

"They musta seen us," said Dolan. "Funny they don't follow."

"Not at all funny," said Doc Wheely, feeling various fresh abrasions.

After much stumbling and groping, they came upon a stairway that led to a locked door. Dolan applied Nazuk's pass key and found it fit. Cautiously he swung the door open. Wheely followed him into a large hall made of polished, fragrant red

sandalwood. The place seemed deserted.

They walked about, trying doors. All inside doors they could open, and found empty rooms. All outside doors were bolted from without. Dolan swore pessimistically.

"Let us reconnoiter," said Wheely.

They climbed to the second story, still meeting no one. They found a series of marble lattices on this story through which they could look out. The sights they saw were far from reassuring.

Daylight had come. The *muezzin* was droning his call to prayer from the minaret of the mosque. The *maidan* between the palace and the pavilion was alive with people, many of them soldiers. A cordon of guards now extended completely around the pavilion. There seemed little doubt but that the presence of the two Americans in the pavilion was known.

A green-turbaned battalion was drawn up in formation before the Sandalwood Pavilion. A cannon boomed. Anxiously Dolan and Wheely watched two small field pieces firing in alternation until twenty-one guns had been rung up. More people came swarming to the *maidan*. When the square was full, Rai Bahadur rode into the crowd, astride a black horse, red turban flaming, sabre flashing, decorations gleaming upon his breast. Trumpets blared.

"My friends," said Rai Bahadur in stentorian tones. "It is my painful duty to inform you that your revered ruler, His Highness the Rajah of Balipur, is dead. His Highness has just passed away in the Sandalwood Pavilion, where he has been ill for so long."

A murmur ran through the crowd. "No wonder this joint looks dead," said Dolan. "We're the only live ones in it. And a stiff upstairs—"

"Listen," said Wheely.

"My friends," Rai Bahadur was saying. "What is the traditional funeral pyre for a great prince of India? A fire of sandalwood, is it not? What could be more appropriate, then, than that our late and dearly beloved Rajah be cremated in his own Sandalwood Pavilion, that the edifice which he himself erected, in which he ruled, and in which he died, perish with his earthly body, rising to heaven with him in the flames? What could make a more magnificent pyre?"

Again a murmur ran through the crowd.

"I see you approve," said Rai Bahadur. "Go then, seek fuel, return here with your tinder and kindling. I will apply the torch—"

"Our goose is cooked," mumbled Dolan.

"Roasted is the verb," suggested Wheely.

"Let's kick out these marble screens and make a break for it before they set us afire."

Doc Wheely shook his head. He pointed across the way. In two windows sat riflemen with what appeared to be silencers attached to the muzzles of their guns. Rai Bahadur had thought of the possibilities of just such a break.

"Then you think the Prime Ribs knows we're here?"

"Certainly," said Wheely. "He's just burning two birds with one stove, as Voltaire said."

"And we're gonna take it sittin'?"

"Indeed not," exclaimed Wheely. "I have a plan of salvation. If the Rajah lies dead in his chamber above, as our friend the Prime Minister has announced, why shouldn't you and I emulate the Cid?"

"Sid who?"

"The Cid," Wheely corrected. "The great Campeador. The Spanish hero

who was potent even after death, whose men strapped his dead body to his horse, sending him into the fray at the head of his army, routing the enemy by his mere presence —"

"Where we gonna find a horse?" demanded Dolan.

"Don't misunderstand. We will merely prop up the late Rajah, walk him to a balcony between us, and present the impression that he is alive and in earnest conversation with us— That ought to hold up the fireworks for a while, and give us a breathing spell."

Dolan was not particularly enthusiastic, but could think of nothing better. The two Americans continued opening doors, seeking the death chamber. They found nothing but deserted rooms, an air of abandonment that confirmed Nazuk's statement that the old Rajah had been left in complete isolation to die of boredom.

They finally found the Rajah in a room on the third floor. He was lying on a wide couch, his eyes staring into space. His white hair and beard stood out in startling contrast to his brown, wrinkled skin. His eyes, however, were not the dull glass eyes of a corpse, nor were his limbs fixed in that grotesque rigor of death. In fact, when Dolan took a step forward, the Rajah turned his head.



DOLAN STOPPED short. Wheely bumped him from the rear. The first reaction of the two was one of horror. Then, gradually, as the confused noises of Rai Bahadur's preparations on the *maidan* seeped into the room, they realized the full import of the situation. Rai Bahadur, with a flaming brand, was thus expecting to rid

himself at once of two meddlesome Americans, and the old Rajah, the one obstacle in his ambitious path to glory—

"Your Highness!" shouted Doc Wheely, going quickly to the Rajah's side, and salaaming in what he thought to be royal manner. "You have been betrayed! Your life is in danger!"

The Rajah listlessly transferred his glance to Wheely, but said nothing. Although alive, he did not seem to have any particular interest in life. He was not in the least upset by the prospect of danger. The sound of Wheely's voice, however, did arouse a burly Pathan guard who had been slumbering peacefully at the foot of the Rajah's couch.

The guard towered into action. He stretched a long arm to seize Danny Dolan by the seat of the pants, preparatory to tossing him through the door. Dolan twisted himself half around and smacked the guard on the chin. The guard dropped him, grunted, then grappled with the jockey. The Wheely Equestrian Galvanic Battery buzzed into usefulness. Dolan grasped the Pathan's wrists, and the Pathan leaped backwards, howling, executing a complete if somewhat ragged somersault.

The aged Rajah raised himself on one elbow to watch. He was indifferent to being betrayed, but intrigued by the victory of the diminutive, bandy-legged Dolan over the huge, hulking Pathan guard. With a slight movement of his head the Rajah summoned Wheely to ask by what magic the little chap was able to throw a man three times his size.

Wheely saw the Pathan crumpled in a corner, dazed and humiliated, rubbing his wrists. He saw flaming torches passing under the windows of the Sandalwood Pavilion. He looked at the Rajah. And at that

moment inspiration came to the ex-veterinary.

"Your Highness," said Wheely, "my friend gets his strength from a medicine prepared from my own formula. I have brought you some. Try it. It will restore your lost years."

From his hip pocket Wheely extracted a bottle of Scotch that he had salvaged from the Prime Minister's apartments. He tendered the bottle ceremoniously, praying that the Rajah had been a strict Moham-medan insofar as the Volstead clause in the Koran was concerned, and would thus be unable to recognize the exact nature of the remedy. If he suspected what it was—

"It burns," said the Rajah.

"A good sign, Your Highness. The remedy is acting. Another dose?"

A wisp of smoke floated into the room as Doc Wheely was administering to the Rajah. Danny Dolan was lying on his stomach on a balcony, watching the milling crowd in the *maidan*. Soldiers aided the peasants to pile fuel against the pavilion. Somewhere fire had been applied. Dolan wriggled back into the room and stood.

"They're gonna slip us the works in two shakes," said Dolan. "The bonfires are started. What's our move?"

"Have another dose, Your Highness," Wheely was saying.

When the Rajah handed back the bottle, there was a beautiful smile on his wrinkled face. His eyes shone with new light. He sat up.

"Wonderful!" he said.

"He's spiffed already," murmured Wheely to Dolan. "It's surprising what a little Scotch can do to a virgin stomach."

"Wonderful!" repeated the Rajah. "I haven't felt as spry in many years."

"You should show yourself to your

people," said Doc Wheely. "They are anxious about the outcome of the treatment. Many are gathered in the *maidan*, hoping for a glimpse of their beloved ruler they have not seen for months."

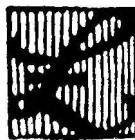
"Good idea," said the Rajah. "I am feeling in excellent health. We will celebrate. Naggar! Yusuf! Achmed!"

The recent victim of the Wheely Battery climbed out of his corner to help the Rajah to his feet. Cackling gleefully, garrulous and a trifle unsteady, the aged ruler toddled between the guard and Doc Wheely. Danny Dolan threw back the doors to the balcony.

As the Rajah appeared on the balcony, a surprised murmur arose from the crowd. The murmur grew to a roar, which in turn exploded into a ragged cheer. The crowd became a kaleidoscope of multicolored turbans, shifting, moving excitedly under a veil of smoke. Men ran to snatch burning brands from the foundations of the Sandalwood Pavilion, to scatter the newly-lighted fires, to stamp on the flaming, fuming faggots. The cremation was postponed.

The Rajah seemed highly pleased with the demonstration. In his pleasant befuddlement he probably interpreted the showers of sparks resulting from the eclipse of the fires, as some sort of fireworks, some new brand of *Dewali* festival. He waved his arms loosely and shouted in a voice that wavered and cracked. There was life in his movements. There was life in his eyes.

He made a somewhat drunken speech about having been snatched from the jaws of death by a *pardesi* remedy. For the miracle, he was about to reward these two foreign gentlemen who came from afar to cure him—



WHILE THE Rajah was speaking, the red turban and black beard of Rai Bahadur could be seen pushing through the crowd, making for the Sandalwood Pavilion. Doc Wheely saw the Prime Minister. He also saw the snipers disappear from the windows of the palace opposite. He thought he had recognized the half-veiled face of Nazuk at the windows too, but of that he could not be sure.

The Rajah tottered back into the room, mumbling something about more medicine. He let his arm slip from around Doc Wheely's neck and dropped back to his couch.

At the same moment Rai Bahadur burst into the room, his eyes blazing menace and indignation. He saluted briefly, then stepped aside to allow the entrance of a dozen men bearing the trappings of monarchy—green-coated aides with glittering sabres, uniformed flunkies bearing silver fly-whisks, many-tiered golden umbrellas, brocaded sunshades, jewelled spears—symbols of oriental royalty.

"My homage and congratulations on your recovery," said the Prime Minister coldly.

The Rajah hiccupped, made a careless gesture, then began fumbling in the voluminous folds of his robes.

"I have a little gift for these friends who have brought me a miraculous remedy," said the Rajah producing a leather bag. "It is only ten thousand rupees. Tell them I will do better later, when I will have a formal levee—"

"I will attend to that," said Rai Bahadur eagerly. "Let me take the money—"

Dolan and Wheely looked suddenly forlorn as they saw the leather bag pass into the hands of their bearded

nemesis. Rai Bahadur saw their faces change. He sneered.

"And now, Your Highness," he said. "Let me tell you something of these men you were about to reward. Instead of men of medicine, they are vulgar adventurers. Last night they violated the sanctity of the *zenana*. Surprised, they fled. Your Highness surely remembers the penalty for such an offense—"

"But their remedy," insisted the Rajah. "Their remedy is real. It has given me new life. It deserves recompense—"

Rai Bahadur approached the aged man, sniffed at his breath, smiled scornfully.

"These men deserve death," he snorted. "They have tricked Your Highness into violating the edicts of the Koran. They have forced you to drink intoxicating liquor, which the Prophet forbids. Their famous remedy is nothing more than the *pardesi's* infamous whisky!"

"Whisky!" squeaked the Rajah, sitting up very straight.

"I swear it by the Sacred Tomb of Ali at Karbala!" Rai Bahadur declared.

The Rajah made a wry face, as though to rid his mouth of a dark brown taste. He said nothing, but Dolan and Wheely knew by his expression that their cause was lost. They looked at each other.

"Seize them!" ordered Rai Bahadur.

"The Wheely Equestrian Galvanic Battery will get us out of this," Wheely murmured to Dolan. "You start the fight, and I'll occupy myself with strategy—"

Wheely edged toward the bearded Prime Minister as a green-coated guard grabbed Dolan.

"To hell with strategy!" yelled Danny Dolan, as he found himself sprawling on the floor with a giant bending over him. "Your damned

battery's run down. I can't get a buzz out of it!"

Then he kicked his guard in the stomach and the fight started.

Heavy teak furniture whirled through the air. Dolan was on his feet, a windmill, a threshing machine, a buzz-saw combined. Fists flew, thumped, bled. Heads bumped. Wood splintered. Feet thudded, scraped, kicked, caught in draperies, ripped them to shreds. Dolan saw that Wheely had abandoned strategy for action, moved toward him. The two Americans, hopelessly beset, fought like a dozen demons, grimacing, swinging, punching, clawing.

Rai Bahadur extricated himself from the *mêlée* and stood off, revolver in hand, waiting for a clear shot at one of the Americans.

The combatants seemed eternally mixed, white arms and brown torsos, shreds of green uniforms, turbans, white heads, brown legs, fists, feet, flashing, weaving, smashing, still entangled, always at grips.

Suddenly a shot cracked.

Danny Dolan groaned, faltered, pitched forward.

Doc Wheely, gaining strength from desperation, picked up the Rajah's couch, dumped the whisky-drowsy ruler to the floor, hurled the heavy piece of furniture across the room, pinned five men under it. He followed it with a barrage of three splintered chairs and a brass pot in quick succession. The royal silver fly-whisk hit the Prime Minister.

Wheely stooped, picked up Dolan, slung him over one shoulder, and ran faster than he had ever imagined he could run.

Another shot cracked. Then another.

Wheely was in the stairway, stumbling, catching himself. He was outside, his back bent beneath the weight of Dolan's inert body. He was pushing through a bewildered,

curious mob. He was running. He was clear of the crowd. He turned a corner and nearly collided with a covered *jhutka*, beside which an old man with a yellow turban was stopped, doing something to a wheel. Wheely pulled up short, staring at the yellow turban. It may have been an accident that this *jhutka* was parked here, and again— No, it wasn't an accident. That was certainly Nazuk he had seen in the palace window. He gently laid Dolan inside the covered vehicle, climbed in, and lowered the rear flap. Without a word the old man in the yellow turban mounted the front end and started the cart jolting across the fields.

As the *jhutka* jerked and bumped along, Doc Wheely bent over Dolan to ascertain the amount of damage.

"I'm a such of a which!" he murmured, as he cut away the jockey's bloody shirt. "That shot busted hell out of the battery mechanism!"

Danny Dolan opened his eyes.

"Thank God!" he said. "That buz-

zer was the jinx. We come down here to collect a little gold, and all I collect is lead. I guess the old lady won't get that grand after all."

"Let's see," said Doc Wheely, calculating. "One grand, that's three thousand rupees. Oh, easily. You can send her the grand and there will still be two thousand rupees left of your share. That will buy you a steamship ticket—"

"Whaddya mean, my share?"

"Your share of the ten thousand rupees the Rajah gave us," said Doc Wheely blandly.

Dolan laughed bitterly.

"Don't joke!" groaned Dolan. "Don't joke about sacred subjects! We really deserved that jack. After all, we really saved the old Rajah's skin for him. And to think we damned near had ten thousand dibs!"

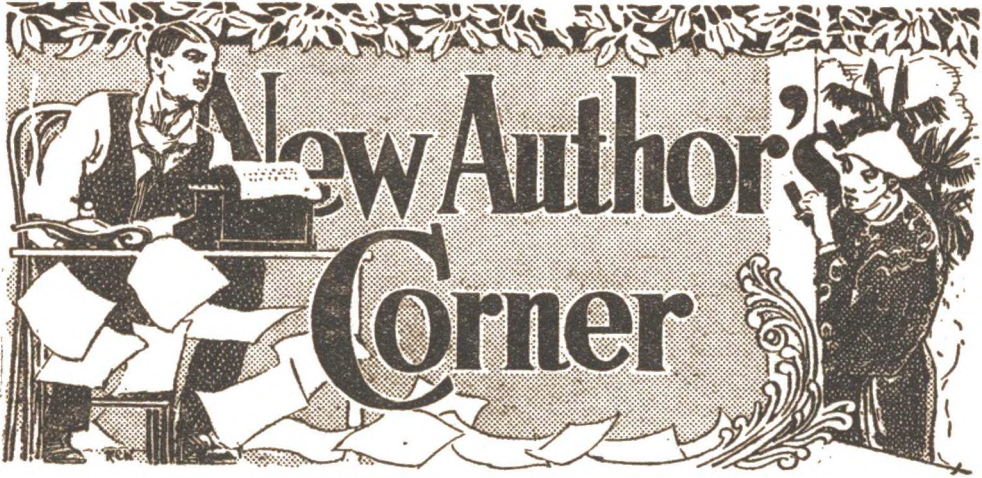
"Damned near? We damned well got it!" said Doc Wheely. "By deft manipulation I lifted it back from that crooked Prime Minister when the fight started. And, as Voltaire said, 'He who lifts last, lifts best.'"

King of Siam Coming to New York

King Prajadhipok of Siam, whose visit to this country was announced several weeks ago, will arrive in Vancouver in April, it was learned today.

The King will be accompanied by Queen Rambai, her parents, the Prince and Princess Svasti, and a retinue of fourteen or more persons. It is believed he will travel incognito to a residence he has selected in New York City.

The King's principal purpose in coming to America is to have an eye affliction treated. It was understood, however, that he will make a formal visit to Washington, plans for which are under discussion between representatives of the State Department and Prince Amoradat Kridakara, Siamese Minister to this country.



This is the fourth story of what we hope will be a long series of yarns by new authors who have never before appeared in print. We would appreciate our readers' opinions and comments regarding this department.—THE EDITOR.

A Sea Going Ghost

by

Captain Walter Henderson

A Harrowing Tale of
The South Pacific



THE CORONA was one of a fleet of six vessels owned and operated by G. W. Carter of San Francisco. She displaced two thousand tons and was powered with a Diesel engine that gave her a speed of five knots an hour, thus doing away with tug boats and calms.

At the time this story begins we were two days out from Newcastle, N. S. W. with a cargo of coal bound for Frisco.

I was sailmaker and had the nights in, as did the bos'n for we worked all day. So, you can't blame me if I growled some when an ordinary seaman came aft and told us that the mate had ordered us out on

deck to take all sail off her because he was going to start the engine.

I was ordered to take some men from each watch and handle the mizzen mast, so I got six men and worked at the foot of the main mast hauling on the crojack braces. The second mate was at the main braces, all of us being on the bridge amidships.

Suddenly I heard the second mate let out a sharp cry, then the rest of his watch started to yell, and I turned to see what was wrong. There, on the main yard arm, was a glowing face, that seemed to weave to and fro. As I watched spellbound, agonizing shrieks pierced the darkness of the night. It froze the marrow in my bones and sent cold shiv-

ers up and down my spine. Like an Indian war whoop it was, blood curdling, piercing and weird.

Then I saw Mr. Carter the owner, and the skipper start shooting at the gruesome face. Strange to say I counted the shots and even noticed that two different guns were being fired. I noted distinctly the sharp crack of an automatic and the duller roar of a forty-five.

Then, with a last peal of mocking laughter the face seemed to burst and fade out. Silence followed. Had it not been for the slap of sails against the mast and rigging, and the creaking of the yards as they swung with slack braces, you would not have known there was a soul aboard ship. But almost immediately another face appeared on the fore yard arm, and the dank salt air fairly vibrated with the same gruesome cries and hideous laughter. And a voice, shrill and piercing issued forth.

"Carter," the voice wailed. "You murderer! I am on your trail. Don't think that you can escape. We are going to avenge those who you killed because of your lust for gold."

Carter stood silently on the bridge.

"I am the father of your murdered wife and her sister," the voice wailed on in dreary monotone.

"And I," came another voice from the crojack yard over my head. "I am Paul Ingram whom you killed because I tried to help them. You cannot escape our vengeance. We will follow you even to your grave. Staying at sea will not help you as you can well see, for even here we have you at our mercy."

Apparently the guns were emptied for no more shots blasted the eerie stillness of the night. The faces finally faded away, and the derisive laughter died away in the distance.

By this time the whole ship was in commotion. All hands gathered together on the bridge. When Haywood, the mate, with his second

ordered us aloft to stow the clued up sails, I was standing with the rest of the crew. They flatly refused to go aloft. Then I could see that the bos'n was as scared as I was, for he stood silently by while the mates tried to bluster it out. After some frightful seconds a seaman spoke up.

"If you two are game to lead the way, we might try." The rest of the crew joined in, daring the mates to lead us aloft. Instead, they slunk away. It was a good thing there was no wind, or our sails would have been blown away for not a man aboard was game to go aloft.

The bos'n and I walked to windward with the mate while the second went to tell the engineer to start the engines. We were of the after guard and had to show that, even if we were scared, we were still with it.



CARTER AND the Captain stood forward of the main rigging. The mate and I were abaft it, when there came screams from aft and a patter of running feet along the decks.

The second mate, followed by the two engineers, came bounding up the after ladder onto the bridge. All three rushed up to where the captain and Carter stood. Scofield reported that he had given order as directed, to start the engines.

They ran smoothly for a minute or so. Then a voice issued from the cylinder heads. It seemed to speak in cadence with the stroke of the pistons: "I will grind your bones! I will grind your bones!" Louder and louder it came as he watched. Then, when the engines were stopped, it faded away with a rollicking peal of laughter and final shriek.

Carter seemed to be the only one that had not lost his head as he

stood there on the bridge listening. Yet, he was the one threatened. He stood calm and cool as a cucumber, as though it was a report of work well done, not a threat on his life. When the second mate had finished his report, he snapped at him:

"Aw, go to hell!" You are like a lot of blubbing kids." Then he turned to Captain Holt. "Have you lost your head, too?" he asked. "Can't you and those so called *hard-case* mates of yours get a crew of damned sailors to follow your orders? Try again and get those sails off her, or the yards braced up to catch what little wind there is. Damn me, if ever I saw such an after guard!" With the final words he jerked open the chart house door and went below.

