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SPEED ADVENTURE STORIES

L. N.

A SPEED MAGAZINE

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by LEW MERRILL

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SPEED ADVENTURE STORIES

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GOODBYE TO BLACKBEARD

By Forbes Gunnison

★ ★ ★

Maynard was amazed to see Blackbeard a guest at the party . . . until he discerned that his host was planning to use the pirate as his private admiral

★ ★ ★

THAT Winter night in the year 1718 a brilliant company had assembled for the ball in the house of the Governor of the Carolinas. Charleston was at her loveliest, set like a jewel in the midst of her live-oak gardens. The sea, studded with islands, lapped softly against the shingle. The house, ablaze with candles, was filled with guests—the Pinckneys, the Rutledges, the Laurenses, the Gadsdens, and representatives of all the other leading families.

Young army officers, sons of plantation-holders, the "proprietors" who held the Colony in their political power, everybody of any consequence had gathered there. Prominent among them all was Chief Justice Nichols Trott, who was virtually Governor, due to the illness of the present incumbent. Grave, dignified, severe in his peruke and satins, he moved among the guests, receiving their homage.

Young Maynard was present, too, not as an invited guest, but because this was "open house." And he had known that Laura Rutledge, the daughter of one of the leading men in the Government, would be there. They had met only twice, but they were desperately in love with each other.

Also, Maynard had expressed his desire to do business with some of the "proprietors" of the Colony. For, if Teach, alias Blackbird, the notorious buccaneer, could move unscathed in Charleston, despite the record of his atrocities on the high seas, surely none could cavil at the presence of a lesser knight of the waves, who came to dispose of a few bales of goods, at market prices, with no questions asked as to their origin, and no information volunteered.

Neverthele , Maynard was amazed to see Blackbeard at the ball. A tall rogue, verging on forty, dressed in a flashy suit of black taffetas, the square black beard, from which he derived his nickname, flowing down on his chest, he was a singular and disconcerting figure in that galaxy of fashion and beauty.

He stood there, in a group of the elder men, evidently quite at home, leering and squinting at the ladies as they paraded past on the arms of their cavaliers.

Then Maynard saw Laura Rutledge amid the throng. Slight, dainty, her fair hair piled up on her head, with only a sifting of powder, she passed Teach with her cavalier, and Maynard saw the pirate turn, and peer, and leer at her.

A HAND closed upon Maynard's shoulder. "Not so fast, Maynard," said a voice, and Maynard realized that he was quivering with anger.

He looked up at red-headed James Moore, the leader of the popular party. He was astonished to see him there, for, in the factional dispute between the people and the "proprietors," Moore had become the most loved and hated man in Charleston, and every day his arrest had been expected.

"Two fishes out of our element, eh, Maynard?" laughed the young man. "A word with you."

He drew Maynard aside into a darkened embrasure, from which they could see the whole passing panorama of the scene. There was silence for a moment; then Moore said bitterly:

"Well, Maynard, the hour is at hand. The exactions of the 'proprietors' have passed the bounds of human patience. In a day or two we strike. We have secured powerful support in England, as you know; we shall overthrow these tyrants, and their leader, Justice Trott, and proclaim liberty in Charleston. I may count on you?"

"Our understanding remains," replied Maynard. "But what is Blackbeard doing here tonight? Even though the 'proprietors' are privy to his deeds, and profit by them, surely

this exceeds the greatest impudence of which he could have been suspected."

"That is what I do not know, Maynard," responded Moore. "It is feared that the 'proprietors' have gotten wind of our intentions and plan to bring Blackbeard and his ship into Charleston harbor, to overthrow the popular party. That is where you come in."

"And I," said Maynard, "will cheerfully match my sloop against Blackbeard's, outgunned and outclassed though she be. It is monstrous that Blackbeard can sell his plunder in Charleston, while I, a poor, honest gentleman of the seas, am denied all freedom of trade."

"Aye, a poor, honest gentleman of the seas," laughed Moore. "Well, Maynard, I should advise you that your aim is hopeless. I have heard that you are about to be proclaimed an outlaw. Therefore, my advice is, leave this place and hasten back to your ship before it is too late."

"What, with Blackbeard Teach roaming the salons of Charleston?" exclaimed Maynard indignantly. "Look at the fellow now!"