Captain Holt called us all to the windward and informed us in no uncertain words that he would log every one a month's pay if we didn't do as we were ordered, and further pointed out that he would charge us with mutiny if we continued to refuse. But, he was interrupted by the cries of the steward as he came rushing pell mell from the cabin.

"Captain, save me!" he cried. "Carter is mad. He shot at me. And I saw a big Indian walking in the cabin. He has feathers on his head and an axe in his hand. He walks through doors that are locked and the doors don't open. I saw it, Captain. I saw him. Save Mrs. Carter. She is there in the cabin with the savage. I heard her scream as I ran out."

Captain Holt started for the door of the chart house. The mate followed with drawn gun in hand. Carter opened it and held up his hand.

"Call all hands aft," he said. "No more of this damned nonsense! Listen to me. I want you to understand that this foolishness is going to stop right now. One of you

started this and I vow that I'll find out who it is, by God! It looks like there is a ghost aboard this ship, but ghost or no ghost, the ship's work will be done.

"Captain, it's up to you and the mates. Drive hell out of them. Make them forget ghosts or I will send a few of them to make some brand new ghosts. Now get the hell out of this and show me you have some guts."

A ringing laugh sounded behind him. He spun around on his heel with gun in hand, but there was nothing there.

Silently, he opened the chart house door and went below.

Apparently the captain had decided to wait until daylight, for he gave no more orders; and the ship drifted in a flat calm, while we snatched what sleep we could on the main hatch.

When daylight came and the cook passed out hot coffee it put new life in all of us, so we turned to with a will and set the sails we had clued up the night before. A fair wind had sprung up and we had no more visits from the ghost while it lasted.

Then, on the third day it died out again, but we had sighted The Three Kings off the north island of New Zealand, and all hands had forgotten the ghosts for we had not seen or heard anything of them since the wind sprang up.

I was sitting on the poop sewing an old staysail, when on turning to spit over the side, I saw two sharks swimming alongside. I called the captain's attention to them. Carter, who was on deck with him, suggested trying to get one.

Captain Holt ordered me to get the hook and line from the sail locker and the steward to get some pork for bait.

As soon as the hook was dropped into the water, the smaller of the two sharks made a snap at it and

was hooked. Captain Holt called the bos'n and we soon had it on deck and unhooked. Carter then started angling for the other one.

The steward stood near me at the rail and seemed to be trying to say something as he pointed to the shark that was still in the water. He seemed to choke and sputter. I was going to ask what was wrong, but thought better of it and looked at the shark. It would swim up to the bait, smell it, then turn on its back, opening and shutting its jaws as though laughing at us. Then, as a stream of bubbles issued from its mouth, a scream rang out, and as it turned on its back again, a voice growled:

"You can catch the females, Carter, but I am waiting to grind you between my jaws. You low-down scoundrel, you are doomed!"

Carter drew his revolver and emptied it at the shark, but it only swam around a few times, peals of laughter following it, and when it swam away the laughter died out.

Carter stood there, a look of rage on his face, and stared from one to the other of us. I am sure he saw fear on all our faces. Fear not only of the ghostly voices, but of the gun that he now stood reloading. I could see madness in his eyes.

Then the Captain stepped into the breach.



"START THOSE engines," he roared. "Get that shark overboard and wash down the deck. Haywood get all hands on deck and take the sails off her."

The sails were taken in and we eased along at a leisurely five knots an hour with the Diesel going.

All hands were kept on the jump the entire day so we had no time to talk of the mystery of the ship, or of the man who owned her, and who now was being followed by a

curse, or haunted ghost of the past. But nothing can stop tongues from wagging in the dog watch. I went forward to the fore hatch, in the second dog watch, and mingled with the crew. Weird tales of ghost ships were the topics of conversation.

As one bell was struck—a quarter to eight—a screech came from the cabin and Mrs. Carter came running out on deck screaming that an Indian was attacking her husband. The Captain, who was on the deck at the time, took her in his arms as she poured out her tale, and we all stood around listening.

She said she went to her husband's door to ask him something. On opening it she saw an Indian all dressed in war paint with feathers in his long hair, and a knife in his hand, bending over him as he lay in his berth. "Oh, Captain, save him, do something," she pleaded.

When she finished her story, voices came from her cabin. You could hear Carter's as if in an argument with another, then came six shots, and on deck it sounded like women's voices mingled with men's, and shrill laughs as well as shrieks rang out.

Then Carter came running on deck, his pajamas were torn and blood poured from a cut on his forehead. He came across the deck to his wife who was still clinging to the Captain's arm. Taking her by the arm he spoke.

"You must have been dreaming, dear. There was no Indian down there. The steward and I looked the place over well."

"Oh, George, you are safe—he did not kill you," she sobbed and rushed into his arms. "I was so frightened. What is all the screaming about? Are there other people aboard, and do they fight among themselves?"

Carter gave a grim laugh. "Oh, no, my dear. That was only the sailors that you heard. Come, let

us go below again." As he entered the cabin door, he called out to the Captain: "See that there is no more noise on deck, Captain Holt."

The Captain, taking his cue to try and reassure Mrs. Carter, answered: "Very good, Sir. Shall I set the sails again? I see there is a nice breeze coming from the south now."

"Do so," gruffly answered Carter.

Then it was work, believe me. Haywood, who had the name of being a bruiser, acted up to it now. He was known as a kicker and it was his boast that he could make a man turn a back somersault by kicking him under the chin—and I believed him.

There was no let up, Scofield even joined him and they laid about them with hand and foot. Even the steward was pressed into service on the fore and main, both working with the rest of us. It was drizzling rain, yet we were not allowed to go and get our oil skins on until all the sails were set.

We had just finished coiling down the running gear, and some had lit their pipes, when I heard the voice of Haywood.

"Oh, good God!" Look! They have come back and are climbing all over us."

One of the faces seemed to pick out Haywood. "Haywood," it shrieked, "you have kicked your last sailor. Prepare to meet your Maker."

Haywood screamed, then ran into his cabin. I looked aloft as he had said. There were faces on nearly every yard on the main, and some on the fore mast as well. And voices came from first one, then the other, calling to Carter, to the Captain, and even to Scofield. Cursing, laughing, screaming, blood curdling screeches rang from one end of the ship to the other.

I did not blame the steward who

was at the lee rail with his head down, while sobs of fear were shaking his body. I was scared myself.

The officers, however, did not stand idle.

Haywood had come on deck with a revolver, and started firing at the faces with Carter and the others. Face after face burst and some blew away with the wind, their laughter fading away with them, until only one remained fast to the fore-top-gallant yard arm.

Try as they would, no one seemed able to hit it, and it continued to revile them as a cowardly lot of scoundrels, until finally it, too, sailed away down wind, with a last parting peal of eerie laughter.

To make matters worse, I heard the steward scream, and upon turning, saw him struggling with one of those terrible faces in the lee scuppers. I distinctly saw him clutching it, but he seemed to grasp only thin air, and yelled for help all the time.

I am ashamed to say it, but I was afraid to go to his assistance. The bos'n did finally go to help him, but he, too, soon cried out as though he were being cut to pieces.



FINALLY, I did pluck up courage enough to try and help, but as I approached the ghost face gave one final scream and went soaring away to leeward. I was quaking with fear as I helped the bos'n and steward to their feet. I could see they were both shaking with fear as they told the captain of the strength of the ghostly form they had struggled with. And they showed the bruises and scratches on their faces. We all stood shivering, too. At last the Captain ordered the crew forward and took them into the cabin where I saw him dress their wounded faces.

When dawn broke, overcast and

cloudy, we could see on our lee the grim rocks of The Three Kings, not five miles away. The ship was drifting towards them at the rate of three miles an hour.

Is it to be wondered at that Captain Holt met us at the break of the bridge when we came aft at four bells? I had been made spokesman, yet it was with a very mild manner that I spoke my piece.

"Captain," I said. "We have all talked this thing over and have decided, that if the ship is not turned back at once and headed for Auckland, New Zealand, we will not do another stroke of work aboard her. And," I added in a firmer voice, "we will abandon ship and take to the boats if you refuse to do as we ask."

He tried to tell us that we would be charged with mutiny and jailed on arrival at port. He was making a sputtering speech when Carter came on deck and stepping over to the rail, held up his hand for silence. Everyone was talking at once.

"Men," he said. "Don't you know that you will be the joke of the world if you do as you say you are going to do?" Who is going to believe a lot of rot about ghosts. Why the police will think we are all crazy aboard here."

While he was talking, I noticed the steward emptying a pail of slop over the side and stand listening. As it was still calm, the slop drew a number of sea gulls and molly hawks and one great albatross was among them. He did not drop into the water as the others did, but soared overhead as if watching the gathering on deck.

Then a peal of laughter rolled from the albatross and a voice said:

"Oh, you damned liar. Do you think you can bluff the whole world? We will get you, you cur, you will hang!"

Carter whipped out his gun and

fired at it, but the bird wheeled away with another screaming laugh, unhurt. Shot after shot Carter fired after it, and we saw the feathers fly as he hit it once, yet its laugh could still be heard as it faded away in the blue.

When Carter turned to face us again his expression had changed. His face was drawn and haggard, and his hair, which only the day before had been black, black as a raven's wing, was now snow white; and his tall, broad-shouldered form stooped as he stood leaning on the rail.

Captain Holt, too, had changed. His face was pale and I saw his lips tremble as he spoke to Haywood, the mate. He, also, seemed to be afraid. He kept glancing about as though expecting the visitors of the night before to return any minute.

Then, taking heart, I again spoke up and repeated our demands. The Captain swore and turned to Carter.

"Mr. Carter, I, as master of this ship, join with the mates and crew. I have come to the conclusion that we should put into Auckland and have this mystery solved. Let the New Zealand authorities decide whether the ship is haunted or manned by a lot of lunatics! I feel like another night such as last night will make me a raving maniac."

Carter straightened up and looked with fear at the rocky coast under our lee, then up aloft at the flapping sails. Then he turned about and snapped: "Go to hell! You pack of yelping curs! Turn her back I will be glad to get rid of you."

Then we saw the chart house door open behind him. Mrs. Carter came out leaning on the arm of the steward. The look of horror she gave Carter, as she passed around him to the side of the Captain, I shall never forget. But, receiving a reassuring pat on the shoulder from the stew-

ard, she held up her hand and pointing to Carter:

"Oh, you cold-blooded murderer! I know all about your crimes. Your other wife, and her sister Ruth, have told me all. They, with their father, came to me in my cabin and told me how you had robbed and then killed them when you thought their friend Paul Ingram had found you out. And then you killed him, too.

"Oh, you smooth-tongued scoundrel. I demand that you put me ashore at once, even if it be only on those rocks over yonder." She pointed to The Three Kings now not more than two short miles away.

Captain Holt stepped up to Carter.

"Mr. Carter," he said coldly, "I will trouble you for that revolver."

Without a word Carter passed it to him and staggered into the chart house and below to his cabin. The Captain then ordered the mate and bos'n to guard his door. Reloading the revolver he passed it to the bos'n saying:

"Don't hesitate to shoot if he tries anything, bos'n."

He then assisted the now fainting woman to a settee in the chart house where the steward bathed her head with a wet towel. When he returned he ordered all sails set and the ship put about, adding so we all could hear:

"We are heading for New Zealand and Justice."

Cheerfully we sprang to the braces and halyards. And the sheer joy of relief seemed to drive away the fears of the past week.

Yet, we were all wondering, who and what the ghosts were. Had we not seen them, heard them? And had not the bos'n and steward even struggled with one?

Was it a fact that there were such things as ghosts? Or were all of us just crazy lunatics, with too much salt water in our brains?



AT EIGHT bells that night, when I came onto the bridge to relieve the second mate, for I was taking the mate's watch with the Captain while he kept guard, the Captain met me and said:

"Get another man up here to keep look out, as I want you and Scofield below for a few minutes."

After I had done so, I followed him and the second mate into the cabin. Carter was seated on one end of the table. It was littered with papers as though he had been writing and tearing them up unsatisfied with what he had written. The mate and bos'n sat behind him and I could see that they both held their guns handy.

He now sat with one sheet of paper in his hand, and as we entered, he handed it to the captain.

"Read it aloud," he said, "I want you all to witness it."

Captain Holt took it, and clearing his throat, he read this confession:

"My name is George Walter Carter and I swear that all I have written here is the truth and that I am of sound mind as I write it. I confess that in Tulsa, Oklahoma, I killed Thomas Girber, also known as Thunder Voice, an Indian chief. I poisoned him because he would not let me marry his daughter, Irene because of his saying that I was only doing so to get hold of her property, on which there were oil wells, which I was working at the time. Because he was a very old man, no one questioned his death, so soon after, I married Irene and sold the property and moved to San Francisco, taking her young sister Ruth with us. We were followed there by a young Indian lad who was fond of Ruth and wanted to marry her. But, as I had by that time control of her money too, I did not want this to happen so refused to let them marry. Young Paul Ingram had money and he was eloping with Ruth one night from the ship "Maahona" when I caught them. I upset the boat they were in and, as neither could swim, they both were drowned. My wife, Irene heard their cries for help and threatened to inform the police that I had drowned them, so I threw her overboard and she too was drowned.

"I reported to the harbor police the next day that they had gone sailing the night before in one of the ship's boats and had not returned. The boat was found bottom up, and they recovered the bodies by grappling for them. As there were no marks on them, the coroner's inquest brought in a verdict of 'found drowned by accident.' Knowing that I am about to die, and that Frank Girber, son of Thomas Girber and brother to the two girls, also known as Echo Voice, is still living, I wish to make what amends I can before I do so. I leave to him all money invested in these ships that I bought with the stolen money. My present wife is to have a sum of money that is in the Marine Bank at San Francisco. It is honest money that I had before I committed these crimes. I only regret that I cannot see "Echo Voice" and ask him to forgive me, and to tell him that I never touched his property, because I was always sure that he lived, and that some day he would find me out in my crimes. That is why I bought these

ships and stayed out at sea as much as possible. "I am sorry that he cannot be here now, to see me die as he said he would, when he came with the rest of his folks to my cabin aboard this ship. Those visits have driven me to this act, knowing that they will eventually drive me mad or make me confess to the law, and then I would be hanged for my crimes, I take this way."

Signed: G. W. CARTER.

Witnessed by Captain W. Holt and the other officers aboard the ship *Corona* at sea this Sixth day of June, 1926.

We all signed our names as witnesses and were leaving the cabin when the door of the pantry opened. A tall Indian stepped out. He was in full war dress with painted face and feathers in his long braids. There was a long stemmed pipe in his hand such as I have heard called the pipe of peace.

Carter sprang to his feet, fear written on his face. Then slowly sank back into his chair again.

The Indian spoke: "I am 'Echo Voice.' I told you that I would be with you when you left this world. I am here." He handed the pipe to Carter, saying, "Smoke the pipe of peace before you go to join those who have gone before you to the happy hunting grounds of our people. For you, too, were made a blood brother in our tribe when you carried my sister, and you too will go there to face the great chief."

Carter reached out and took the pipe, took a long draw on it and passed it back.

Then the Indian took the confession from the table, read it through, folded it and put it into his pocket.



HE THEN tore the head dress off, and with a towel wiped the paint from his face, and stood revealed to us as: **THE SHIP'S STEWARD!**

A gasp came from all except Carter who coolly replied: "I thought I knew your face, Girber, but never having seen you was not sure."

"Yes, it is me, Carter. And if you had only stopped to think instead of letting your fear haunt you

as you did, you would have remembered why they called me 'Echo Voice.' It is because I can throw my voice. I am a ventriloquist. That is how I fooled you, with that and the help of Lee the bos'n who was in the army with me when you committed these crimes. He and those toy balloons with sulphur faces painted on them were sent aloft, so that when the damp air struck them they would glow. A small moving picture camera with a magnifying lens completed your downfall. But, simple as it was, I have this confession," he said assuringly and patted the pocket that held it.

Only a moment he stood watching the changing expression on Carter's face. Then, slowly drawing a revolver from his pocket, he pointed it at Carter's head.

"Carter," he said. "Die not by your hand, nor yet by mine—" A shot rang out. "But by the hand of God!"

Captain Holt stepped forward, then, stopped. We all stared, expecting to see the form of Carter fall bleeding to the floor. But the form sank slowly and the head dropped onto the table and a deep sigh came from the white lips.

The Steward then turned the dead form over and showed that there was no wound. He pointed to the bulkhead to one side of the dead man's chair where his bullet had struck.

Carter had died from fright, not from a bullet wound.

The steward, or shall we call him Mr. Girber, the new owner, then told us in detail of all the strange ways he and the bos'n had led us to think the ship was haunted. But, as he pointed out to us, justice had been served, so we had to forgive him and the bos'n for the frights that they had given us.

When he had finished his strange tale Captain Holt spoke up.

"Well, Sir, I consider you are my new owner now, and I am willing to take orders from you." "And," he added, "if I may, let me congratulate you on your methods of obtaining justice."

"Very good," said Girber. "I will continue as steward, as though nothing has happened. You need not tell the details to Mrs. Carter. Simply

show her the confession. Read it to the crew, and if all are willing, put the ship back on her course for San Francisco.

At day break, we all mustered on deck, the confession was read, and as the ship was put about she was held in stays for a moment, while a canvas-covered, weighted bundle was slid over the side.

ANNOUNCEMENT

This Special Monthly Feature will always be published under the department heading—New Author's Corner—and we hope and expect to make it one of the most interesting features of this magazine.

Stories to be acceptable must conform with the editorial requirements of FAR EAST Adventure Stories and should not exceed 3,500 words in length.

All manuscripts accepted for the New Author's Corner will be paid for on acceptance at our regular rates.

Stories from new authors submitted to us for this monthly feature must be so specified. To facilitate our handling these manuscripts in the most efficient manner, the coupon below, properly filled out must be attached to the upper left hand corner of the first sheet of the manuscript.

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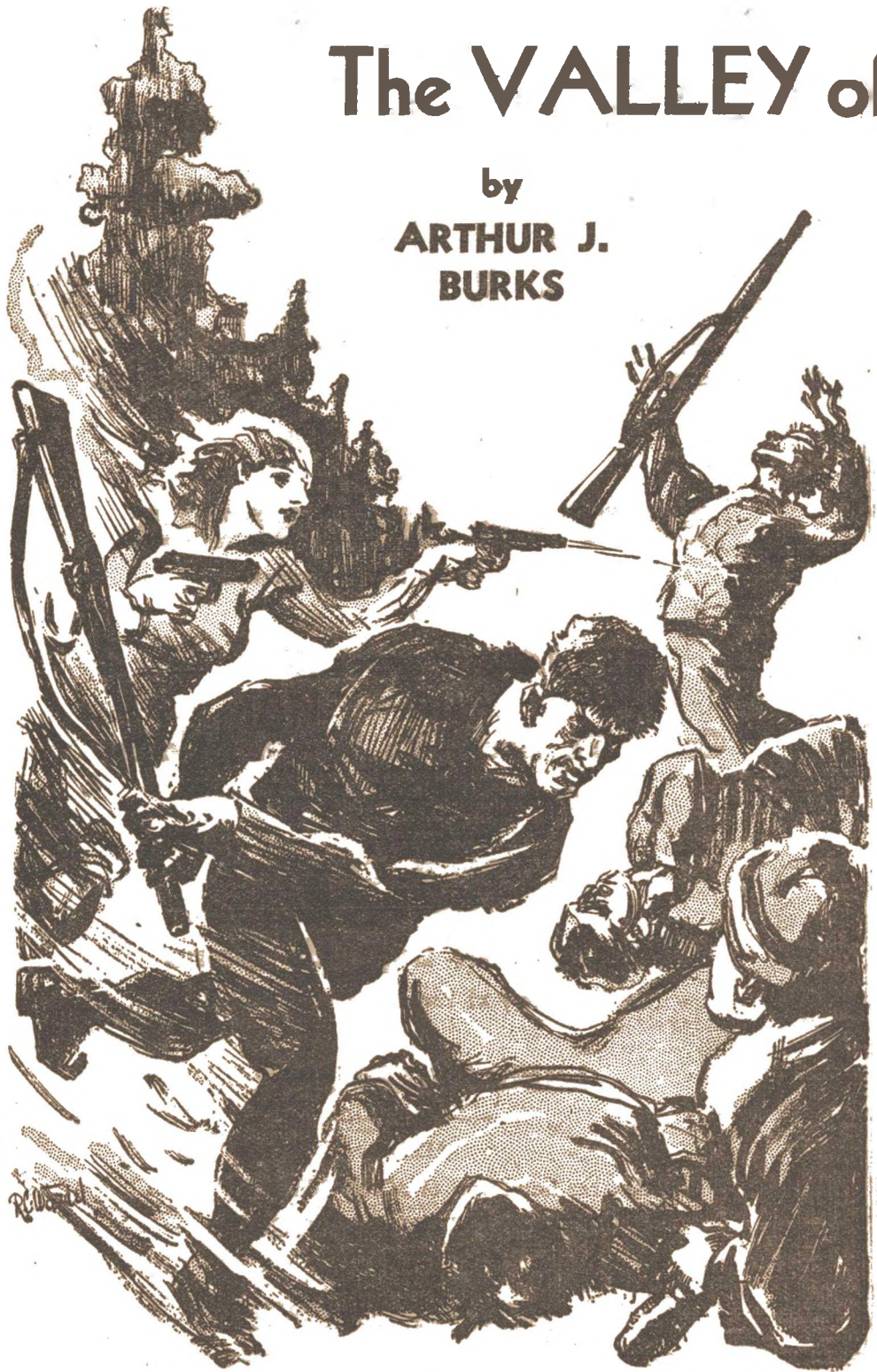
Another Installment of JOHN SOLOMON'S
EXPERIENCES IN MOROCCO

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The VALLEY of

by
**ARTHUR J.
BURKS**



the STONE SPRUCES

A Novel of Turkestan

Chapter One

ON TRAIL



LARRY SOBLE, employed by the Turkestan Trading Company of Urumchi, pulled down his restive stallion and turned to his thick-set companion. His black eyes were filled with a haunting light in which Bart Halstead had a hint of the dread that gripped the lean man's soul. His hand trembled a little as he doffed his fur cap and gloves and rumpled his unruly black hair.

"Bart," he said, "Cardigan has turned off the main trail here, and is apparently heading toward the head-waters of the Keck-su. It's a grim, terrible place. I know. I went in there once four years ago to hunt wapiti. It's called Stone Spruces, because the stone pinnacles look like trees. It's really Mongol territory, and a place where almost anything may happen."

Bart Halstead, phlegmatic, older, ten years Soble's senior—was the typical manhunter, unconcerned when danger threatened. Apparently he did not even know the meaning of fear. He merely grunted, and his eyes, as he lifted them to look up the alpine way Soble had indicated, mirrored none of the terror he had detected in Larry Soble's.

Still, Halstead knew that Soble had courage to spare, and that there

must certainly be some basis for his plainly evident concern. If Soble feared the weird sounding Valley of the Stone Spruce, then there was probably something to fear. At that, just the name of the place was enough to make a man ponder. Halstead often thought that Soble had spent so much time in the Orient that some of its strange beliefs had been grafted into the fibre of his being somehow. He knew that Soble feared nothing he understood, and his fear therefore argued instantly that its cause was something deeper than ordinary man-created fears.

Sullen clouds were massing ahead, and the trail was plainly a dangerous one in the best of times.

"You're boss, Larry," said Halstead. "But I'd say that if Cardigan went up this trail, we can follow him."

"Into ambush, maybe?" Soble replied.

"Yeah? Well, he's had plenty of opportunity to ambush us. I'd think if he had any such design he'd have carried it out before now."

"That's right, but this place we're heading for now is different. It's claimed by the Mongols—and say, Bart, did you ever hear of the Mongol method of disposing of the dead?"

"Tossing them to the wild dogs, you mean? Yeah, I've heard, but I don't aim to go into the belly of any mongrel dogs, and neither will you. Don't get the heebies, old man; it's probably just the atmosphere of this layout that gets you. Old man Sing is paying us plenty to bring home

the bacon, quite aside from the fact that in a way he's your boss. Let's get going."

Soble turned and faced his partner squarely. He wanted to tell him that it wasn't for himself he was afraid, but for him. But his lips were mute because he could find no name to which to tie his fear for Halstead. It was just something deep inside him, an inner voice of warning more than anything else. But the feeling was there, and he had learned never to ignore his feelings or his hunches. But now as he looked at Halstead, who for six months had been as close to him as a brother, he felt in his heart that he looked upon a man who would soon be dead—and the feeling nauseated him. Had he had the same feeling where he himself was concerned, he would merely have shrugged it away, and taken added precautions for his safety.

But Halstead was another matter entirely, and it was something you could never talk about to Halstead. His lack of imagination would have pooh-pooed the idea. Yet, Soble felt that Halstead's life rested in his hands. If he turned back, Halstead would not die—if he went on Halstead would die. It was in the cards somehow, certain and unchangeable as the course of the stars in the heavens.

"This is really my job, Bart," he said. "Why don't you stay here with the Quazaqs, while I push on after Cardigan?"

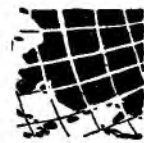
Halstead grinned.

"Nix, buddy," he replied. "I never stop anything I start, and I'm enjoying this."

Bart Halstead put his horse to the trail. With his heart heavy as lead in his breast, Soble followed. Behind them, keeping almost on their heels, rode their Quazaq guides and hunters. On their faces Soble saw traces

of superstitious fear, and understood it. They were in deadly terror of what lay ahead, yet were eager to go on because they were to be well paid for their services.

There were tall tales told throughout Turkestan about the Valley of the Stone Spruces. But Soble brushed thought of them aside and gave all his attention to the trail over which his stallion stumbled and fought his way, keeping close behind the animal which Halstead bestrode. The trail itself gave a hint of what might be expected in the lost country to which they were going.



TO THEIR right, stone walls rose into the murk of the tumbling clouds, while to the left, deep gorges yawned to catch the unsure-footed and unwary travelers. The wind whistled through the gorge below, and fine snow sifted over their clothing down the face of the wall to their right. The trail was merely a rocky ledge, crooked as the trace of a snake with a broken back. Now it rose steeply, so that one clung to the saddlehorn to keep from sliding over the tail of the mount. Now it dipped down until the animals slid over the slippery shale, with all four feet braced to hold themselves back.

And always the wall at their right, and the gorges to the left—falling away to abysmal depths. A misstep on the part of a horse, and horse and rider were doomed. Skin was knocked off knees against the wall as the horses clung to the hellish ledge and moved forward. The animals' ears were stiffly to the fore always, as though they too had some instinctive knowledge of the fact that the greatest danger lay, not in the gorge over which their bellies often hung, but in the grim land toward which they were forging.

Where the way dipped sharply into a notch, a wooden bridge of two poles with brushwood and earth heaped over it emphasized the danger. The stallions took the bridge in headlong rushes, as though afraid if they paused for a second they would crash through. A Quazaq rider behind was more careful, and his animal's hoofs went through. Rider and pony were rescued with difficulty by all hands—and after the near tragedy, even the loquacious Quazaqs were silent.

Larry Soble knew Quazaqs and fully expected that these would flatly refuse to continue on until they had reached the Valley of the Stone Spruces. It was only a matter of time.

The snow stopped finally, and through the rifts in the clouds which hung over Keck-su, the sun splashed the rocky crags across the gorge with a weird mixture of reds and greens—as though some insane giant had raced across the rocks with a leaking paint-bucket of gigantic size. The weird color mixtures, which seemed to change and shift under the play of sun and drifting clouds, were utterly depressing.

Soble raised his eyes to the broad back of Bart Halstead and shivered a little. That shiver of his had been part of him since he could remember. Among friends he often laughed when they noticed it.

"It's nothing," he was in the habit of saying. "Somebody's walked over my grave, that's all."

But now. . . .

Well, the shiver was just a part of it all. It wasn't his grave that worried him. He was noting the strong, broad shoulders of Halstead, noting the visible play of muscles on the back of the big man as he eased himself to accommodate the twisting and turning of his mount.

He kept wishing he had never pro-

posed that Halstead accompany him from Urumchi, fully knowing however that Halstead would have come anyway. It was all inevitable perhaps, but the feeling that he might be taking Halstead to his death persisted.

He only hoped that nothing would happen to frighten the Quazaqs until they had reached their destination. If Cardigan evaded them in the Valley of the Stone Spruces, they would lose him for good. For, if he made friends with the Mongols, they would help him across into Mongolia where his pursuers could not follow.

Now Soble thought of Cardigan, a savage fellow who had been concerned in all kinds of devilry in this part of the world for more than a decade. The man had plenty of killings to answer for. Soble had seen him once, and could never forget the cold whiteness of his expressionless face, nor the livid scar across his cheek. Cardigan was a two hundred pounder, a brute of a man, without mercy or soul.

Now he had gone too far, even for this wild land of perpetual evil. He had slain a harmless scientist in Urumchi by bashing in his skull. There had apparently been no reason why he should have killed Matthias Golden, yet there had been witnesses in plenty to swear that Cardigan had committed the murder—and then had fled, pausing only to loot the treasury of the Turkestan Trading Company which employed Larry Soble.



ONE DETAIL of the slaying Soble remembered most poignantly, the picture of a woman, a young girl rather, found in Golden's pocket when he had been discovered, a girl with golden hair, and features calculated to cause the heart of even the most hardened of men

to beat a little faster.

As for Golden himself, practically nothing was known about him, save that he ate, slept and drank of his science—whatever it was. Whether his excavations into ancient tumuli, his constant poring over old manuscripts found in ruined cities all over the land, had any direct bearing on his mission in Urumchi, no one knew, because Golden had made a recluse of himself. Strangely enough, but one man had been able to break through his wall of reserve, and that man had been Jake Cardigan. And he had murdered him.

For several weeks prior to the murder, Cardigan, while tongues wagged and heads were shaken in doubt from one end of Urumchi to the other, was constantly in the old man's company, apparently as deeply interested in his work as Golden himself.

Then—the murder.

Larry Soble and Bart Halstead were ordered to trail and bring back the murderer. They began the consequent endless drive on the spoor of Cardigan which might or might not end in the Valley of the Stone Spruces almost immediately.

The panting stallions moved on. Rocks rolled into the gorge, and were lost, not even the crash of their landing coming up to the ears of the pursuers of Cardigan. The Quazaqs crowded even closer to their white masters, so that it was a little dangerous—and Soble was forced to order them to keep their distance.

The way led constantly upward, the incline increasing as the minutes were ticked off. Soble knew that had the day been clear, he could have looked back—if no bend in the gorge intervened—out across one of the most impressive wastes in all Chinese Turkestan, a land of ancient migrations of whole hordes of people; a land of drouth and plenty, of sud-

den death, strange superstitions; a land of massacres and grim unhealthy promise.

It was near dusk when they reached the end of the dangerous trail. And they paused on a great escarpment to look out across the far reaches of a strangely shadowed valley, high in the foothills of Tien Shan. The Valley of Stone Spruces, into which the trail of Cardigan led them.

His trail was again visible, though it had been lost for a time on the rocky ledge they had followed. There were the hoofprints of many horses, but Cardigan's was shod and easily discernible in the slush underfoot.

Soble dismounted and examined the tracks.

"He's still carrying an extra burden, Bart," he said. "I wish we hadn't missed the exact spot where he took it on. I wonder, too, what the devil he's carrying."

Before Bart Halstead could answer, one of the Quazaqs suddenly pitched head foremost from his pony, and sprawled limply beside Soble. At the same time the very air seemed to crackle with the slapping bark of a high-powered rifle.

The Quazaqs whirled their mounts as though to start back down the trail they had just successfully negotiated. Soble yelled to them in their own tongue.

"Wait! Would you run right into the death which took your comrade? Look here!"

He knelt and turned the dead Quazaq over. The bullet had entered the back of his head and torn through the frontal bone. It had plainly come from the gorge which they had just put behind them, or from some coign of vantage in the wall on one side or the other. Their retreat by the way they had come was cut off! If they went back the unseen marksman could take his

time and pick them off, one by one. Even the not-too-intelligent Quazaqs knew this—and when Soble led the way at a swift gallop into the Valley of Stone Spruces, they crowded about him as though for protection against the devil in the gorge who spoke with a voice they understood too well.

But after that one bullet, silence that spoke louder than a whole barrage of musketry, settled over the lost land—there was no sound save for the drumming of feet of the thoroughly frightened animals.

Chapter Two

BARRICADED YURTAS



SOBLE'S FEAR of the unknown had vanished. That rifle bullet had been fired by someone, and whatever the weird mystery was that masked the Valley of Stone Spruces, this was not part of it. Whether it had had anything to do with the man they were pursuing remained to be seen. He was of two minds about that. He felt that if it had been Cardigan, the murderer would have held the Quazaqs in contempt and sent his bullet into the head of either Halstead or himself. The bullet might easily have been fired by a Mongol resentful of the intrusion into this land of the Quazaqs, whom they were constantly raiding, and being raided by.

But if a Mongol had fired the shot, why had he fired but one?

Why had he not systematically slain each one of the Quazaqs in turn? If he possessed one of the ancient muzzle-loaders of flintlocks, the explanation was obvious; but the smack of the rifle had been recognizable by Soble as that of a modern high-powered weapon.

But why only one?

A Mongol, of course, could have sent a bullet as accurately as had the invisible marksman, for the Mongols were good shots, due to their hunting of marmots, but—

Soble decided to ferret out the "buts" later.

He headed as fast as the winded horses could manage, toward a tumbled pile of rocks some quarter of a mile ahead. He took to the more open country because he could not be sure that marksmen had not been stationed all about the valley, with orders from Cardigan to shoot them down. But, again, why had they not been fired upon before they had even reached the Valley of Stone Spruces? On that ledge they could have been slain with ease by a single hidden rifleman—to the last man.

Nobody could have turned a horse on that trail, and more than average speed to escape would have meant sure disaster. by a plunge into the gorge.

The future would tell?

Soble swung down among the boulders and shouted to the Quazaqs.

"Pitch your *yurtas* in near those rocks. Bart, grab your rifle and flop down here with me. There may be an attack any minute, and we'd better get set. Grab plenty of ammunition."

They had a clear field of fire in all directions, and when they took position behind the rocks, the Quazaqs leaped to their task of making camp with speed beyond the imagination of anyone who knew Quazaqs.

Their *yurtas*—tents of skin with interior bracing like umbrella ribs—were quickly slapped into place, and the edges fastened with rocks placed on the overhanging flaps.

"Begin a rock barricade," Soble ordered when the *yurtas* were pitched.

Two men had taken the pack and

riding animals deeper into the pile of stones, where they were out of range of any possible snipers. While Halstead and Soble peered off across the waste, taking in every possible location where a rifleman might hide, the Quazaqs fell to with a will, and without a word, to carry out his orders.

There were rocks in plenty, most of which could be procured without digging or picking.



THE SUN had dropped out of sight in the west, and Soble watched the grim approach of darkness with dread rising higher and higher in his heart. The mystery of that single rifle-shot tantalized him, and made him recall the wild tales he had heard of this section of the country—tales of wild boar on the rampage, wild boar as large as a rhinoceros; tales of travelers led off the main trail by treacherous guides, and caused to die in strange, mysterious ways; tales of queer people descended from animals, legend probably based on the werewolf idea; tales—all sorts of tales.

Two hours had passed since the Quazaq had been shot, and no further sound had broken the silence of the valley, save the sounds made by the Quazaqs as they rushed the building of the barricade.

Just one shot—no more.

Patently that one slaying had been deliberate, intended to destroy the morale of the Quazaqs perhaps, so that they would run away from their white masters, leaving them without guides—but why?

Why had not either Halstead or Soble been slain?

"I wonder what Cardigan is up to?" said Halstead after the silence had become unbearable. "Do you think he's somehow doubled back on

us and got away by the way we came?"

Soble shook his head.

"No, there's really little need for him to run now, for he's among his friends. Half the terror he's spread over various parts of Turkestan has been with the Mongols at his back. We walked into this mess like a pair of fools. It would be like Cardigan to have a little sport with us. I imagine he's probably laughing at us with his Mongol friends and—I wonder what the devil he was carrying?"

"Lord knows," said Halstead, "and He won't tell."

In spite of himself Soble's mind conjured up again that picture which had been found in the pocket of Matthias Golden. He wondered why it kept returning to him, and what it could possibly have to do with their present situation. It was just one of those tantalizing things which plague a man's mind at the strangest moments, but Soble could not help thinking of that girl—wondering why Golden carried the picture, what the girl was to him, and who she was.

The idea kept persisting, without reason that he could assign, that the picture was somehow mixed up in all this, and that the girl of the picture was somehow involved in the murder and the subsequent flight of Jake Cardigan.

"Blast it," he said again, "I wish I knew what Cardigan was carrying. The money he carried away wasn't bulky, and besides he'd probably have carried that on a pack animal loaded with his personal belongings."

"Quit bothering about it!" snapped Halstead. "It's going to be dark in a jiffy, and I've a hunch that Hell will break loose then."

Soble turned a white face to Halstead, and again that vague fear was visible in his eyes. Again he had the

feeling that, looking at Halstead, he was looking at a man condemned to die. The thought was horrible, and was becoming increasingly so.

But lowering darkness, which was as though Tien Shan had bent far over them to encompass them in its mighty shadows, gave Soble something new to think about. He and Halstead must play sentry in shifts, as the Quazaqs could not be trusted to remain awake, and probably would balk flatly if ordered to stay out in the darkness alone. They'd cower in their *yurtas* and try to imagine they were safe—like ostriches hiding their heads in the sand.

If Cardigan had joined his Mongol friends, and really wished to destroy Soble and Halstead, he could himself remain safely hidden—though that was not his way at all—and send the Mongols against his pursuers. They could easily ride them down. But if he had any such thought in mind, why had he not immediately launched the attack, before the guides had got the barricade into defensible shape?

The whole thing was a mystery which only increased as time passed and nothing further happened.

A fire was kindled in one of the two *yurtas* the Quazaqs had erected. One tent was for Soble and Halstead, the other for the Quazaqs. A guide came to tell Soble that food had been prepared.

"Go and eat, Bart," Soble ordered. "I'll hold the fort until you're finished. We'll have to take turns at this sentry business, and I've a hunch it will be just too bad if either of us goes to sleep on the job."

Halstead grinned and turned to enter the *yurta* of the fire. Soble's hunger became terrific as he thought of wapiti meat and soured mare's milk to wash it down with. They had a plentiful supply of the necessary foods, including tea. He'd give orders that tea was to be kept hot

during the night for the sentry on duty.



DARKNESS HAD blot-
ted out all view to the
front at least half an
hour before, forcing the
two to depend upon their
ears only to warn them of approach-
ing danger. The Quazaqs if they
spoke at all, discoursed in whispers.
The ponies stomped as they fed, and
once in a while one of them squealed
protest at being bitten by a sour-
tempered running mate. Aside from
that, nothing.

Which was why the sudden sound
of laughter through the darkness
was so utterly unnerving.

It was not loud, but it was distinct.
Soble was sure that it could
not have reached the ears of anyone
in the *yurtas*. But there was a
strange quality in it—something of
mockery perhaps, something of jeer-
ing triumph, which had been meant
for Soble's ears.

He stiffened against the rock bar-
ricade, straining his ears to catch
any further sound, straining his eyes
to see moving shadows where he
knew it was impossible to see any-
thing—unless a careless someone
happened to light a match.

But as there had been but one
rifle-shot, there now was but one
burst of laughter, mocking and tri-
umphant—then silence. If the one
who had laughed had intended to
draw Soble's fire he was disap-
pointed, for Soble had no intention
of wasting a bullet that might later
on be needed to save a life—or to
be sure of taking it.

When Bart Halstead relieved him,
he hurried through his supper, came
back to the cold rock barricade, and
dropped down beside Halstead. Hal-
stead was easy to see, for snow was
falling now in a great white mantle,
and the nip of the cold night pierced

through and through their riding garments.

Soble dragged out a fur coat for his partner, watched him drape it about him—as casually as though it did not matter that he looked upon him as a man doomed to die—then spoke what was in his mind.

"Bart, we're trapped here like so many rats. I'm going to see if there is a way out, or if I can locate Cardigan, or find a Mongol *yurta* where I may possibly overhear news of him. We can't wait here and be starved out. If I don't come back—keep on holding the fort, and save a bullet, understand?"

There was a low laugh from Halstead, which only served, instead of strengthening Soble's courage, to recall that single burst of laughter which had come to him across the Valley of Stone Spruces.

He struck straight out across the valley floor toward the spot whence he guessed that burst of laughter had come.

Chapter Three

THE ZIG-ZAG TRAIL



SOBLE WAS not ignorant of the danger he was incurring in going directly out into the white wastes. But he did have faith in himself, and knew that a bullet could get him in the dark only by accident. He had figured out for himself, during many adventures in China and the rest of the Orient, that when one thrust his head in a lion's mouth, the one sure way to keep from having it bitten off was to thrust it in further.

That single rifle-shot and the single burst of laughter had been tantalizing in the extreme. He knew from the deep silence following immedi-

ately afterward that he was being baited, goaded into making some movement that would result in giving the enemy a chance at him and his party, either wholly or individually.

Soble was going directly into danger, alone, because that was what they were trying to make him do—and the very least it could do, he felt, would be to bring the action more into the open. Shots fired from ambush, and crazy laughter, were too aggravating in themselves, and he couldn't rest until he knew exactly what was behind it all.

He walked stooped forward, eyes and ears straining to catch sights and sounds. From the mountains off to his right came the screech of the roaring wind through the high pass. Dead ahead, an indeterminate distance away, was the entrance to the Keck-su gorge, the route by which they had entered this wild valley of ill renown. To his left—merely the pinnacles of stone reaching away into darkness, like frozen sentinels on perpetual guard. He couldn't see them now, but he had marked them when his party had raced to the hummock of stones where they were making their stand.

About here, he estimated, was where he had heard the laughter—that single burst of laughter that had caused little red ants to play tag up and down his spine.