ACROSS the room a little commotion had arisen. Maynard had seen that the little group of "proprietors" were well primed with sherry, but they had gone no farther than almost every gentleman who has enjoyed his two or three bottles after dinner. They looked no farther advanced along the road to drunkenness now.

But Blackbeard was showing his liquor plainly. He was grinning and grimacing, and pirouetting, and, as a comely girl passed on the arm of her escort, he caught her by the scarf, detaching it from her shoulders, and stood, roaring with laughter at her humiliation.

The young man, about to demand satisfaction from the pirate, was turned from his course by one of the elder Laurenses, who stepped dexterously between them. The incident passed, but now the ladies and their escorts were giving Blackbeard a wide berth as they passed.

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Maynard angrily. "Monstrous that our so-called 'proprietors' dare not call their manhood their own, because they are beholden to the fellow for their illicit gains, but must swallow his insults to their women!"

His eyes were searching for Laura Rutledge. He saw her now, and knew that she was looking for him. They had fallen in love at first sight, when he helped her to her feet after the runaway horse upset her sedan-chair; she had met him again, by appointment, in the live-oak gardens. She had thought him a merchant-captain. What would her feelings be if she discovered that he was a gentleman of the seas, like so many naval men reduced to penury by the termination of the long French wars?

She was passing Blackbeard now, and he stoop like a great ape, scanning the women in the crowd. She, too, was avoiding him. But suddenly the gross body shot forward. Teach caught the girl, not by the scarf, but by the arms, and pulled her toward him.

"A kiss, my queen of beauty!" Blackbeard shouted.

She struggled and screamed. Blackbeard held her only the tighter. Suddenly the crowd was split as Maynard leaped into its midst. One blow,

smashing squarely into Blackbeard's face, released the girl, sent the pirate staggering back, and drenched his satin taffeta coat, with blood from his broken nose.

Maynard caught at Laura, but she eluded him, panicky with fright. Women were screaming all through the long hall: Blackbeard was struggling with those who were holding him, and trying to draw his cutlass. Maynard saw all eyes fixed upon him, but those eyes were hostile. There was hardly a man present at the ball that night but knew Teach was in high favor with the proprietary government; there was hardly a man but derived some portion of his emoluments from traffic with the notorious marauder.

"S'blood, let me at him!" bellowed Blackbeard. "I'll tear his heart out. I'll spit him with my cutlass!"

Into the crowd moved Chief Justice Nicholas Trott. "It were well to leave, sir, immediately," he addressed Maynard, who, after a quick glance around, showed him that Laura had disappeared, moved slowly toward the entrance, between the lines of impassive Negro servants.

HE had reached the gardens. That was the moment the "proprietors" had been waiting for. They hated him as an interloper, who had attempted to rival Teach. The pirate, released, went bounding along the hall and into the moonlight, hailing Maynard with vile oaths.

"Stand, you chouse, you rascally sea-lubber!" he bawled. "Stand till I can cut the lights and liver out of you! Stand, I say!"

Behind him came the "proprietors" in full cry. Maynard turned, and faced the pack alone, cutlass in hand. Teach reared his great height and swept at him with his curved steel. The young man sidestepped, and, as the pirate plunged forward, advanced a single step, caught his beard in his left hand, and held his swordpoint at his throat.

"On your knees, dog," he shouted. "On your knees, and crave pardon, or I'll cut your beard off!"

But a man leaped forward from the shadows of the trees and pinioned Maynard's arms to his side. A second twisted the sword out of his hand. Maynard stood imprisoned helplessly, watching Teach again struggling with his captors.

Chief Justice Trott stepped forward.

"Maynard, you are a common pirate," he said, "and, as such, to be hanged without benefit of trial, in accordance with maritime law, and that of England. Away with him!"

IT was the cry of Laura Rutledge that drove Maynard to desperation. She had come up in the wake of the crowd. "No pirate," she cried, "but a ship's master. His sloop lies offshore five miles from harbor. It's a mistake. Let him go!"

No attention was paid to her, but Maynard, with a frantic leap, freed himself of his captors. Two blows sent two men reeling; others grappled with him. He fought them off, broke to the side of Justice Trott. "If I be a pirate, what of Teach?" he shouted. "Is there a man among the 'proprietors' who does not deal with him in plundered goods, and brandy that has never seen stamp of exciseman?"

"That's true," shouted James Moore, pushing into the throng. "Chief Justice, this would be a gross delinquency of justice, if you per-

Maynard knew what it was —the gallows on which pirates were hanged.

mitted it."