He stood stock still to listen. But no sounds reached him, save that roaring of the wind through the high pass. He turned to look back, and could barely make out the location of their camp, where Bart Halstead would be on guard, listening to the sounds from the wastes, and worrying no little about Soble himself.

Soble remained where he was, listening, wondering—and inwardly trembling, for though the snow had

covered the valley floor as far as he could see, which wasn't far in this gloom, and he should have been able to see anything that lived or moved anywhere near him, he saw nothing—yet that strange sixth sense, which was his heritage told him that danger was right beside him, on either side of him, and behind him.

He tried to analyze the feeling. When he turned one way he distinctly felt that impression familiar to everyone which is caused by eyes staring steadfastly at one's back. When he turned another direction he still could feel strange presences behind him. His finger tightened on the trigger of his rifle, but there was nothing at which to shoot.

Then it seemed as though the surface of the snow itself began to move, to shift—to rise, and shake itself! Where a second before there had been only the smooth whiteness, now there were many figures in black, from whose forms the white flakes were shaken to fall back on the ground.

Soble swung up his rifle as the figures charged. They came in utterly without sound, for a reason which he was at no difficulty to guess. They hoped to get him without causing any outcry which might arouse those at the barricade, or worse still, bullets. Then, when he was missed back there, and someone else came out seeking him, that one too could be taken in the same manner.

It was effective and sure, and the attackers would thus stand no chance of being slain by those at the barricade. Soble knew that he dealt with Mongols who had orders to take anyone alive that issued from the barricade, or else to slay them noiselessly.

He was on sure ground now. The weird terrors of the Valley of Stone Spruces had lost their chill for him

—for the moment. For reasons of his own he did not care to fire his rifle. He had confidence in his own ability to win free, and in any case would not have fired—for he knew that at sound of his rifle, Bart Halstead would come charging out to his rescue, and chances are would be slaughtered, or taken prisoner, with the five remaining Quazaqs.

Even if Halsted were to make a sortie and win free again, the barricade could be taken in his absence—and the whole group set afoot in the awful wilderness, to be run down and slaughtered at leisure.

So he set himself and waited.



THEN WHEN the Mongols piled over him, he clubbed his rifle right and left. He felt the butt of it smash against a man's skull. The fellow went down, moaning. A big Mongol leaped upon Soble's back, almost bending him double. But Soble still clung on to his rifle grimly. Suddenly he whirled quickly around and threw himself upon another of the silently tenacious enemy. The man on his back loosened his grip, and Soble lurched his shoulders quickly—won free, and started clubbing again with his swinging rifle butt.

He wielded the weapon with all his power and speed, and in spite of their number, the Mongols gave back to gather breath for another charge. Apparently this strange silent man from the stone barricade was not going to fire, and they could face rifle butts as well as anyone.

The man whose head he had almost broken with a savage butt stroke was rocking and reeling across the snow, on a line somewhere between the barricade and the place where the party had entered the valley from the Keck-su gorge, roughly,

northeast.

Soble guessed that in that direction was "home" to the Mongol. In his addled condition—and Soble had laid on the power with that butt stroke—the Mongol was giving him a hint as to the location of the Mongol encampment, and presumably, information as to the whereabouts of Jake Cardigan.

But Soble did not run directly after the reeling man. That would have been entirely too obvious, and the Mongols then would have had but to return to their own *yurtas* to intercept him.

He cut quickly out of the fight, leaping into a full run almost from a standing start, catching the Mongols flat-footed with surprise. He was momentarily fearful that they would fire upon him, but as the seconds passed and no bullets sped after him, and he widened the distance between himself and his silent attackers, he began to realize that he had guessed the truth—that orders had been issued the attackers against making any undue commotion in the valley.

It was all a little weird.

But Larry Soble was not bothered by that now. He was away to a good start, keeping well to one side of the line being followed by the reeling Mongol, yet curving in slightly toward it for the benefit of any sharp eyes which might have followed his flight. He wanted his enemy to think he was trying to cut back toward the encampment, and when he dared a look back it was to see several of them racing through the snow in that direction to cut him off.

The silence with which the whole affair had progressed thus far was weird in the extreme. It was as though every actor in it had been a deaf-mute. Yet it was deadly, too—as deadly and weird as this wild

Valley of the Stone Spruces, about which tall tales were told around every campfire in Turkestan.

There were rocks just under the snow which were hard on his feet, but he was thankful for heavy soled shoes and tough leggings. There was a chance of twisting an ankle, but he was taking that chance. Back in some recess of his mind he was keeping a picture of the location of the stone barricade where Halstead would be awaiting him, and worrying about him if he did not come back. He'd have to get back there somehow, but he was resolved not to try it until he had learned something of this valley's secrets, and something about Cardigan.

The Mongol whose head he had smashed was now nowhere to be seen, and all the rest of his attackers had vanished into the white smother of snow behind him, or had merged with the shadows of the high hills beyond. Soble swept further to the left now. Guessing at his direction, but doing so with confidence because he possessed an uncanny sense of direction—he raced ahead, straining his eyes for some familiar outlines that might be moving animals, or habitations of some sort.

As he ran he zig-zagged through veritable stone forests, the stone forests which had given this valley its queer name. Just pinnacles of stone, seemingly grown out of the ground itself, some of them reaching up to points of needle sharpness, some with queer stone protrusions that looked like arms—or the limbs of trees. As though, it seemed, a forest had petrified there in the valley.

He was careful as he rounded some of these odd formations, for he was of no mind to run directly into the arms of Mongols who might have no orders about sparing lives. He was like a boxer, balancing lightly on both feet, ready to jump

in any direction—yet moving forward steadily at the same time.

He judged he had come fully a mile from the barricade, and over the crest of a sort of knoll, when he saw the flicker of light ahead. Quickly he stepped into the shadow of one of the stone "spruces," with the idea that if any of his recent attackers had been close on his heels, his running muffled by the snow, Soble would not be outlined against the light. Then he began a circling movement to reach the source of the light from the opposite direction.



AN HOUR passed before he found himself in the middle of what seemed to be an unusually large encampment. He estimated that there were fully a hundred *yurtas* scattered over an area of several acres, in a sort of pothole in the valley's floor.

Against the rise of another knoll, off to his left, he could make out the moving shapes of many ponies, could catch the rank smell of horses and cattle.

But he could see no human movement anywhere, and now, even the light he had noticed before had vanished. He understood why, however. He was on the opposite side of the *yurta* from which it had shone, perhaps when a *yurta* flap was swung open for someone to enter or leave.

He listened for the sound of voices. Many minutes passed before he heard them. Then, so close as to seem right beside him came the chatter of voices. The sounds seemed to echo back and forth between the sides of the hollow as though the very voices themselves were alive.

Quickly, taking a slight chance of detection since he felt that the Mongols sent to lure someone from the barricade were in all probability

seeking him above, he rose and strode to the back wall of the *yurta* from whence the voices came.

"I tell you," said a voice in Turki, of which Soble had more than a smattering, "that the white master possesses, besides the girl, the Blue Diamond of Kanze, which is worth, even in Urumchi or Kulja, thrice the amount all of us together will receive from the man with the scar for serving him. If we could procure it—"

"But how?" broke in another voice. "We know he can't escape from the valley, but we don't know where he hides himself with the woman. We do know that he has plenty of ammunition, and that he can be approached only from in front. If he had the courage to come freely among us—"

"Who has not the courage to come among you?" a cold stern voice broke in.

In the midst of the excited chattering which followed, Soble decided upon a bold stroke. He pressed his knife-blade to the side of the *yurta* and cut a slit, through which he peered into the tent crowded with squatting Mongols. Beyond them stood a giant white man with a face unnaturally pale, across one cheek of which there was a livid scar, like a tongue of angry flame.

"Who has not the courage to come among you?" coldly repeated Cardigan.

Chapter Four

GRIM CARDIGAN



HERE WAS a strange figure of a man—Jake Cardigan. Well, for all his name there was the hint of Mongolia in him, per-

haps because he had spent so much of his life among Mongols, perhaps even because he was related to them by ties of blood, though his unnaturally white face seemed to give the lie to that. Jake Cardigan—the white rascal of the renegade Mongols. Lived among them because they were rich—all Mongols were supposed to be rich—and would follow him into any rascality.

That was Cardigan's reputation, and he played fast and loose on disputed borders where, when the going became hot, he could step across and elude police or soldiers. Larry Soble wondered wherein lay his power over the Mongols, especially since he had just heard them refer to him as to a man generally hated. Now he was to discover the secret of Cardigan's power.

"If you were referring to me," came the icy tones of Cardigan, his black eyes boring into those of the last man to speak, "you are wrong if you think I am afraid of any misbegotten dogs of Mongols who speak in Turki because they fear I may overhear their Mongol speech. You think I do not know the Turki? Dogs that growl when your master whips you! Illegitimate sons of dirty mothers! Scum of the festering swamps! Not one of you would face me squarely. If I turned my back there might be some among you with the courage to send a bullet into my back, but I doubt even that—"

Here, without warning, the flap behind Cardigan was yanked back and a sweaty sobbing Mongol entered the *yurta*. His face was bloody and he had lost his fur cap. One hand was clasped to his head, and the man was almost crazy with pain.

Cardigan whirled as the man entered, and Soble was amazed at the speed of the big man. For as Cardigan whirled, his right fist went

out unerringly to crash against the chin of the newcomer. The Mongol went down from the unprovoked assault. In a way Larry Soble was glad, for he knew how that Mongol had received his wound. Soble himself had given it to him with his clubbed rifle. And while the man was unconscious from Cardigan's savage blow he could not talk—that was a break in his favor.

"This man was sent at your orders to lure the white men outside their stone barricade, master," came in respectful tones from the man who had just flouted the courage of Jake Cardigan. "Perhaps he has news—"

"News or no news," Cardigan replied grimly, "I allow no man to come behind me, even by accident. I'd rather kill an innocent man than get a bullet in my back for carelessness. You see, I know you well, my brothers! And I trust not one of you. Throw water in that clumsy fool's face."

Under the lash of icy water the fallen Mongol stirred. Cardigan, with small pity for the fellow's sufferings, yanked him to his feet.

"Speak, dog!" he snapped. "What happened up there?"

Cardigan had, with fluent ease, switched to the Mongol dialect, in which the man made a stammering, almost incoherent reply.

"One man came out," he grasped. "We surrounded him, but he killed half of us with his swinging rifle butt, and I just escaped with my life. He got away. I think he ran back to the barricade."

The report came in broken gasps. Cardigan hurled the man from him with a stiff-arm push that would have felled a far stronger man than the Mongol. He sprawled in the furs which banked one wall of the *yurta*, motionless.

Cardigan turned back to the man

who seemed to be the headman of the group.

"Fool!" he said. "I give you a simple task to perform and you bungle it. I won't have bunglers serving with me, you understand?"

Again Soble was amazed at the snake-like speed of the giant Cardigan. Cardigan's hand dropped to his waist and rose again all in the same movement. From his extended right hand, now holding a Luger automatic, spat a single pencil of flame. The headman crumpled forward, flat on his face.

"If my money does not procure obedience," Cardigan said contemptuously, "this weapon will. You understand, you scum? Now listen to me, carefully. Mass your men about that barricade, which you should have done this afternoon while it was being built, and take it, understand? I'll be there with you to see that it is properly done, and I'll send a bullet into any man who draws back in the attack. I won't be stopped by these two fools. Nor will I be driven from the valley by them until I am ready to go. Jake Cardigan has run all he's going to. I'm staying here to enjoy myself—with my woman, with my—"

Again the mention of a woman—and Cardigan used a vile name when he said it. Soble thought of the girl of Golden's picture, and shuddered inwardly while he thought of her in the hands of this beast.

"That fellow escaped from our men," went on Cardigan, "And this fool says he got back into the barricade. I don't think so. He didn't take a chance on coming out just to run back again. He came out for a purpose, to find out something about me. He may be in this camp at this very minute, listening to what we say. Turn out every man and scour the camp. Then form at the spot where you placed your men right

after dark, and trace him from there. I give you half an hour. Then the attack on the barricade begins."



SOBLE STIFFENED. If the Mongols piled out of the *gyurta* and began to search their camp, they would surely find him—and he shuddered to think what Cardigan would do to him if he found him in the position of a listener.

As the Mongols started for the flap of the tent, cringing past Cardigan like the curs he had called them, Soble backed quickly away from the slit he had made, turned his back for a moment to accustom his eyes once more to the darkness, then set off at a swift run for the barricade.

He had half an hour. It was possible of course that he would be trailed from the place where he had fought with the first aggregation of Mongols, but he would be through their lines on the valley floor and back in the barricade before they could overtake him. Then—well, the Quazaqs would fight hard if told that death was the alternative.

The snow still fell heavily, so much so that there were times when Soble could scarcely see his hands before his face. But he knew he was traveling upward, and that he had taken the proper direction from the Mongol encampment to reach his own stronghold. He had no worries on that score. His one fear was that he might be delayed worming his way through the Mongols around the encampment—until the attack began, when every rifle would be needed against the attackers.

He swung away to the left when he almost ran into a huddled group of three men in the lee of one of those strange stone trees. They did not see him, however, and he worked past them on the opposite

side of the stone pinnacle.

He tested the mechanism of his rifle as he ran, to make sure that it was not clogged with snow. He tapped his pockets to make sure that he had not lost his ammunition.

From behind him came a shout, and for a moment his heart sank. He stopped and listened. Then a sharp command from Jack Cardigan silenced the demonstration.

Soble asked himself why he had not shot Cardigan dead when he had had the chance. It would have been easy, with Cardigan outlined in the light of the *yurta*. And he could easily have escaped the Mongols while they were recovering from their surprise.

But he knew why he hadn't. That mention of a woman had been tantalizing—as tantalizing as that single rifle-shot, that single burst of laughter. He knew from what he had heard that only Cardigan, and doubtless one or two of his own trusted personal servants, knew where she was. Presumably the Blue Diamond of Kanse was in the same place, for Cardigan, despite his contempt of the Mongols, would scarcely have brought it on his person when visiting them. Cardigan must in the end lead Soble to the woman, whoever she was, and he couldn't do it if he was dead.

He stopped in midstride, suddenly, so quickly that his feet almost slipped from under him in the snow. He could now see the outline, dim and ghostly, of the barricade, from which rose the faint glow of a fire. He swore softly to himself. It was funny that Halsted should have allowed a fire in the barricade, for it so plainly gave away the location. But more mature deliberation made him realize that Halsted was deliberately taking that chance, and showing the fireglow to direct Soble himself safely back to the strong-

hold. Which, he now knew, he could not reach without being revealed.

Then he discovered a new value of that glow against the falling snow. He guessed that he had been almost half an hour reaching this place from the Mongol camp. He knew that the scheduled attack would take place very soon. It was good business to attack now, for in the daytime, figures could be too plainly seen on the white floor of the valley, and lives would be lost. Not, of course, that Mongol lives worried Cardigan in the least—save insofar as he wished to keep these people to aid him over the mountains, perhaps, into Mongolia proper.

But that was just a guess.

Soble now, because the way to the barricade was cut off, crouched in the shadow of a stone tree and took stock of the situation. To the right and left of him the pinnacles of stone stretched away like soldiers on parade, marching into the snow. He grinned as he thought of the use he was putting them to now.



WITH NO preparatory outburst of sound, the Mongols opened fire. Cardigan had thrown his forces into position with speed and precision, with the surety of a trained tactician. Black figures were creeping through the snow toward the barricade and they fired as they advanced. While from the barricade came a sudden desultory burst of rifle fire. Halstead had posted the Quazaqs, then, to repel the attack. The guides were firing in nervous haste. Halstead would have to steady them.

But Soble, with moving figures outlined between himself and the barricade against the glow of light, threw his rifle to his shoulder. It held five cartridges, which

might be fired as fast as one could work the bolt and pull the trigger. The black figures were outlined too clearly against the background of falling snow for him to miss—and he—

Five times he fired, taking quick aim each time and squeezing the trigger—fast.

Then not waiting to see what damage he had done, he darted back among the pinnacles and raced off to the right at top speed. Sharp eyes might have noted the flames of his rifle, and bullets would soon make his position untenable if he stayed where he was. And men might be sent to flank him. Now he was more thankful than ever for his speed on foot.

A hundred yards from the spot where he had opened fire on the Mongols, he dived into the shadow of another pinnacle and filled his magazine quickly. The Mongol group were advancing again, all except two or three who had dropped to their knees in the snow and were apparently peering back among the stone trees, trying to locate the spot from whence their rear had been fired upon.

He ignored the two kneeling men, though he knew they would open fire on him almost as soon as he opened on them. His rifle came up to his shoulder again, and again he emptied the magazine at the advancing Mongols.

Now it became a guessing contest, with the odds favoring Larry Soble. He knew where he intended running next, the Mongols could only guess. The two men rose and ran to his right, plainly expecting him to continue on in that direction. They had spotted the flash of his first fusillade.

Soble grinned and ran back toward that same spot, but when he reached it he continued on for an-

other hundred yards. The steady firing from the barricade now assured him that it had not yet been taken.

He paused as he saw, off to his left, and out of line with the barricade, three motionless figures. Two might have been Mongols. The third, from its size, could have been none but Cardigan, who was watching the attack in silence. Soble decided to risk everything on one bold throw. He squatted in the shadow of a boulder and watched the attack.

Good old Halstead. He was handling his wild Quazaqs as smoothly as though they had been seasoned troops. The Mongols were being held—and Halstead was taking heavy toll of their ranks.

Soble saw Cardigan wave the two men with him into the fight. The big man watched them run forward. Then, very deliberately, Cardigan turned directly away and strode swiftly toward the trail which led into the Keck-su gorge.

Trembling with excitement now and confident that he had guessed rightly, Larry Soble kept pace with him on a parallel course, keeping as much as possible to the blacker shadows of the stone spruces.

Chapter Five

THE SHRINE



AS CARDIGAN hurried toward the trail which bordered the rock wall of the Keck-su, Soble kept pace with him with increasing difficulty. The stone trees were thinning out—almost as though they had been soldiers, in fact, marching to invisibility in the

gorge—and any moment now Cardigan might turn around and catch sight of him.

He understood why Cardigan had cut out of the fight. His hiding place was a secret which his Mongol allies did not share, and he was going to it now while they were engaged elsewhere, probably sure in his own mind that the barricade must inevitably fall to them.

He had given them an idea of his capabilities in case they failed—by his coldblooded murder of one of their number. Soble had seen death by violence many times, but never before had he seen a man slay with the calm casualness of Jake Cardigan. He understood that the murder of Golden had not been, on Cardigan's part, a particularly brutal slaying, but that the giant had simply struck with the weapon nearest his hand.

Cardigan looked back as he reached the lip of the gorge, apparently to make sure that no one was following him. Then he strode straight ahead, growing shorter by leaps and bounds, as though the earth were actually swallowing him—and Soble took another chance. Cardigan was no fool and might easily have foreseen the very thing Soble now set himself to do. He might disappear over the lip, wait a second to allow a trailer to race into the open—then come back into view and shoot him down with a laugh.

But Soble was taking a chance that Cardigan would not do this. He broke from cover and raced at full speed toward the spot where Cardigan had disappeared, keeping himself in readiness, however, to drop to the snow in case anyone arose to dispute his passage.

But he reached the lip of the gorge and encountered no one. Away to his left, discernible against the

side of the cliff because it was covered with snow, was the evil trail by which they had entered the Valley of Stone Spruces. Straight ahead was the black abyss of the Keck-su. While to the right, bordering the gorge, was the precipice from which a bullet had come to slay one of the Quazaqs. But of Cardigan there was no sign or trace!

He could not possibly have run out of sight along the trail, for Soble could see down its length for all of a mile. He might have dropped into the gorge, but that was unthinkable unless Cardigan had deliberately committed suicide. The wall to the right was utterly out of the question. Not even a bird could have found a resting place there.

Soble, however, sure that the secret was here somewhere—the secret of Cardigan's hiding place—dropped to his belly and wormed his way to the lip of the gorge, down which he looked into the utter stygian blackness.

And out of the very gorge itself, with the sighing of the icy wind that wheezed up the sheer walls to fan his face, came sounds of speech in Turki. One voice was easily recognizable as Cardigan's. The other was that of a native.

Then suddenly breaking in upon the gruff words of Cardigan and the whining tones of the native, came words in English that made Soble's heart do a queer jump upward toward his throat. It had been a long time since he had heard a voice of such lilting cadence.

Soble had never seen the woman, yet he knew in that instant of hearing her voice that he was capable of doing things for her.

Now came Cardigan's voice again, bidding his servant and the woman to silence. Soble waited for a full minute, then crept to the chasm's

edge where he could peer over into the gorge. The drop to the bottom might have been a hundred feet, or a thousand. He couldn't tell because of the blackness, and it made him feel dizzy, just peering into the depths.



BUT IF Cardigan had gone down the face of this cliff, so could he. He took a deep breath as though he had actually been taking the plunge outward into the dizzy space, and set his feet over the lip of the chasm. They encountered a narrow shelf that sloped downward sharply. It was so narrow that a goat could scarcely have negotiated it. But Soble clutched his pistol in his hand farthest from the cliff wall, left his rifle in the snow at his back, and started the descent. That he was out of luck if discovered he knew at once. An armed man could step into the open, down there where Soble saw a glow of light, and shoot him from his perch as easily as shooting a fish in a barrel—if his own figure could be recognized in the blackness.

When Soble got below the level of the trail, he could see what had been hidden from him before—that the cliff wall below it was honey-combed with caves. They could not be seen from above, and none could gain the opposite side of the gorge to spy from there. A man might hide in one of these caves for as long as he wished.

Soble knew what they were without being told. They were mountain shrines, and their significance came home to him like a shock of electricity. They were probably older than any shrines he had ever seen, immutably linked with this grim outland's past. Countless centuries of priests had used these caves as shrines—and now Cardigan was

using one of them as a place of hiding.

Soble worked his way further and further down. Now no light was visible, and Soble saw that the mouth of the cave had been closed by a hanging fur curtain. Cardigan, then, had planned far in advance against his present coup.

Should he step boldly through the curtain and have it out with Cardigan? His eagerness to come to grips prompted this, but Cardigan could have taken him in his two hands and tossed him over into the gorge. Then what would become of the woman—always granting that she was being held against her will, or through trickery of some sort?

Soble decided against so foolish a move.

He had steadfastly refused to turn aside and look down into the gorge, but in spite of himself he thought of the grim ordeal of returning to the valley along this ghastly route.

There were other ways, of course. Probably some of the caves were linked up by passages piercing their walls, and from adjoining caves there doubtless were ways to reach the trail above—which perhaps had not been used for centuries.

Soble now guessed why tall tales had been told of the Valley of Stone Spruces—tales which had been handed down from father to son through untold ages. Tales which had their origin back in the dim past when priests of strange religions had occupied the caves, and had come forth from them to hold strange rituals in the Valley of Stone Spruces.

He stood now before the flap of the cave mouth. A wind from inside, blowing against it and causing it to belly out against him, would force him off the ledge; but still for a moment he hesitated, debating his next move. In the end he decided

to wait for chance to favor him, if she would.



WHISPERS CAME from the cave, but he could catch no words. Further ahead was another black opening, some twenty feet further on. He managed to work his way swiftly toward that opening, and gasped with relief when he reached it. To his nostrils came an odor of decay, almost indefinable, utterly weird—like dead and gone mortality with only the hint of an odor remaining.

He pushed into the mouth of the cave, poised on his knees and toes with his back to the rear of the cave—and waited—waited for something to happen. Cold chills coursed up his spine and his tanned cheeks flushed. There was an uncomfortable air about—as though someone was creeping up on him from the darkness, which of course he knew to be absurd.

With only the top of his head visible, Soble watched the opening of that other cave. For hours, it seemed, he waited—while from far above, from the Valley of Stone Spruces, came the sounds, faint and faraway of rifle-fire. The barricade had not yet fallen to the Mongols.

He heard a muttered ejaculation, and crouched low to peer around the dank stone which masked him from possible view from the other cave.

Standing there, teetering on the very lip of the abyss, was Cardigan. He was turning his back toward Soble, and setting his feet to the ascent.

"Keep brave, little lady," he called softly through the curtain. "I'll soon have the raiders driven off. Then we can move on to Urumchi!"

Soble stiffened, for he knew that Urumchi was the last place Cardigan would think of visiting. He watched

the giant move swiftly up the narrow ledge, as sure of foot as any mountain goat, saw him reach the top, pause for a moment to look back—then disappear, apparently going in the direction of the spot where his Mongol friends had plainly failed so far to reduce the stone barricade held by Bart Halstead and the five Quazaqs.

Soble waited ten minutes. Then he stepped onto the ledge himself and strode to the door of the other cave from whence Cardigan had come.

He hesitated for a moment, then he swept the curtain aside and stepped in.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor were two Kunguz, between the door of the cave and the girl, who occupied a stone seat near a sort of altar at the cave's far end.

The Kunguz leaped to their feet. The girl screamed. But Soble scarcely heard her. His eyes were literally devouring her from head to foot, and his heart was beating a mad tattoo against his breast.

For, she was the girl of the dead Golden's picture.

Soble spoke first to the Kunguz.

"Make a move for weapons," he snapped, "and I'll kill you both before you can move—throw you over into the gorge!"

Then to the girl:

"What is your name?" he asked unbelievably. "Tell me, quickly."

"Catherine Golden, but why—" She suddenly leveled her finger and pointed it accusingly at him. "Who are you? Are you a foreigner leading the Quazaqs who are trying to capture me and secure the Blue Diamond of Kanze?"

"Are you a relative of Matthias Golden?" he replied hoarsely.

"His daughter, traveling from Kanze to join him. Will you go, or must I fire upon you?"

For the first time he noted the

small yet business-like pearl-handled revolver that nestled capably in her right hand, held low at the hip.

"And I suppose Jake Cardigan," Soble went on, "is protecting you against these foreigners and their Quazaqs who would steal your Blue Diamond of Kanze?"

"He has been very good. He is an escort sent by my father to see me safely through dangerous country. He brought me here to make a stand against the raiders. I'll fire when I count three."

But in her eyes there was a hint of doubt, of uncertainty that belied her words. The pistol wavered the slightest bit.

"I'm taking you out of here," said Soble grimly, "if I have to carry you. You don't know what you are talking about!"

But as Soble stepped forward, daring that revolver muzzle which instantly held again upon him without wavering, the two Kunguz uncoiled and sprang at him, their teeth bared in hideous snarls.

Chapter Seven

THE RETURN



SOBLE WAS in no mood to fool with the Kunguz. They carried knives in their naked fists and showed that they were eager to use them.

He dropped to a half crouch as the Kunguz charged, but dared not fire at them for two reasons. One, he might hit the girl by accident. Two, the sound of the explosion would surely bring Cardigan back. This had to be a battle of fist and skull, and Soble, despite the necessity of getting away in a hurry, was

in the mood for it. He had seen through the piece of trickery Cardigan had used to persuade Catherine Golden in his favor.

Not knowing this part of the world she had believed Cardigan, when all her woman's instinct must have warred against believing him. Soble had got a hint of this in her uncertainty after she had threatened to fire upon him.

Now the Kunguz were upon Soble with knives poised at their hips for savage, disemboweling stabs. He stepped in and drove his knuckles against the jaw of the first one. The man went reeling back toward Catherine Golden. Her face was very white as she stepped aside to avoid colliding with him, and her revolver hung limply at her side, with muzzle pointing at the floor.

Soble grinned to himself and got set for another charge. The second Kunguz, more wary now, circled about, advancing by little jumps, as though hoping to scare Soble into taking a backward step. But Soble didn't fall for that ruse. One step backward and he would plunge over into the gorge.

Now, with face set and eyes narrowed, he dived in and ducked knife thrust. Both fists slashed and smacked against the Kunguz' head and jaw, but the man's jaw seemed to be made of iron. Soble staggered him but could not knock him down.

Soble redoubled the fury of his attack now and slashed out with swinging rights and lefts. The knife was knocked from the Kunguz' hand, and quick as a cat, Soble grabbed his forearm, and by a trick learned in Japan, snapped it until the bones crackled. The Kunguz sank to the floor. In a second the Kunguz was moaning on the floor with a broken forearm.

"Oh, you beast!" gasped the girl. Soble chanced a hurt look, to find

her eyes blazing contempt at him. It hadn't been a nice thing to administer punishment to this Kunguz in her presence, but it had been unavoidable—and time was precious.

Now the second Kunguz, still out on his feet, charged Soble like a bull, from the opposite end of the cave.

But he sidestepped as the Kunguz reached him, and brought his hand down, palm open, its edge poised for a knifelike blow—squarely on the back of the Kunguz' neck. Too late he realized what he had done, for the Kunguz fell forward, smashed against the fur curtain, which gave to let in a cold blast of air—and slipped over the ledge for the plunge into the abyss of the gorge. His wailing death screech was ear-racking.

"I couldn't help it," he said to the girl. "You'll understand everything a little later. Now, I must get you out of here."

But as he advanced upon her, he saw her face whiten to a deadly pallor. Her revolver came up again and pointed squarely at his heart.

"You're leaving here," he said grimly, "and I'm coming to get you. Fire if you're going to, but remember this: Keep that weapon on you afterward, for eventually you will need it against Cardigan—or to use on yourself."

Her finger tightened on the trigger. Soble moved steadily forward. He might have leaped at her, but he knew that might cause the necessary nervous tightening of her finger which would hurl a bullet into his body.

"I am a friend," Soble said solemnly "whether you know it or not I ask you to believe that. Soon I will explain everything."

"Oh," she replied, "I do not know what to believe. I did not like to trust Cardigan, but he had a letter

from my father, in father's own hand."

"Which he must have got by trickery, before. . . ."

But he could not tell her, yet. She caught quickly at his pregnant pause.

"Before what?" she asked.

Perhaps, he thought, it was as well to tell her now as later. The shock might make her more pliable in his hands, for he was thinking of that ghastly journey back up the ledge to the floor of the Valley of Stone Spruces, and wondering how he could make it with her. Cardigan, doubtless, had gathered her up in his arms with a careless laugh, when he had brought her into this place.

"He must have tricked your father into writing that letter," Soble replied grimly, "before he murdered him!"

The girl swayed suddenly. Horror flooded her eyes. Her revolver dropped to the stone floor of the cave. Her hand went to her forehead. She sagged, and Soble caught her to prevent her falling.

He gathered her up, managed to slip a fur coat on her somehow, and a cap over her head. Then he draped her across his back in fireman's fashion and started out the door of the cave.

Gingerly, after a last look at the moaning Kunguz, and the cave-shrine where tallow candles guttered in ancient sconces on the stone walls, Soble let himself out upon the ledge.



HE HAD to press himself flat against the wall. Soble raised his eyes to the crest that seemed a mile away, ahead and above, but could see no one there, for which he was thankful. It seemed too much to hope that the screaming of that Kunguz had passed unheard by the Mongols who still, by

the sound of firing, unsuccessfully attacked the stone barricade.

Slowly, an inch at a time, by refusing to look any direction but ahead, Soble forced his feet, one ahead of the other, along that narrow ledge of death. Every gust of wind threatened to topple him over. Every bit of snow seemed to slide under his feet—and cold sweat broke out on his forehead, and froze in tiny beadlets as they slithered down his checks.

There was nothing to do but go forward—and thread on he did with the limp form of the girl slung precariously across his shoulders.

He breathed a gasp of relief when the lip of the gorge showed no more than fifty feet ahead and above him. Just a few more yards . . . a few more feet . . . mere inches now.

All during the terrible journey the girl had not so much as moved a muscle. But, when the challenge came she did move, convulsively, so that Soble knew she had been fully conscious during most of that dread journey, and had remained quiet lest any movement of hers disturb his balance and send them both down to destruction. She had plenty of courage, for all that she had fainted.

The challenge. . . .

"Very pretty!" came the deep voice of Cardigan. "And very romantic, too. I suppose the hero has told the heroine the whole story? The truth and nothing but the truth? Too bad it will do neither of you any good, for she stays with me, whatever she may say about it—and you go back into the gorge! It will please me to break you in two with my hands. You were a fool! Didn't you realize that when I found your rifle I would know somebody had trailed me to the caves?"

Soble's heart pounded with excitement. He had fully expected Cardigan to send a bullet into him as

soon as he saw him. That he hadn't, gave him a fighting chance.

He dropped the girl to the snow, and saw her dart aside toward the narrow trail leading out of the valley. He had then fell to his pistol—only to find that somewhere along the ledge he had lost it.

"All right, Cardigan," he said defiantly, and balled his fists. "Let's get on with the business. Wait, young lady."

Cardigan, who had been standing back from the gorge, with his huge hands on his hips, laughed mockingly—charged like a mad bull, but in grim, purposeful silence.

Chapter Eight

PRIMORDIAL



THAT CARDIGAN intended to lift him and toss him to oblivion into the gorge, Soble knew quite well. He was battling for his life from the instant Cardigan began his charge. If ever the big man placed hands on him, Soble knew he was through, his life's race done. But it was not of this in itself he thought as he braced himself to meet the attack of the murderer. He thought of what the future would hold for the girl if Cardigan defeated him.

It came to Soble, as he faced Cardigan, that this fight was a carbon copy of thousands of other fights just like it, fights which went down the dim dusty corridors of the ages; fights which were fought in different lives through the endless past. Larry Soble and Jake Cardigan, fighting here in the barren wastes for a woman. Life was old yet young, and chivalry was not a departed form of gallantry. For here

he was, a gallant knight out of the pages of the past—fighting for a woman's honor. It was easy to believe that, standing there at the top of the gorge, with the Valley of Stone Spruces beyond.

He smiled wanly as he set himself and waited for the impact of Cardigan's mad charge.

Now he was the rapier. Cardigan the broadsword or the mace—the battleaxe. If ever the broadsword landed squarely, or the mace came in contact with bone and sinew, Larry Soble was dead. It would have been that easy for Cardigan. But Soble was fast on his feet. He was, moreover, a clever boxer, with dynamite in either clenched fist.

So, and it must have amazed Cardigan, who would not have been surprised that Soble turned and jumped into the abyss to escape him—Soble stepped forward to meet the giant.

"There, Cardigan," he snapped out briskly as his fist flashed, "is one in the mouth for the word you used among the Mongols to describe Miss Golden!"

Blood spurted from the smashed lips and dripped down upon Cardigan's tunic. But Cardigan laughed. The blow had merely snapped his neck back a bit, and smashed lips were nothing in the life of Cardigan.

"When I have finished with her," said Cardigan, his great arms working like pistons, "she'll be not treat even for the Mongol to try."

"For that I shall beat your mouth to a pulp!" retorted Soble.

"Even beaten to a pulp it will be good enough to bite you in two pieces and spit you over into the gorge," snapped Cardigan in reply.

Funny, this grim battle, with the two opponents engaged in repartee on the very lips of death.

Soble was not consciously trying to prove himself before the girl, but something inside him prompted him

not to try to reach a spot further removed from the gorge—where he might further his own safety, but, in doing so, leave her open to a greater danger.

Cardigan was scarcely breathing hard, and was pressing the fight with the tenacity of a leech. His grin was red and horrible, and Soble kept wondering if, in case he should beat the murderer, Cardigan would throw aside all sportsmanship and finish the fight with the Luger that swung at his belt. Soble watched for that movement, remembering how snake-swift Cardigan had been with the weapon in the Mongol *yurta*. But the furious seconds passed and Cardigan made no move for his weapon.

Soble would have dived in in that event, and tackled him, fought Cardigan's own fight, to prevent him firing. Cardigan might think of that, too, and move for the weapon to draw Soble close enough for his great arms to get in their work.

Cardigan stopped stock still for a moment and laughed.

"Yes. I can outguess you in any game you care to mention," he said sneeringly, and poised purposely in a defenseless attitude.

"Except this one, Cardigan," Soble rasped. "I'm going to beat you to a pulp with my bare fists, and then put a bullet into you with your own gun."

"Why not be a real hero and take me back to Urumchi to stand trial?" was Cardigan's mocking retort. And it recalled Soble's duty, for Cardigan had spoken the truth. Soble and Halstead must return him to Urumchi if it lay within the bounds of possibility.

"I shall do that, after all, Cardigan," retorted Soble ironically. "Thanks for reminding me. You will stand in front of a firing squad yet."

Cardigan laughed again and Soble's fists, both of them, left and right, smashed against his mouth—but they did little more than break the even flow of his laughter. Cardigan was a brute and appeared almost impervious to pain. Catherine Golden was leaning against the wall where the outward trail began, like a woman done in stone, watching the pygmy and the Titan, battling for her—watching silently and white-faced.

Soble did not sidestep as quickly as usual before Cardigan's next charge, and Cardigan drove him, gasping and afraid for the first time, to the very edge of the precipice before he could slip free of the flailing fists. But he was instantly glad that it had happened, for as he had tottered there a broken cry from the girl had struck his ears, and gone to his heart.

"Oh, be careful! God help him!" she exclaimed.

He knew then that the prayer had not been for Cardigan, but for him, and there was fresh strength in the knowledge.

He lashed in with renewed fury and hammered a constant tattoo on Cardigan's face and eyes. In that way he might wear him down, blind him and beat him—if only no Mongols came to interrupt. He wondered why Cardigan did not shout for his Mongol friends, but second thought cleared his mind.

If he lost, and the Mongols saw, they would see, too, that he was not invincible—and would gang him, perhaps tear him limb from limb. He dared not risk his fear-rule over the Mongols. At the same time, if any arrived on the scene by chance, Cardigan could shoot Soble, if he was getting the best of it. Soble's one chance was to batter the big man down, then run for it—but where?



HE REFUSED to think of that, however, willing for the future to look out for itself. His fists were getting through Cardigan's guard faster and more often than before, and the big man was staggering. Deep within him Soble prayed for the little more strength he would need when the climax came—and everything must be put into a blow to knock the big man out.

Cardigan was breathing heavily now, for it was harder to fight a man you could not always hit, than to fight one you never missed. Because it was exasperating as well as exhausting. The girl still stood where she had stopped, at the end of the trail.

But Soble scarcely dared look at her.

He was afraid to turn his head aside for even an instant, for the fact that Cardigan had not fired upon him, made him watch all the more closely for some trick. Cardigan had not fired, perhaps, because fire would draw the Mongols to investigate. For the same reason Soble would not dare fire, for he must somehow run the gauntlet of the Mongols, and gain the doubtful haven of the barricade where Halstead was doubtless holding his own.

The big Cardigan was hurling profane oaths right and left now. "For each obscenity, Cardigan," said Soble, "you get another punch in the mouth."

And Soble kept his word, though he did not stop the flow of Cardigan's cursing.

Then. . . .

The time came. Soble bunched himself, stiffened his muscles and spine, dug in with his toes, and sent a right from his hip that packed everything he possessed of strength, accuracy and scientific knowledge of

boxing.

The blow exploded against the chin of Cardigan like a charge of dynamite, and Cardigan staggered back—toward the gorge!

Soble hurled in, fastened his fingers in the bloody coat of Cardigan, kept him from going over—and when Cardigan crumpled, the breath going out of him in bubbling gasps, Soble dragged him back from the edge.

Now he hurried to the girl.

"Do you believe, now?" he asked hoarsely.

"Yes," she answered. "Where do we go?"

"We've got to run the gauntlet of the Mongols that surround my camp."

He looked at Cardigan with real regret. He did not even think of trying to lift and carry the murderer. It would have been impossible. Nor, he knew, had he made Cardigan prisoner when the giant aroused himself—could he possibly hope to get him to the encampment, through Cardigan's Mongol friends. Whatever they thought of Cardigan, they would take his part against these invaders from Urumchi who had taken the lives of many of them.

So he left Cardigan, with wounds cooling in the snow, and with his left hand at Catherine's elbow, and his right clutching the Luger he had taken from the now unconscious giant—he struck straight toward the barricade.

Chapter Eight

THE GAUNTLET



NOW AND again a choked sob broke from the lips of the girl as she ran at Soble's side. Her fear had passed,

Soble knew, but she had not yet recovered from the shock of her father's death. This girl was a thoroughbred, though, for she did not pause in the slightest when, materializing out of the gloom ahead, they saw the running figures of the Mongols. The snow was dotted with dead ones at a number of places, proof enough of the efficacy of Bart Halstead's firing.

Soble had almost forgotten his strange premonition about Halstead—that he was a man already condemned to die, and soon. Too many things had happened during the last few hours for him to dwell on that.

As Soble ran he called to the girl over his shoulder.

"Keep close behind me, Miss," he said. "We're not going to stop to fire at these Mongols. We'll put up a bold front and run right among them. We'll have to get through them somehow, anyway, and we may as well dive right in. And remember, it would not be nice for you to be taken by them."

"I won't keep behind you," she said quickly. "I can use this revolver very well indeed, even though I couldn't bring myself to fire at you."

"Why couldn't you?"

"I don't know. A conviction inside me that you were a friend, perhaps. I had been wondering about Cardigan, too. He had found too many occasions to touch me with his hands when it was entirely unnecessary, and I didn't like the way he looked at me."

The girl carried the revolver tightly gripped in her right hand, and now increased her stride until she was running side by side with Soble. Bullets were still coming from the barricade, and Soble wondered why in the world the Mongols had not settled the whole thing by

a concerted charge from all sides at once.

Then, suddenly, he thought to look at his watch. Despite the length of time which seemed to have intervened since he had set out on the trail of Cardigan, he had been gone from the Valley of Stone Spruces only a quarter of an hour. Instead of having held out against the Mongols for hours, Halstead and his Quazaqs had kept them at bay less than half an hour at the most.

But so much had happened that it seemed an eternity. His musings were cut short here, for the Mongols nearest them had noted their running approach across the wastes. They were not firing on them yet, but were merely curious as to their identity. They had seen a big man, Cardigan, disappear into Keck-su, and now two people, both of them together but little larger than Cardigan, returning out of the gorge.

In a minute the two would be among them, and would be recognized. But it was no longer dark and there was no use weeping about it. It had been dark when he had slipped from the barricade, but was dark no longer—at least not the deep, cold darkness that had possessed the Valley of the Stone Spruces when he had come out among the Mongols and saw Cardigan in the *yrta*.

Now the Mongols were calling to one another, and several of them had drawn together in a group directly in line with the barricade. In one way this suited Soble's book, for Halstead, suspecting something of the truth, or guessing at least that he was returning, would make sure that no bullets from the barricade itself should endanger him.