Justice Trott bellowed, "Away with him to the jail! And test the old gallows between low and high tides. We'll hang him in chains at sunrise!"

A pistol butt dropped on Maynard's head from behind. Stunned by the blow, nevertheless he still tried to go on fighting. But there was no longer any strength in his arms. He was quickly downed, and lay on the ground, not quite unconscious, but only vaguely understanding his situation.

He saw the moon dancing through the palmettos, and the grim faces of his captors. Most of them were watching him, but some had gathered about Trott, who, his wig slightly askew, was nodding vigorously. He thought he heard Laura crying out, but he was too weak even to turn his eyeballs to discover her.

He had no idea how long he lay there, but soon a covered vehicle ap-

peared, and came to a stop beside him. He was lifted up and flung inside. A guard stepped in and squatted beside him. The vehicle began to move. Before it reached its destination, Maynard had yielded to that enveloping wave of blank unconsciousness.

HE awoke on the stone floor of a cell. The moonlight, flooding it through a small grilled window, showed him its small dimensions, and the door of live-oak at the further end. Maynard staggered to his feet. His head throbbed, as if a giant pile-driver were hammering it at each pulse-beat, but he remembered everything almost immediately.

Fool that he had been, to show himself in Charleston. It had been partly the desire to see Laura again, but also the need of discovering how matters stood in the capital. He had known Teach was hand in glove with the "proprietors," but he hadn't known that they would be willing to have his life at Teach's bidding.

He made his way to the door. The least investigation showed him that there was no escape that way; it was firm-set; flush with the wall, and could not be bulged an inch. Maynard felt around the walls. They were of solid masonry, covered with a growth of slimy moss, and damp from the sea-fog that came in through the window bars.

And now Maynard saw that the water, which lay two inches deep at the lower end of the floor, was rising and falling slowly, in tune with the waves outside. He stood on tiptoe and managed to peer through the bottom of the window. He was looking out at Charleston Harbor The jail was just above high-water mark, the edge of the waves was no more than a few yards distant, and as the tide receded, a black object was being slowly uncovered by the receding tide.

It loomed up, grisly in the moonlight, and Maynard knew what it was. It was the gallows on which pirates were hanged, between high- and low-water marks, hanged in chains, to rot there until the bones fell asunder under stress of wind and weather.

The tide was receding rapidly. Even as Maynard watched, the cross-beam of the gallows emerged above the level of the water. And the white skeleton of a dead man came slowly into view, suspended in the weed-clotted chains that supported it.

SUDDENLY a great blaze of light shot up from somewhere in the town, which lay invisibly behind the curtain of live-oaks that shrouded the shore. At the same time Maynard heard distant shouting, and then the discharge of fusils.

The uproar swelled out on the night, and died away, and arose again, seeming to spread to all sections of the city. Maynard wondered whether this was one of Teach's exploits; whether the pirate had landed men under cover of the festivities, and was sacking the city, as he had sacked others along the Atlantic coast.

He started as a key rattled in the door. There was the sound of chains being flung down. The door opened. Laura, accompanied by a tall Negro, in the livery of the Rutledges, stood in the entrance.

She came running forward, and uttered a cry. Maynard caught her in his arms, pressed his lips to hers. It was their first kiss, and it seemed everlasting.

Laura tore herself away. "Thank God you are safe!" she cried. "It is revolution that has broken out in the town. James Moore is leading the people against the government. They are fighting everywhere. Chief Justice Trott is imprisoned in the Residency, with most of the 'proprietors.' I took two of our men and overpowered the jailor, and got his keys. Come quick now, before it is too late."

"But where?" asked May ard. "I cannot leave you. My boat lies on the shore; you must come with me."

She shivered. "I dare not. No, you must save yourself, and perhaps, in happier days—

"Listen, your peril is desperate. Blackbeard made his escape. He has some of his ruffians in town. It is they who are fighting Moore, for our own forces are too surprised and disorganized. Moore is waiting for you at his headquarters. He knows what I have done, and I have promised to bring you to him. Come at once, if you love me."

She stood before him, a dainty, silken figure in the flood of moonlight. Outside the uproar seemed to be increasing. The town was burning at several points, and a great glow of red pierced the sky. Maynard hesitated no longer.

"Come, then," he cried, and the three hurried from the cell, up a flight of stone stairs, and through an open doorway.