Soble resolved that if he were downed, he would shoot the girl on the spot. Mongols were especially impossible where women were con-

cerned—loaned their own wives to friends desirous of begetting sons; and knew nothing of love as Soble's kind thought of love. For the girl to fall into their hands meant misery unthinkable.

"We must beat them to the jump, Miss," he said grimly. "Let them have it when I fire, and don't be squeamish. If they capture you they'll have little consideration for you—less for you, because you are a woman, than they would have for me as a man. You understand?"

"Too well," came her grim reply, in a voice, however, that trembled not in the slightest.

The Mongols were bunching there, and Soble realized that Halstead's holding of his fire was likely to boomerang. His bullets did not endanger them; but at the same time they left the Mongols free to act as they saw fit.

The rifles were rising to shoulders.

"Now!" spat Soble. "Fire into the thick of them, and increase your stride."

He himself leaped forward like a stricken deer, and pleased to note that the girl easily kept pace with him. From his half raised right hand the Luger automatic of Cardigan spoke flatly. A scream rose from the Mongols as one of their number fell on his face and his knees in the snow, both hands clasped to his middle.

Rifles spoke savagely now, but bullets were speeding from Soble's Luger, and from the little derringer in the hand of Catherine Golden. At such a range it was impossible to miss, and the Mongols were already in turmoil from the effect of the death which the two silent runners were hurling into them. And the advancing duo did not hesitate as they approached, but were increasing their speed, as though they would run over the Mongols as

lightly as they would have run over unarmed pygmies in their pathway.

It was beyond their experience, but they must have remembered Cardigan's threats, for those of them left standing held their position, while out of the snow, to right and left, came others. Then Soble handed his automatic to the girl, and clubbed the rifle which he had carried in his left hand.

"Behind me, Miss," he yelled at her. "Shoot anybody who tries to take me from the side, and keep right on my heels, understand?"



"TLL be with you," she answered tersely.

He ignored men who rushed him from either side, and when the first enemy fell before his whirlwind attack with the clubbing rifle, he slashed on through, with the girl at his heels. Her revolver barked and its reports were answered by screams of pain from the Mongols.

Then the tiny bark of her revolver gave way to the roaring crash of the Lugar, and he knew that she had exhausted the cartridges in her revolver and had switched to the weapon Larry had given her—Cardigan's. It had no more than three cartridges left in it, if Soble had made no mistake in the count, and Cardigan had not refilled the magazine after slaying the Mongol in the *yrta*.

He was fighting like a fury now, smashing forward, sending savage blows to fur-covered heads, turning aside as he ran to smash into the Mongols with hunched shoulder, bowling them over in the snow—and as men fell they screamed for their friends to come to their aid. If Soble were once forced to stand and fight, unable to proceed further toward the barricade, he was finished, and the girl with him—of

that he was sure. But nothing could stop him, he told himself fiercely, unless the girl was wounded.

Now he heard his name called from the barricade.

"Larry!" it was Bart Halstead's voice. "Is that you, Larry?"

"Yes," Soble answered. "Turn your guns on the chaps running in from right and left, or we'll never make it through!"

Instantly Halstead laid down a sort of box barrage to right and left of the fugitives which, while it did not harm the Mongols against whom he was directly fighting, it did prevent others from joining them. With renewed vigor, and forgetting that he had scarcely paused for a moment's rest in many hours, Soble lunged and struck, and lunged again.

The Mongols could not fire for fear of hitting their own, but they could borrow from Soble's book and attack with clubbing rifles, which they did. But Soble struck aside the rifles of those directly ahead of him, leaving to the girl the task of shooting down any who came in from either side.

"My last bullet!" it came like a moan from the girl, and with a last tremendous effort Soble blasted down a pair of Mongols who still stood out ahead of him, hurled his rifle into the faces of others coming in—an act he was later to regret—then whirled and caught the girl by the hand.

If he had made speed before, he redoubled his speed now, racing with the girl until she was almost a dead weight on his hands. But she somehow managed to keep her feet, though her breath was coming in panting gasps, and the Mongols were racing close at their heels.

The barricade was just ahead. Soon the Mongols must either overtake and drag them down, or unduly

expose themselves to fire from the barricade if the fugitives escaped them, entered the barricade, and turned the rifles upon them again.

They drew back, then, and Soble still clinging to the girl's hand, gained the barricade.

"Thank God, Larry," came Halstead's choking voice. "And who. . . ?"

"This is Catherine Golden, Matthias Golden's daughter, Bart. I wondered what extra weight Cardigan's horse was carrying, and I've found out. This lady is it."

Bart Halstead's face was very pale, and his answering grin looked drawn and a little ghastly. But it clung to his face, almost like a mask, and Soble realized that something was wrong with Halstead. Instantly that old premonition came back—and he leaped toward Halstead, arms outstretched, questions flooding to his lips.

But before Soble could reach him, Halstead crumpled and fell. Drops of blackish crimson stained the snow near his head.

"I held out 'til you came back, didn't I, Larry?" mumbled Halstead. Then he became still.

Soble thrust his hand under Halstead's coat, to find the heart beating strongly.

He yelled to a couple of Quazaqs to help bear Halstead into their *yurta*, then he bade the girl go and tend him. He took her Luger and revolver, brought out another rifle of his own from their dunnage, placed plenty of ammunition within reach of his hands, and took the post behind the barricade that Halstead had relinquished.

Strange, but every last Mongol seemed to have melted utterly in the darkness. Their attack had failed—but the silence which now held sway seemed even more ominous than a concerted attack with re-

newed fury would have seemed.

While trying to fathom the intention of the enemy, he wondered anew of many things. What was to be done now?

What of the Blue Diamond of Kanze?

What would Cardigan's next move be?

Chapter Nine

CARDIGAN'S ULTIMATUM



BUT THE night drew to a close and nothing happened—nothing that is in which Cardigan played an important part. Soble remained on guard while the cold ate into his bones like acid, and frost formed on his eyebrows. He stomped his feet to keep them warm when he was not circling the inside of the barricade to make sure that none crept up too close.

The light still glowed in the *yurta* where Catherine Golden kept watch over Halstead, and fought for his life. Once she came out, her face drawn and pale, to speak with Soble.

"Your friend is going to die," she said. "I don't think even a doctor could save him."

"I know," replied Soble dully. "I knew it yesterday, when I tried to keep him from coming with me to the Valley of Stone Spruces."

"How did you know?" she gasped.

"I felt it inside me."

It sounded silly the way he put it, but now the facts were proving that his premonition had been all too true.

The girl's mittened hand rested on Soble's shoulder for a few seconds, and no more words were spoken. Then she went back to the *yurta*.

Soble dared not even spare a second to look in at Halstead, for the Quazaqs were not dependable as sentries, and even in a split second, disaster might descend upon the beleaguered ones in the stone barricade.

But across the wastes nothing moved at all. No shouts rang through the night, and the dead Mongols were left where they had fallen. Soble knew that they were all doomed unless they got away sometime during the day. The Mongols, backed by Cardigan, could keep them bottled up indefinitely, and in the end must win. They could gain nothing by waiting, for waiting weakened them physically, and reduced their supplies. Each hour that passed but served to make their position all the more untenable.

Soble watched the sun come up across the wastes. His red-rimmed eyes could still discern, across the snow, the dark splotches which had yesterday been men. The Mongols, as usual, had left their dead to the elements. Bart Halstead and his Quazaqs had accounted for many of those dark splotches and now Halstead himself must die.

But a doctor. . . .

Soble felt that even though Halstead was sure to go, he might have some sort of chance, however long, to escape death if he could be taken to a doctor. Days of riding might kill him, but Halstead would prefer to die on his feet, or astride his horse, than to pass here in the grim Valley of the Stone Spruces, while his enemies circled the barricade and kept his friends boxed in.

With the sun up, turning the valley into a weird plain of stone pinnacles, Soble entrusted the Quazaqs with the duties of guards, then he slipped into the tent to Bart Halstead. Catherine Golden was asleep, her head in her knees, as she had slipped forward in the midst of car-

ing for the stricken man.

Halstead was conscious, and he grinned at Soble.

"This girl—she's one in a million, Larry—tells me rather frankly that I haven't a chance, but from what I hear none of us has a chance here. Can't we do something? I'd rather take mine as it comes, with a good rifle stock against my shoulder, than to pass out here like a dog. Let's make a break for it."

"They'll get us as we pass along the trail, Bart," said Soble grimly, "even if we are able to cross the valley floor and reach the trail leading out. I doubt if we can do that."

"But if I weren't here, and so helpless, you'd try it wouldn't you?"

Soble nodded before he thought how Bart would feel, his helplessness making him a sort of nuisance on the hands of the others. Then he caught himself, started to speak—and Halstead grinned, put out his hand.

"I know. I meant to take you by surprise that way. I knew the truth anyway. Listen, this girl isn't a doctor, and at the moment I feel pretty strong. The bullet that got me didn't quite get one of my lungs, I think, though, it came damned close. Once get me into the saddle and I can ride, and if we get away from these Mongols and Cardigan, you can fasten me to the saddle and stop to thaw me out whenever it looks as though I might freeze to death."

Soble searched the drawn face of Bart Halstead carefully. There were beads of perspiration on Halstead's forehead, but his lips were set in a firm straight line. After all, a husky fellow like Halstead might conceivably fool doctors who would give his case up as hopeless.

"I've had a good rest during the night," pursued Halstead. "I know

we can make it."

Soble nodded assent then, quickly pressed the hand of his friend, and stepped from the *yurta*. He called the five remaining Quazaqs about him.

"If we stay here," he told them bluntly, "sooner or later the Mongols will either drive us out and slay us, or starve us out. The other white master and myself have decided to make a run for it. We may all get killed in doing it, but we'll get killed anyway, sooner or later, if we remain here. Are you willing to try the escape?"

The Quazaqs chattered among themselves for a few minutes. They seemed to have no fear, now that the sun was up, though to Soble the Valley of Stone Spruces seemed even more weird than it had seemed during the night, under the falling snow. The Quazaqs, unsmiling, finally turned to him.

"We'll go," said their spokesman.



ONCE MORE Soble scanned the wastes in all directions. No figures moved upon their face, and from the gorge came only the sound of whistling wind. He shivered a little. If nothing else, that gorge would be as cold to traverse as a glacier. But it was better than dying here like so many dogs.

"Prepare the animals, but pack them lightly," he ordered the Quazaqs. "Then stand by here to tear down the barricade for us to pass through when I give the word. I'll be leading your ponies, and you can jump on them as we dash through. You will keep the wounded master and the woman under close guard. You may even have to help him a little. But no harm must come to either, understand? If we escape, not one of you will ever again need to want for money with which to

furnish yourselves with food."

The Quazaqs grinned. They saw visions, perhaps, of days when they would no longer need to trail their starving herds from pasture to pasture, eking out a living howsoever they could. To be independent was a dream none of them might ever hope for, even in the best of circumstances.

They raced to the lower ground where the animals were secured, and Soble turned back to the task of watching for any demonstration on the part of the Mongols. But there was nothing, though he knew very well that at their first movement, bullets would probably be hurled at them from all directions. But, at the least, they would die in the open, fighting.

Soble quickly turned his head to the left as a hail came from somewhere among the stone trees off there where, last night, he had played at tag with the Mongols. The voice of Cardigan rolled across the wastes like the bellow of a bull.

"Ho, there, the barricade!" he yelled.

Soble hesitated a moment before answering. But then he recalled that besides his duty to Bart Halstead and Catherine Golden, he owed a duty to Urumchi—that of returning Cardigan for trial, and of recapturing the loot Cardigan had taken from the Turkestan Trading Company. Besides, he supposed, though he hadn't asked the girl, Cardigan had possession of the Blue Diamond of Kanze.

"Ho, Cardigan," he answered.

Cardigan laughed boisterously.

"So you're still there, eh? I rather like you, fellow, I've never seen anyone before except myself who could stampede Mongols the way you do; but it hasn't helped you any. There are only a handful of you, while I can gather more Mongols merely by

snapping my fingers."

"Never mind the blather, Cardigan!" yelled Soble, casting quick glances about to see whether Cardigan were trying to distract his attention while his Mongols closed on the barricade somewhere else. "What do you want?"

"I want the girl. Turn her over and I'll let you go with your escort. If you don't—I'll take your barricade sooner or later, and turn the girl over to my Mongol friends! You know what that means?"

"I do, yes. And my answer is—go to Hell! I'll be taking you in yet, Cardigan, and you'll face a firing squad for killing Golden."

Soble whirled as a gasp came from behind him. The girl had come out at the sound of voices, and he knew that she had heard Cardigan's ultimatum. But she had also heard Soble's reply. She said nothing. There was nothing she could say. She could scarcely be expected to offer herself to save her companions, especially after Cardigan's words. No one would have expected it of her. It was one of those things people didn't even question.

"Is Halstead conscious?" he asked softly.

"Yes."

"Then I'll help him out and onto a pony in a few minutes. But I'll try to put Cardigan off for a few moments."

He raised his voice again in a shout to the murderer. His finger itched on the trigger and his eyes strained to catch a glimpse of Cardigan. Echoes among the stone spruces, however, made it almost impossible to tell whence the hail had come.

"I said, Cardigan," he shouted, "that you could go to Hell!"

"Yes, and I can raise plenty of the same. This time I'll lead the attack in person, and you can bet

we won't turn back."

"Go to it!"

Cardigan's laughter died away among the stone spruces. Cardigan was going back toward the Mongol encampment to rouse his friends to a new attack. Now, if ever, was the time for Soble to act. The ponies were ready, for a Quazaq was beckoning to him from the place where they had been tethered.

"Here, Miss," said Soble grimly, "take this rifle and keep an eye open for raiders until I give the word for you to do something else. We're making a break if Bart can stand to ride, even a little."

With the sureness of practise the girl took the rifle, examined it to make sure there was a cartridge in the chamber, and turned to face the grim valley.

From the pothole where the Mongols were encamped came loud cries which proved to Soble that Cardigan was stirring them up to new attempts, perhaps with offers of huge bribes. His face was stern as he stepped into the *yurta*, stooped over Bart Halstead, and helped him to his unsteady feet.

He helped him out of the *yurta*, lifted him to his own mount's back, then ordered the Quazaqs to the barricade. This done he called softly to the girl and helped her to mount a pony. Then, gathering the tie ropes of the five Quazaq ponies in his hands, he nodded to the Quazaqs, who stood beside the barricade, ready to make a breach for the ponies to dash through.

He raised his hand as a signal, took a deep breath, brought it down again—and the Quazaqs began to work on the stones of the barricade like so many beavers. They heaved rocks right and left, and a way was open in a matter of seconds. Then Soble lashed the animals into a run, and the Quazaqs jumped aside as

the eight ponies dashed for the breach. Each Quazaq leaped for his own pony, clutching at the rope as he jumped, and the whole desperate cavalcade broke from the stronghold almost in a body.

Soble fully expected the Quazaqs to dash away for the gorge, leaving their white masters to get through as best they could; but he felt ashamed of his belief when the five nomads closed in around Halstead and the girl, who rode stirrup to stirrup—masking their bodies with their own.

Soble himself led the way at a swift gallop. But even as the party swept toward the gorge, there rose over all the Valley of Stone Spruces the mocking laughter of Jake Cardigan—and from among the needle-like pinnacles came scores of Mongols on horseback.

It was as though Cardigan had known the beleaguered ones were planning to break from the barricade, and had been ready—for a dozen Mongols swept out of the pinnacles and to the head of the gorge, where they swung into formation to bar the way of the fugitives.

Chapter Ten

THE BREAKAWAY



BUT THERE could be no drawing back now, and Soble merely urged his sturdy pony to a faster pace.

From among the stone spruces rode other Mongols, and all were shouting to the fugitives. At their head rode Cardigan himself, and as he rode he yelled at the Mongols who held the opening to the Keck-su trail.

"If you let them through I'll blow

your heads off!"

Soble knew instantly from the quick chattering among the Quazaqs that they had understood the grim words of Cardigan. Soble swung aside and threw his rifle to his shoulder for a quick shot at Cardigan. But he missed, and a Mongol away to the right of Cardigan tumbled from his saddle as his pony fell dead. Soble could scarcely expect to do expert shooting from the back of a racing pony. He devoted his attention now to the Mongols directly ahead of them.

The Quazaqs, he knew, were expert horsemen; but so were the Mongols, and they were facing the fugitives in the shape of a semicircle, so that when the shock came they could simply close up, like the jaws of a trap, and hold the whole party until Cardigan arrived with other Mongols, making escape utterly out of the question.

Soble called to Halstead and the girl.

"Keep right between the two Quazaqs I shall designate in a minute, and right on the heels of the three who will precede you—and don't stop until we've got through. The minute we manage it, Miss Golden will get into the lead and race along the trail which borders Keck-su. Bart, you'll follow her. After you will come the Quazaqs, while I'll bring up the rear and try to keep the Mongols from coming within range."

White faced, both the girl and Halstead nodded.

Soble now commanded the Quazaqs: "One of you on either side of the wounded white master and the woman. One will ride directly behind me when I give the word, while the other two will ride so that the noses of their ponies will be about midway of the flanks of the pony behind mine, understand? I want to hit those Mongols as though we

were an arrow—understand arrow? I'll be the point of the arrow, and the Mongols will have to give way for me. As they slide past me the two on either side will wedge in, thrusting them further aside. after which the two riding side by side with the wounded man and the woman will add to the movement. Do you understand? We'll form a shape like a knife blade, and we won't stop until we get through. When we get through, make a way for the woman to ride first onto the gorge trail, after her the wounded white master—and after him yourselves. I'll ride in the rear."

The Quazaqs grinned, and there was admiration in their faces for Larry Soble. The ponies were running with their bellies close to the ground, literally devouring the quarter mile or so between them and the Mongols who blocked the way of escape.

Just for a second Soble remembered that single bullet which had killed the Quazaq when they had entered the valley, and wondered if there were coigns of vantage on the opposite wall of the gorge where Cardigan might have placed riflemen to pick them off the trail on the off chance that they got through the cordon of yellow men.

But he decided against that. Cardigan had probably shot the Quazaq from the top of the precipitous trail that led down to the cave-shrine. Anyway he had to take a chance on that, and anything was better than waiting to be starved out of the barricade.

He'd have to forego capturing Cardigan this time—although secretly he had resolved to put Halstead and the girl in the hands of the Quazaqs with orders to them to get both to some Quazaq encampment, then return himself to try again to take Cardigan, this time by stealth.

Perhaps, he thought ruefully, he might have accomplished more had he started alone in the beginning. Stealth had more chance of success than a show of force, especially against a man who could gather such a force of his own with such ease.

"When I give the signal," he cautioned the Quazaqs, as they swept closer to the Mongol barrier, "jump into position as I ordered you."

They grinned and nodded. One false move and the freak formation he had outlined to them would fail—and the whole outfit would become prisoners, and Cardigan would laugh and carry out his whims, whatever they might be.

Closer and closer they rode to the Mongols, who now were sitting crouched forward in their saddles, tensing for the shock. Their hands were raised as though they were jockeys with whips in their hands, waiting for the springing of the barrier.

Still Soble waited to give the signal.



THEY WERE within fifty feet of the Mongols—twenty—ten—when he shouted to the Quazaqs. A cry of exultation rose in his throat when the nomads instantly kneeed their ponies into position to form a stout triangle of horse-flesh, with the girl and Halstead at its base, and Soble himself as the apex.

The Mongols seemed startled and a little bewildered by the swift tactics of the oncoming fugitives, but Soble had figured on that to give him a little additional advantage, where plenty was needed if they were to have a chance at all.

"Out of the way, you scum!" he yelled suddenly, rising in his stirrups and bringing up his rifle for a quick shot over his pony's head.

The flying wedge struck the cen-

ter of the Mongols, a split second or two after a bullet from Soble's rifle had drilled one of the Mongol ponies, which plumped in its tracks, forcing the ponies on either side to veer away for a brief space.

Soble swung his clubbed rifle up and began to lay about him. The Quazaqs fired from their hips into the thick of the Mongols who were closing on them—and the wedge of attacking horse-flesh smashed into the semi-circle of the defenders with all the impetus gained by the race across the valley floor plus the weight of animals and riders.

Ponies went down, right and left. One was a Quazaq mount. Soble gasped. He couldn't leave one of these loyal Quazaqs to fall into the hands of the Mongols. But the Quazaq who fell yelled at him to keep going, and himself vaulted, with never a pause in speed it seemed, into an empty Mongol saddle and swept back into his place in the formation.

"This stud is better than mine anyway!" the Quazaq yelled.

In spite of himself Soble grinned. So far their attack had succeeded, and they had broken through the cordon of Mongols. However, there was a long dangerous trail ahead, and a long trek to the nearest town where help might be secured, and as long as Cardigan kept on their trail, they were in almost as much danger as though they had remained in the barricade. But at least they were trying, which was something—and the future must look out for itself.

The Quazaqs swerved the instant they had broken through, while the Mongols were forming again behind them—and the girl booted her pony into the lead, taking the ghastly ledge trail without the slightest hesitation. After her went Halstead, while the Quazaqs and Soble turned on the Mongols and sent bullet after

bullet into their midst.

Then one by one, while the remaining ones stood a rear guard action, the Quazaqs followed Halstead in single file, until only Larry Soble was left.

His last bullet took a charging Mongol in the chest, and the fellow rolled free, so close on the heels of Soble that he slid to the lip of the gorge, and flopped over—in silence, which proved that he was already dead.

The girl was traveling the terrible trail at a swift run, which was suicidal. But it was also necessary that they cover almost a mile of the trail at the fastest possible pace, since Mongols could follow along the rim far above for that distance, and shoot straight down at them. Cardigan would have thought of that, too, perhaps, or would think of it now—and they must get beyond the place on the trail where it was possible for the enemy to parallel their course on the far rim above the narrow ledge.

Larry warmed to the courage of Catherine Golden, who was taking desperate chances on the ledge, trusting wholly to the surefootedness of her mount. If, by ill fortune, she happened to meet someone on the trail at that mad pace, it would be a catastrophe for her and for whoever met her. Two animals could not possibly pass on the trail, nor could one be turned.

At least so Soble thought at the moment.



THE MONGOLS, thwarted at the top of the trail, were waiting for Cardigan, giving him the right to lead the pursuit by reason of his overlordship of the moment.

That also gave the fugitives a bit of time.

All eight animals were traveling at breakneck speed, but Soble knew that Cardigan would travel just as fast too—for he gave the murderer credit for being absolutely fearless. Soble glanced down into the abyss of the gorge, and swayed dizzily on his saddle.

Now the pursuers were out of sight behind a bend in the trail.

Soble drew a deep breath of relief—for the moment—and slowed down a little, yelling to the others to do the same. Any moment and a pony might slip, roll over and dash himself and rider into eternity. At the same time, if an animal stumbled on the ledge and slowed down even for an instant, the one next in line behind would have to slide to a halt, or catapult into the brute that had stumbled—all sorts of terrible things might happen.

Since the Mongols, headed by Cardigan, could only follow in single file, it was just as safe to slow down as to travel at top speed.

Soble paused behind a curve in the trail, where the stone wall obscured the view behind, and looked back. Cardigan had dismounted one of the Mongols, who ran ahead of Cardigan—and Soble swore softly to himself. The running man would warn Cardigan of any trap ahead, of any man who slowed down to fire upon him. Cardigan was protecting himself then with plenty of care.

But the race continued.

Soble was now mentally looking ahead, remembering—remembering that bridge where a man and his pony had crashed through and had almost fallen into Keck-su. At that place the wall made a deep bend inward, the trail curving down to the bridge which crossed a deep gash in the wall. Across that bridge the trail turned right again, always against the wall—

Soble remembered that. The bridge

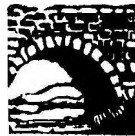
couldn't have been repaired since they had crossed. There would be trouble in plenty crossing it, and plenty of delay, by which time Cardigan would have reached the turn in the cliff wall where the trail turned left around the bend—from which position, himself perfectly protected, he could pick off with ease, one after the other, the whole cavalcade as it filed along on the trail on the opposite side of the curve, across the abyss.

And Catherine Golden was leading! Halstead could not act as rear guard at the curve, nor could the girl, and he was afraid to trust a Quazaq with the important task, especially as their knowledge of mountaineering would be needed to see the party safely over the bridge. He could not stand rear guard himself, and trust the others to get the girl over in safety.

It must become a race again then, with the hope that all could cross the bridge and negotiate the curve before Cardigan could get in position to pick off the men—and overtake the girl at his leisure.

Chapter Eleven

THE PASSING OF A MAN



THE IN-CURVE where the smashed bridge crossed the abyss was the one place on the trail where a horse could be turned, a fact of dreadful significance, of which but one man at the moment of their arrival was cognizant.

As Soble closed up to assist in the crossing, Halstead drew aside, sagging in his saddle, and his tortured eyes met those of his friend's. He

tried to straighten, but the grin he forced to his lips was ghastly.

"Don't worry, pal," he gasped. "I'll make it. I've got to."

Halstead's eyes lifted to the ledge beyond the bridge, where it made the almost right-angled turn to the right, and again they came back to Soble's.

"Yes, Bart, we've got to hurry," Soble answered the unspoken question. "If they get to the curve before we're around that one, a single rifleman can pick off every last one of us."

"So I figured," said Halstead softly. "God, if only I were of some use."

Soble laughed, trying to hint at hope which he did not feel. Then he stepped forward and with the aid of two of Quazaqs, got the girl's pony across, and saw her mounted. He immediately ordered her to hurry, and pass around the curve in the trail to safety. There would be plenty of delay here, for the one pony which had crossed—her's—had made hard going of it, and the others were trembling as they stared at the frail structure.

"Larry," groaned Halstead, "I simply can't go on, but—"

Soble turned to stare at Halstead, and in that instant Halstead whirled his pony, dug his knees into its ribs, and started back along the way they had come—at full speed.

"Bart, come back! For God's sake what are you doing?"

And then he understood. Halstead knew that he could not live to the end of the chase, and was intent upon doing a man's part to help those who were his friends—to help Soble, and the Quazaq nomads who had been loyal. He was deliberately racing back at top speed to meet Cardigan, well knowing that two animals could not meet and pass on that trail.

With a sob of helplessness, Soble

caught up his rifle and dashed on foot after Halstead, knowing very well that the pursuers were not far behind and that Halstead would have met them before he could possibly have mounted and given chase. And even if he overtook Halstead, they could not turn around again and come back—and the task of backing the animals, even if they lived through the brush with Cardigan and his Mongols, would be slow and terrible.

He ran until his lungs were near to bursting with the effort until he reached the curve in the trail.

There was Halstead, now riding stiffly erect in his saddle, while from his lips yells of defiance were hurled at Cardigan, in full view dead ahead, just now rising in his stirrups and bringing his rifle to his shoulder.

Halstead hadn't a chance. He did not even have a rifle.

Soble could do nothing for him, as Halstead himself, and his mount, masked the pursuers against being fired upon. Halstead's intention was plain. He intended to crash Cardigan from the trail, because neither animal could turn. In any case, he was stopping the pursuit in the most effective, though most terrible manner.

Soble sobbed again. Halstead was doomed.

In that instant Cardigan's rifle spoke flatly, while Halstead's charging horse was no more than twenty feet from him. Halstead swayed for a moment in his saddle. Then his reins swung free, and both his hands clung to the saddle. Soble knew that Halstead had been hit, but knew too that the big man would not drop until he had crashed his pony into Cardigan's.

Halstead was going out like a man—and yet—

Soble prayed for a miracle to save him, even though he felt certain that

Halstead was a man already dead. He had been dying before, and had taken Cardigan's bullet in the chest.

Soble was hopelessly left behind, but he kept on running. He did not think that he himself was running to sure death, though on the ledge behind Cardigan he could see a score of Mongols, riding single file.

He thought of nothing but that Halstead was offering himself as a sacrifice to make safe the way for his own return.

Cardigan hesitated as though to jump from his horse. Yet that was impossible. There was scarcely room between his horse and the wall for a man to stand, and on the outside there was only—abysmal Keck-su.

Cardigan stood to receive the shock, since there was nothing else to do. In the instant of striking Cardigan's animal with the shoulder of his own mount, Halstead slipped his hands back to the reins, and yanked his horse's head toward the wall, thus forcing his animal in between Cardigan's and the wall—and on the other side was Keck-su.

A shout of terror burst from Cardigan as his animal rolled toward the edge, stood upright on its hindfeet, its forefeet over the abyss, and tried to turn back. But in that instant Halstead did his supreme act. He clutched for Cardigan with the strength of desperation.

He caught the big man by the throat, yanked him free of the horse, just as that animal started the head-foremost plunge into Keck-su. He dragged him across the neck of his own animal with all his strength—and both Cardigan and Halstead rolled off on the inside, between Halstead's mount and the towering wall of the gorge.

Halstead's mount tried to leap the fallen men, lost its footing—and plunged over with a scream that was ghastly and uncannily human.



HALSTEAD HAD bashed Cardigan's head against the stone wall, but Soble knew as both men fell limply together, that Halstead did it with his last bit of strength.

For a moment the two men floundered on the ledge, and it was Halstead who slid over—because, noting the fall of Cardigan, the leading Mongol, and the one who had been afoot, who now knelt on the ledge in front of the first Mongol pony, sent bullet after bullet into the swaying body of Halstead.

He slumped back, and went over—limply as a bag of meal, and as silently.

Cardigan slumped unconscious on the ledge, his lower limbs hanging over the abyss from which Halstead had saved him. Soble did not look over to note the plunge of his friend. He did not need to. Halstead was gone beyond ever finding. His body could not even be recovered, except by the aid of many men with ropes to lower into the gorge. As Soble raced for Cardigan he promised himself that this would be done when he had the chance.

Halstead deserved a true man's resting place, somewhere.

Soble leaped the body of Cardigan, which did not stir. Beyond it he knelt on the ledge, while Mongols fired at him frenziedly. Bullets whistled past his head, but at the moment he believed that nothing could harm him—until he had avenged to the full the death of Halstead.

His first bullet drilled through the brain of the Mongol who knelt on the ledge—for this one had fired upon Halstead. Coolly, as the man sprawled out, Soble pressed the trigger again, and knew without even watching that it smashed full and true to the breast of the first

mounted Mongol.

Now occurred a scene of indescribable horror. Soble, cold as glacier ice, was avenging the death of Halstead. The second Mongol slipped from his pony and rolled into eternity, not even touching the ledge as he fell.

"A yellow servant for you, Bart!" whispered Soble.

Then, a thing he would never have done at any other time, because he loved ponies as only a horseman can, Soble shot the riderless animal—so that it would leave him a clear field of fire upon the Mongols behind.

Chaos possessed the ghastly ledge. The Mongols yelled in terror as Soble sent bullet after bullet toward them. Some he hurled against the wall, so that they ricocheted off the stone and smashed into Mongols and Mongol mounts. The Keck-su echoed and re-echoed to the crashing of his rifle. Some of the ponies were turning. One plunged over with his rider still in the saddle, but as he turned over, screaming, the rider lost his seat, and pony and rider did a plunging race to the far bottom of Keck-su, falling side by side.

Hell possessed the ledge. Mongols were slipping in between their animals and the wall, and deliberately pushing their animals over the edge in order to give themselves room in which to move. One animal, as a Mongol slipped past him on the inner side, lashed out with his hind feet and smashed the Mongol against the wall—a sodden bundle, slumping down, dead from the kick of his own mount.

Still Soble fired, fired until his magazine was empty.

As he began to reload something of sanity returned to him, and he changed his mind. No more bullets were coming from the Mongols, who were scrambling like madmen to get back along the trail to where it

curved out of his range—while their yells of fear caused a hideous threnody in Keck-su gorge.

Slowly, his face turned deadly white, Soble turned his back on Cardigan's pawns, and bent over Cardigan. Cardigan was stirring. His head was crimsoned with blood where Halstead had bashed him against the wall. Soble went quickly through Cardigan's pockets. He found a flat leather case which he knew held the Blue Diamond of Kanze, and a wallet crammed with bills of huge denomination—loot of the Turkestan Trading Company.

Then, fighting against the desire to hurl Cardigan over to keep company with the others the grim gorge had claimed, he took his own belt, and bound Cardigan's hands behind him. He drew the belt tight, leaving about a foot of it to hang free. This he clutched in his left hand, while he carried his automatic in his right. His rifle he kicked over into the gorge with a gesture of horror. Then he manhandled Cardigan until the big man regained a modicum of sense.

"On your way, Cardigan," he said grimly. "I don't intend to lose you, since Halstead gave you to me. And I've got a string on you so you can't escape that firing squad by jumping into the gorge."



CARDIGAN shrugged and staggered along the ledge, thoroughly cowed.

As Soble came up with the rest of his party, which was now safely across the bridge, it was to discover that the girl had dismounted somehow and raced back when she had heard the roaring of firearms in the gorge. Her face went deadly white when she saw the ghastly thing that was Cardigan.

"Bart Halstead?" she almost whis-

pered it. "He rode back and into Cardigan. He got him—for me."

"Yes, the Mongols got Bart, after he'd already taken one of Cardigan's bullets, and he slipped into the gorge," replied Soble and in spite of himself a half sob escaped his lips. He noted, too, that the girl's lips trembled a little. When she spoke her voice was very low.

"Don't worry!" she managed. "He wished to go like that, when he knew he could not live. He knew last night that he could never make it. I convinced him of that, or thought I had. I still think so, and that he came on on sheer nerve. He's gone, but he's given you Cardigan and the Blue Diamond—and vengeance!"

Slowly she turned to go back to her mount. Quickly, at Soble's orders, the Quazaqs bound Cardigan to

one of the ponies, so tightly he could scarcely breathe. Soble had no intention that Cardigan should escape justice for his crimes—for they had directly cost the lives of many. Not in a hundred lives could Cardigan have atoned for them all. But such atonement as he might make, Soble was resolved that he should make.

As he rode at the rear of the cavalcade, when it was once more under way, moving cautiously now because the gorge had assumed doubly dangerous proportions—his heart was as heavy as a stone in his heaving chest.

But for one thing the world would have been a ghastly empty place.

That thing was Cardigan who should pay for Halstead—whose death meant that hereafter Soble must travel alone.



The Reader's Own Department

Conducted by the Editor

Last month I made a frank appeal for reader co-operation. It is too early yet to determine just how many of you responded, but we are coming out with this issue on time—the same as usual. And we ask you to continue

your efforts to get more readers for FAR EAST Adventure Stories all during the month this present issue is on sale.

We have tried to help you get these extra sales by reducing the price of the

magazine from 25c to 20c. In these hard times, every nickel counts, so we have tried to do our part in reducing the cost of good entertainment.

If you readers will keep pulling for FAR EAST Adventure Stories throughout the present month, I believe we will be able to go over the top with this issue.

Next month we will have an exceedingly fine issue. Some excellent stories we had planned on using this issue had to be held over for the next one. And in addition we will have an author who is new to the pages of FAR EAST—Murray Leinster—but I am sure he is not new to the majority of you readers. He has been writing entertaining adventure stories for years. His LAUGH of LOPE da GAMA which appears in the next issue, is a true fact story of Portugese West Africa, and you readers who enjoy such tales should be certain to tell your newsdealer to reserve a copy of the April issue of FAR EAST Adventure Stories for you.

MR. DAVID ANSWERS MR. CHEESEMAN

Dear Editor:

In the January issue of FAR EAST Adventure Stories I read with the most intense interest the experience of H. Dudley-Cheeseman in your Eastward Ho, section.

I have flown in nearly every type of aircraft from heavier-than-air to the Los Angeles and the Norge before the latter made her spectacular flight over the Pole.

I have also sailed on nearly every type of sea going craft from a fishing schooner to the Leviathan, partly in search of adventure for its own sake, and partly for material for my adventure stories and novels. My latest book, Great Moments of Adventure (Duffield) is just out.

Now it so happened that I was the only newspaper man covering the Alaskan leg of the U. S. Army flight round the world in 1924. I was then representing the North American Newspaper Alliance of some eighty papers in the U. S. and Canada.

When Major Frederic Martin and Sgt. Alva Harvey flew out of Chignik, half way out on the Alaskan Peninsula, to join the other three planes then at Unlaska in the Aleutian Islands, a snow storm came up. At the head of the Chignik lagoon there were three passes through the mountains. In the storm the fliers took the northern one

which led inland and not along the coast as they were trying to fly for their planes were then equipped with pontoons. This placed the high Peninsular mountain range between them and the sea.

Much of the time Major Martin was flying the ship through fog and snow. Each time he came out of the fog he saw "a large body of water to the west. I felt sure then that we were getting on our right course again. We headed for it. The land under us caused me a great deal of worry. But that blue water off in the distance must be a part of the sea. We must get to it and fix our bearings. . . . Finally we came through the fog. There, away off, was that blue water again like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But why were we so far away from it after flying all that time? I had banked around and could not have been flying in circles with those (snow) heavy ailerons. Later I learned it was a mirage. But then it was too late to turn back or fly any more! . . . I pulled the nose up high and climbed. But these mountains came out of the fog right at me with the speed of an express train. I blinked as I saw the next mountain coming straight at me. I could not bank. Then there came a sickening splintering crash above the roar of the Liberty. A terrible jar nearly took the two of us out of the cockpit. Then we came to a dead stop with the plane standing on its nose, propeller splintered and Liberty in the snow. Our belts held us from being thrown out and fortunately the Seattle did not turn over on her back."

I quote the above from the exclusive story radioed to me at Unalaska the moment Major Martin came out at Port Moller ten days later after suffering terribly from exposure night and day in the snow and below zero weather, because I had had my syndicate offer \$1,000 reward for finding them dead or alive. I quote only a part of it from one of the 19 adventures in the book mentioned above. It will be noted that Major Martin's crack-up was directly due to a mirage of the sea which was nearly fifty miles away at the time he saw it.

Perhaps Mr. Dudley-Cheeseman will recall that when Col. Lindbergh flew the Atlantic that he saw an island 500 miles before he reached Ireland, if I remember, that it was a mirage!

I have never seen a mirage in my flying experience and I supposed, until I read of these experiences, that one must be traveling too fast to see them, for I have seen many of them at sea. I was mistaken and how Mr. Cheeseman saw a mirage of Trafalgar Square in Mesopotamia I cannot explain, but I thought these two experiences mentioned above might interest him and your many readers.

Yours awaiting a mirage,

EVAN J. DAVID.

New York City.

Edmore, N. D.

Editor, FAR EAST Stories,
Dear Sir:

Just a few lines of congratulations on your new magazine which I have made up my mind on becoming a constant reader.

Your stories are excellent, and the authors are great, but I am not a stranger to J. Allen Dunn's or H. Bedford Jones' stories, as I have read many of them in *The Argosy*—my favorite weekly for several years—and I intend to keep on reading the *Argosy* and also the FAR EAST magazines.

Here's hoping a lot of success to your new publication.

ARTHUR E. MILLER.

P.S.—I intend to keep my first copy—and in 50 years (if I'm alive then) I'll be able to boast that I have the first issue of your magazine.

Asheville, N. C.

Eastward Ho:

In the opinion of an old timer, who has sailed the Seven Seas, and has adventured far into the South Sea jungles, the story entitled *Poachers Plunder* by H. DeWitt Thomason, rings true to caste, and takes me back "Somewhere East of Suez."

Thomason should be proud of this effort, and FAR EAST Adventure Stories congratulated upon inaugurating this New Authors Corner.

Sincerely,

J. W. CHEESBOROUGH.

OUR WESTERN COPIES WERE
LATE

Dear Editor:

On page 5 of the January issue of FAR EAST Adventures you give a synopsis of what the February issue will contain.

At the bottom of the page in large print is the statement "On Sale January 5th."

Here it is the 14th and the magazine is NOT ON SALE at any of the stands in San Diego.

You have started a good magazine, with stories by Authors who are second to none, now keep faith with the magazine-reading public and get it out, and on the stands ON TIME, the fifth of the month means THE FIFTH, not any other day.

I started "The Red Cossack," and got very much interested, and, if you are not going to get out any more numbers of the FAR EAST I would appreciate it if you will let me know where I can purchase the novel, if you are going to continue publication, GET THE MAGAZINE OUT ON TIME.

Again requesting you to have your magazine on the stands ON TIME in future, and complimenting you on its publication, I am,

Yours very truly,

ALEX. MACDONALD-JONES,

First Lieut. Inf., U. S. Army, Retired.

THE READER'S CONTEST

The guessing contest announced in the January issue has been discontinued because it conflicts with the Postal Laws governing prize contests. Because of these Postal Laws, it will be impossible to award the prizes as stated.

I have to apologize to the readers for making this mistake. I should have taken it up with the Postal authorities before I started it, but I didn't—so it is all my fault.

That is another reason why the readers on the West Coast were a little late in getting copies of the last issue. But it won't happen again—so that's that.

WALLACE R. BAMBER.

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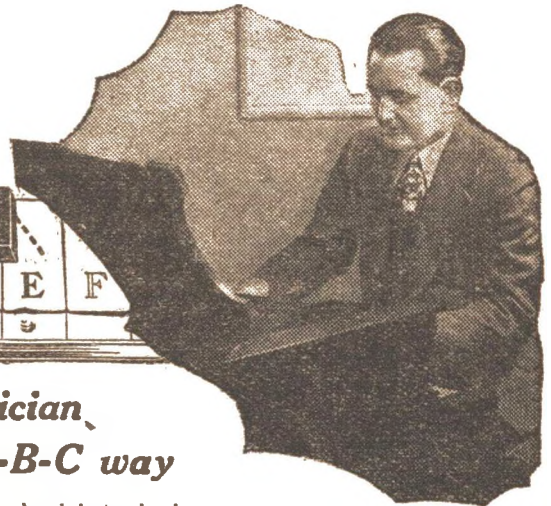
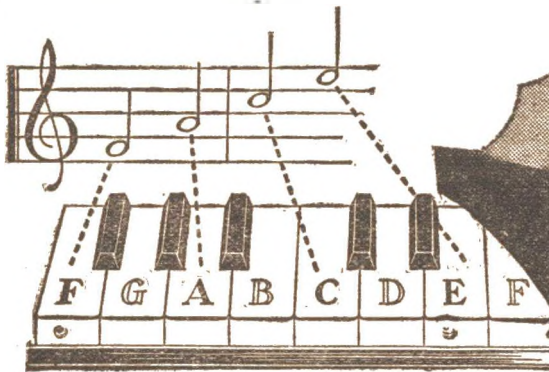
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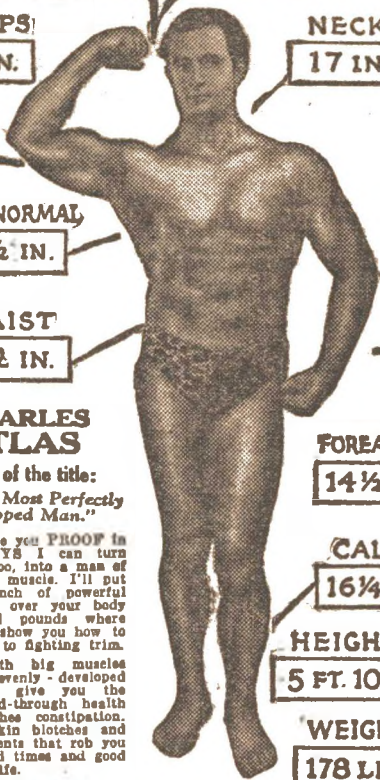
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If Getting Up Nights, Backache, Frequent Day Calls, Leg-Pains, Nervousness, Burning or Smarting, due to functional bladder irritation, in acid conditions, makes you feel tired, run-down, discouraged and depressed, you should try the quick-acting, double treatment known as the Cystex Test.

Quick Acting Double Test

If you suffer from these conditions, you likely will be delightfully surprised at the quick, soothing, beneficial action of Cystex.

Much of the marked success of Cystex is due to its being two treatments in one. Because of this double action most sufferers find that there is no long waiting for results but that their conditions are alleviated almost immediately. One part of the treatment starts circulating thru the system within a few minutes, quickly alleviating urinary irritation and associated painful conditions. The other part of the treatment soon acts as a mild and soothing diuretic to the kidneys.

The ten pure ingredients composing the Cystex double treatment are listed in each package so that you may know exactly what you are taking, and can be told by your druggist or doctor that this is a highly meritorious preparation which does not contain any dopes, narcotics or habit-forming drugs.

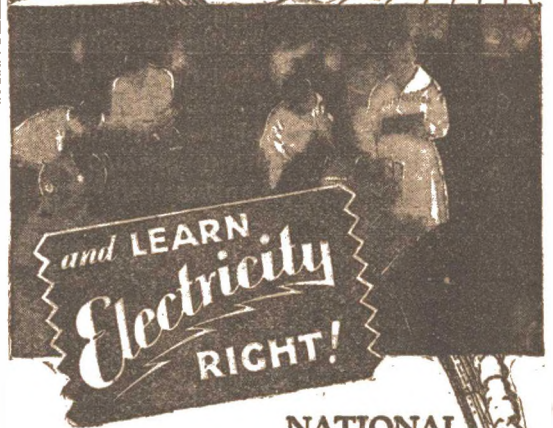
Internationally Successful

Cystex has had such marked success that it is now demanded in many different parts of the world, and is registered with the governments of twenty different countries, such as England, France, Canada, Australia, Brazil, etc. This rapidly growing demand is largely due to quick action, unusual merit, and the recommendation of satisfied users who found that Cystex quickly alleviated their conditions thus eliminating many hours' suffering and worry.

Guaranteed Trial Offer

Don't Wait. Don't delay. Get Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex) from any druggist for only 60c under the Iron-Clad, Money-Back Guarantee. Put it to the test. Use all of it. See for yourself how fast it works. If it does not quickly improve restful sleep and alleviate other discouraging conditions, due to functional bladder irritation, thus increasing your energy and enjoyment of life, merely return the empty package and your money will be refunded.

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NATIONAL opens its doors to you!

Right in the heart of America's most interesting place to live and learn—National—the approved trade school of the West—invites you to Los Angeles! Come West, enjoy life, learn a profitable trade in the land of prosperity, progress, sunshine and happiness.

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Every one dreams of coming to California. National will pay your railroad fare from any point in the United States. Never again another opportunity like this! Investigate this great offer at once!

REAL Big Pay Jobs Await You!

Boulder Dam means millions for Southern California! Thousands more will soon be working on this world's greatest hydroelectrical project. Learn quickly at NATIONAL for big pay jobs in profitable Electrical Trades.


Don't Worry About Enough Money! We'll Help You!

If you are short of money, we help you secure part-time jobs to earn your living expenses while learning. We place scores of graduates on good pay jobs with real futures. Unlimited Lifetime Employment Service.

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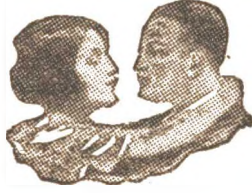
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Try It FREE

Wives, mothers, sisters, it is you that the man who drinks Whiskey, Wine or Beer to excess must depend upon to help save him from a ruined life and a drunkard's grave. Take heed from the thousands of men going to ruin daily through vile bootlegger's Whiskey, and the horrible stuff called home brew from private stills. Once he gets it in his system he finds it difficult to stop—but you can help him. What it has done for others is an example of what it should do for you. All you have to do is to send your name and address and we will send absolutely FREE, in plain wrapper, a trial package of GOLDEN TREATMENT. You will be thankful as long as you live that you did it. Address

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Improve your appearance with the Anita Nose Adjuster. Shapes flesh and cartilage—quickly, safely and painlessly, while you sleep or work. Results are lasting. Doctors praise it. 87,000 users. Write for 30-day TRIAL OFFER, and FREE BOOKLET.

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AGENTS: \$8 A DAY

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Strange Fluid Charges Batteries Instantly

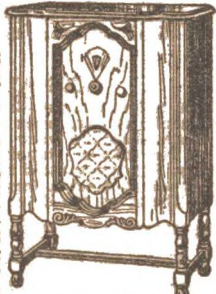
A simple, harmless fluid which automatically recharges automobile, radio and other wet batteries instantly, is being offered on trial to users by Harry Elliott, Suite 1211, Eighth & Park Sts., Des Moines, Iowa. This remarkable fluid also increases the life of batteries and enables them to hold their charge indefinitely. Dead batteries charge themselves as if by magic. Old batteries act like new. No trouble—no battery expense—can be used instantly by anyone. Mr. Elliott wants agents and is making a free offer. Write him today.

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The latest in Radio at lowest wholesale prices—New 1931 Screen Grid Humless All-Electric Sets, remote control, public address, phono-combinations—all dynamic speaker equipped. Also battery operated sets. Beautiful consoles. Values you never saw before in accessories, parts, kits, electric appliances, etc. Get this FREE book today. Most complete catalog in radio. 168 pages of big money-saving values... highly illustrated.



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IS THE BEST PLACE TO **LEARN AUTOS**




Come West at Our Expense!

For a limited time we are making a railroad fare offer from any point in the United States to Los Angeles. Just think of it! A Trip to California with traveling expenses allowed!

Spend a Few Short Weeks Learning Autos!

Quickly train for Big Pay Jobs in the Auto Game. Unlimited Lifetime Employment Service. Employers insist on our men instead of green, half-baked mechanics who don't know what it's all about. That's why you don't find National Trained Men walking the streets for jobs.

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If you are low on cash, we'll help you. We help you secure a part time job to earn living expenses while learning.

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Short, condensed training in our Million Dollar Practical "School of Shops"—instruction on the most modern equipment money can buy—with the country's best staff of expert, experienced master mechanic instructors. No dry lectures or text books. Straight practical work on real jobs. No previous experience needed. None too old or too young to learn. Start any time.

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Send me, absolutely free, your big illustrated Catalog of Automotive Opportunities.

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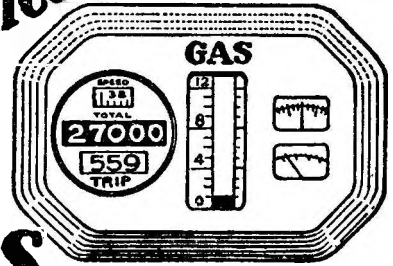
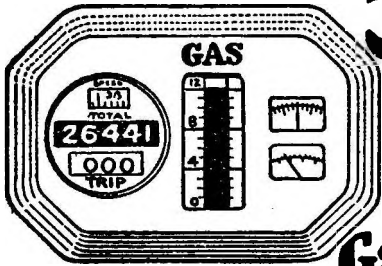
NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE SCHOOL

Over the Mountains from Los Angeles

559 Miles

on 11

Gallons of GAS



Think of it! FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE MILES over rough mountainous country burning only ELEVEN GALLONS of GASOLINE. Imagine more than FIFTY MILES to the GALLON. That is what the WHIRLWIND CARBURETING DEVICE does for D. R. Gilbert, enough of a saving on just one trip to more than pay the cost of the Whirlwind.

THE WHIRLWIND SAVES MOTORISTS MILLIONS OF DOLLARS YEARLY

Whirlwind users, reporting the results of their tests, are amazed at the results they are getting. Letters keep streaming into the office telling of mileages all the way from 22 to 59 miles on a gallon, resulting in a saving of from 25% to 50% in gas bills alone.

Mark H. Estes writes: "I was making 17 miles to the gallon on my Pontiac Coupe. Today, with the Whirlwind, I am making 35 5/10 miles to the gallon. Am I glad I put it on? I'll say so!"

P. P. Goerzen writes: "I made an actual test both with and without a Whirlwind, getting 13 1/2 miles without and 34 6/10 miles with the Whirlwind, or a gain of 21 miles to the gallon. The longer the Whirlwind is in use on the machine the better the engine runs, has more pep and quicker starting. It makes a new engine out of an old one, and starts at the touch of the starter button."

R. J. Tulp: "The Whirlwind increased the mileage on our Ford truck from 12 to 26 miles to gallon and 25% in speed. We placed another on a Willys-Knight and increased from 12 to 17 miles per gallon."

Arthur Grant: "I have an Oakland touring car that has been giving me 15 miles to the gallon average, but I can see a great difference with the Whirlwind, as it climbs the big hills on high and gives me better than 23 miles to the gallon of gas, which is better than 50% saving in gas."

W. A. Scott: "I had my Whirlwind for three years. Winter and summer it gives the same perfect service, instant starting, smoother running, and what I have saved in gasoline these last few years has brought other luxuries which I could not have afforded previously."

Car owners all over the world are saving money every day with the Whirlwind, besides having better operating motors. Think what this means on your own car. Figure up your savings—enough for a radio—a bank account—added pleasures. Why let the Oil Companies profit by your waste? Find out about this amazing little device that will pay for itself every few weeks in gas saving alone.

GUARANTEE

No matter what kind of a car you have—no matter how big a gas eater it is—the Whirlwind will save you money. We absolutely guarantee that the Whirlwind will more than save its cost in gasoline alone within thirty days, or the trial will cost you nothing. We invite you to test it at our risk and expense. You are to be the sole judge.

FREE OFFER COUPON

WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.
899-417-A Third Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

Gentlemen: You may send me full particulars of your Whirlwind Carbureting device and tell me how I can get one free. This does not obligate me in any way whatever.

Name

Address

City

County State

Check here if you are interested in full or part time salesmen position.

FITS ALL CARS

In just a few minutes the Whirlwind can be installed on any make of car, truck or tractor. It's actually less work than changing your oil or putting water in the battery. No drilling, tapping or changes of any kind necessary. It is guaranteed to work perfectly on any make of car, truck or tractor, large or small, new model or old model. The more you drive the more you will save.

SALESMEN AND DISTRIBUTORS WANTED

To make up to \$100.00 a week and more.

Whirlwind men are making big profits supplying this fast-selling device that car owners cannot afford to be without. Good territory is still open. Free sample offer to workers. Full particulars sent on request. Just check the coupon.

WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.

999-417-A Third Street Milwaukee, Wis.

GIVEN Coaster Wagon

Speedy Coaster Wagon - will carry 60 lbs weight easily. 10-inch roller bearing wheels, balloon tires and 16-inch x 36-inch hardwood body.



For Boys and Girls

"Send No Money. We Trust You, Simply Send Name and Address"

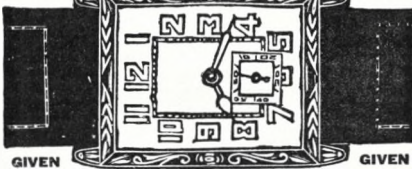
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for selling only 12 boxes of our famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE at 25c each with beautiful colored art picture FREE and remitting as per plan in big premium catalog. Cash Commissions. Send no money. Act Quick. Our 36th year. Mail Coupon Now!

Balloon tires - Nicknamed after the world's most daring aviator.

The Wilson Chemical Co., Dept. MS87, Tyrone, Pa.

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FOR MEN AND BOYS

Send No Money - We Trust You. Simply Send Name and Address.

Latest model, long rectangular, curved shape. Bright white metal finished case fitted with high grade six-jewel lever movement. Radio dial and hands with second hand. Fine leather strap. Dependable. Genuine Value. GIVEN for selling only 12 boxes of our famous

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Wrist Watch and Metal Bracelet FOR LADIES AND GIRLS - Latest Rectangular Shape

SEND NO MONEY

WE TRUST YOU



WRIST WATCH

GIVEN

Simply send name and address. Wrist watch is handsomely engraved, chromium plated case, 6-jewel lever movement, jeweled tip, regular grosgrain ribbon and sterling clasp, complete in box. Very adorable.

GIVEN for selling only 12 boxes of our famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE at 25c each (with beautiful art picture FREE) and remitting as per plan in catalog. Cash commissions. One to three boxes sold

each call. We are reliable. Mail Coupon NOW! THE WILSON CHEMICAL COMPANY Dept. MS87 Tyrone, Pa.

Both GIVEN



Latest Eastman Roll Camera or 22 Cal. Hamilton Rifle GIVEN. Sell 12 boxes famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE FREE with each box and remit as per plan in catalog. We are reliable. Write quick. THE WILSON CHEMICAL COMPANY

BIG MOVIE GIVEN

Uses same film as professionals. Run your own big shows. Here is the machine you need: made of steel - handsome as a man in a fish - attractive red finish.



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SPECIAL U DRAW-EM SLIDE FREE

Re wind and Take-up wheels - Air-Cooled and Absolutely Safe. The Outstanding - includes: Reel of Film Show Bill, Tapes, Labels and Operators' Bands, Stamped Metal Slides with large assortment of different Film Subjects. The Magnified Still Pictures and Instruction for operating included. Other Models in Hig Catalog.

WE TRUST YOU THE WILSON CHEMICAL CO., Dept. MS87 Tyrone, Pa.

Cash Prizes Extra Free Gifts awarded in addition to regular premiums to Wilson Agents. Mail Coupon NOW!

BOTH GIVEN Scenic Uke



Portable PHONOGRAPH

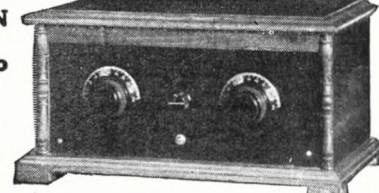
SEND NO MONEY WE TRUST YOU

Send us your name and address. We will send you either Ukulele or Phonograph, according to offer in our premium catalog. Also, portable, 8 1/2 x 11 1/2 in. genuine DuPont water-proof beautiful colored cover. Fine smooth motor. Extra record space. Fully featured castings. Hawaii Ukulele with acetate sound hole. Disc of CLOVERINE used for cuts, burns, sores, etc. One to three boxes sold each call. We are reliable - our 36th year. Write quick! Be First! Dept. M. S. 87 WILSON CHEMICAL CO., TYRONE, PA.

6-Tube RADIO SET - GIVEN

A great receiver - clear-selective-wonderful volume. Easy to operate. Regular radio equipment such as aerial, tubes and battery can be used. Complete instruction book FREE. GIVEN for selling only 12 boxes of our famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE at 25c each with 12 beautiful colored art pictures FREE and remitting as per plan in big premium catalog. One to three boxes sold each call. Be first. Write Quick! Mail Coupon Now!

GIVEN Send No Money We Trust You



THE WILSON CHEMICAL CO. Dept. MS87 Tyrone, Pa.

SEND NO MONEY WE TRUST YOU



31-Piece ROSE MARIE DINNER SET - GIVEN
Simply send name and address. Garland of Blue Roses circling each piece, blending beautifully into hard white body of ware. Decoration is underglaze - never comes off. Consists of six large dinner plates, six cups, six saucers, six deserts, six butters, and one meat platter. GIVEN for selling only one dozen boxes of our famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE at 25c each (with beautiful colored art picture FREE) and remitting as per plan in big premium catalog. One to three boxes sold each call. Be first. Write Quick. Mail Coupon NOW! THE WILSON CHEMICAL COMPANY Dept. MS87 Tyrone, Pa.

MAIL COUPON NOW!

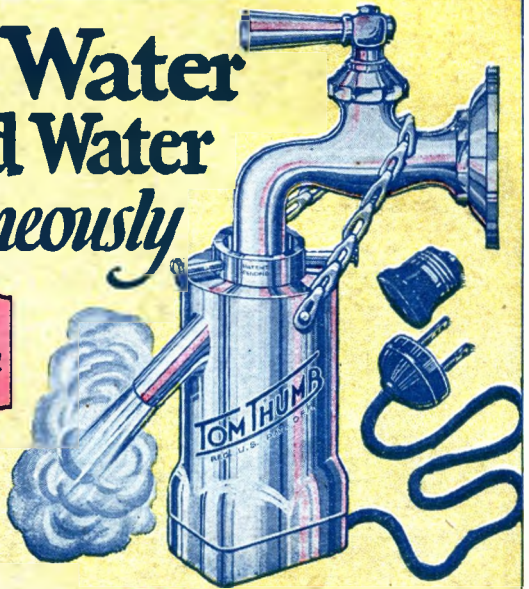
THE WILSON CHEMICAL CO., Dept. MS87, Tyrone, Pa. Please send me 12 boxes of your famous WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE for cuts, burns, sores, chaps, etc. (with 12 beautiful colored art pictures) to sell at 25c per box and I GIVE one picture FREE. Will remit you within 30 days and select premium or take cash commission as explained in big premium catalog included with Salve and Pictures. Order shipped same day received, postage paid.

Name (Write Name Plainly on above line)
R. F. D. or Street No.
Post Office
PRINT your LAST NAME ONLY in space below.

Running Hot Water From Your Cold Water Faucet Instantaneously

Only \$3⁷⁵ Complete

Agents! This Marvelous Invention Will Make Up to \$40⁰⁰ a Day Easy



KITCHEN



SHAVING



BATH



DOCTOR | FACTORY

Just plug in at the nearest electric outlet and presto!—you have instantaneous, continuous running hot water from your cold water faucet. This tells you in a nutshell why the invention of the Tom Thumb automatic electric hot water heater will make it easy for you to make up to \$40.00 a day.

The electric heated steaming hot water comes direct from the faucet instantaneously—yes, as quickly as you can turn on the current and the hot water runs indefinitely until you shut off the electricity. The cost is small—convenience is great. Useful wherever hot water is needed—no fuss or bother—attached to any faucet in a jiffy. Works on either AC or DC current. You and your customers will marvel and be delighted at this new discovery of electrical science. The small cost of \$3.75 for the Tom Thumb, Junior (110 volts) or \$5.75 for Tom Thumb, Senior (220 volts) does the work of any expensive hot water heating equipment costing several hundred dollars—the Tom Thumb absolutely eliminates the plumber or any other additional expense.

No Installation - Stick One On Faucet and Sale Is Made

Think of it! no installation, no extra expense—nothing else to do but to stick it on the faucet, turn on electricity and it is there ready for duty. Easily removed when not wanted and easily carried to any part of house where cold water is running and hot water is wanted. Has many uses—too numerous to mention here. Weighs only 1 lb., made entirely of aluminum. Cannot rust, no moving parts, nothing to get out of order.

If \$40 A Day Sounds Good To You Rush Coupon

This new scientific invention offers tremendous sales possibilities. At the low price of \$3.75 you should be able to sell at least 40 a day. You pocket \$1.00 cash commission on every sale. If you would like to know all about this proposition, sign your name and address to coupon or, better still, get started selling at once. Attach money order for \$2.75 to coupon and rush to us. We will send complete selling outfit

Terminal Products Co., Inc.
Dept. 302, 200 Hudson St.,
New York, N. Y.

The Tom Thumb electric hot water heater looks like a big money maker to me. I am sure interested in knowing how to make up to \$40.00 a day with this proposition. I have checked below the proposition I am interested in at this moment.

1. Enclosed find money order for \$2.75. Please send me one Tom Thumb Junior, order blanks and selling information. It is understood upon receipt of this sample outfit I will be permitted to take orders and collect \$1.00 cash deposit for every Tom Thumb, Jr. I sell, or \$1.50 for every Tom Thumb, Sr. I sell. It is understood I will send the orders to you and you will ship direct to my customers C.O.D. for the balance.

2. I would like to have additional information before acting as one of your agents. Please send this by return mail free of obligation.

Name
Street
City State

If you live outside of the United States, price is \$1.00 extra on each unit, cash with order.