NOBODY was on guard. They ran into the heart of a palmetto glade, then out and into the waterfront of Charleston. Now they could see the fires plainly. A heavy pall of black smoke was swirling down from above, and through it the parts of the burning city glowed, a fiery background. The discharge of fusils, the shouts of the contestants resounded everywhere. Laura led the way, a foot or two in front of Maynard, and the tall Negro, swinging a cutlass, ran, darting from side to side, and peering into the obscurity.

Through the smoke a small body of men came running. They stopped and challenged. Then their leader, grimed with smoke, rushed to the front, and Maynard recognized James Moore.

"Thank God you're safe, Maynard!" he cried. "Those devils were all set to hang you. Now we've got them in the Residency. The town is ours. You know what your part is, Maynard."

"But you're ahead of time, Moore."

"Forty-eight hours ahead, because of you, my friend. If they'd hanged you, though it might have helped our cause in the end, it would have given them a fresh grip on Charleston. Hurry, man, back to your ship. But there's no time to lose. Teach is in town, leading a gang of his ruffians. Those are the men we're fighting, for the militia have come over to our side. Hurry, hurry, man!"

And, correctly interpreting Maynard's glance at Laura, Moore continued:

"We've got the women and children in the courthouse, and well protected by trusty Negroes, whom we've armed. I'll have Mistress Rutledge conducted thither. There's nothing to fear on her behalf. Maynard."

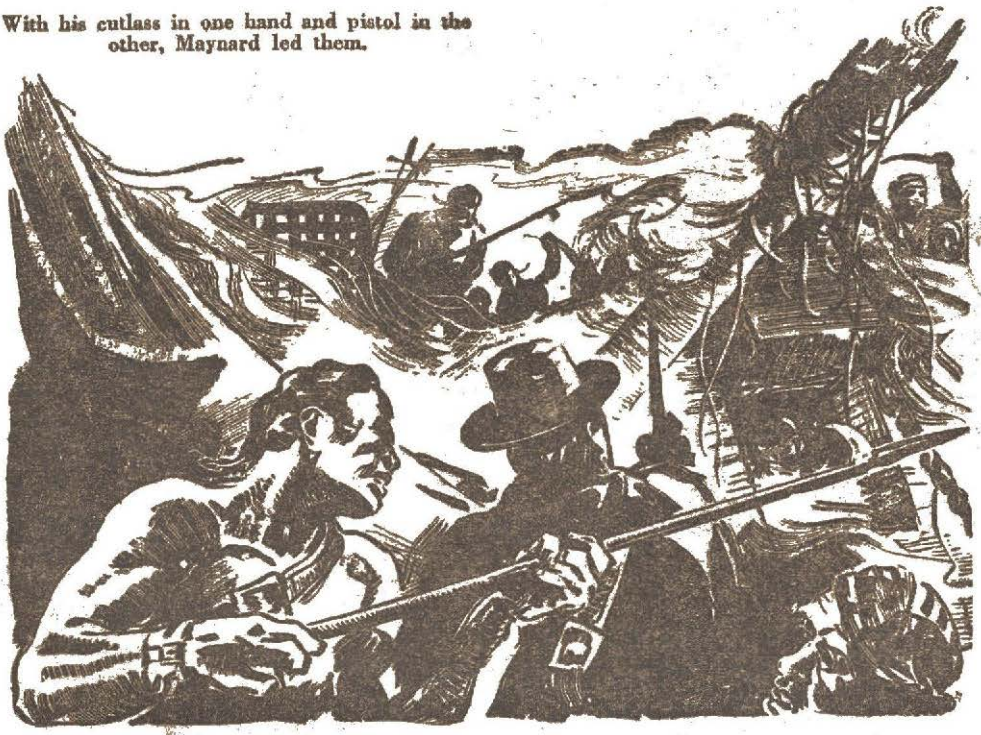
"You must go, my dear. I shall be safe," said Laura. She stood on tiptoe, and kissed him, regardless of the stares of Moore and his men.

"Take Mistress Rutledge to the courthouse, and return as quick at you can," Moore commanded one of

his followers. "You go with him—and you—and you."

The four men started down the street with Laura, their fusils on their shoulders, their swords swinging at their sides. And they were hardly gone out of sight in the smoke when there occurred a new interruption.

With his cutlass in one hand and pistol in the other, Maynard led them.

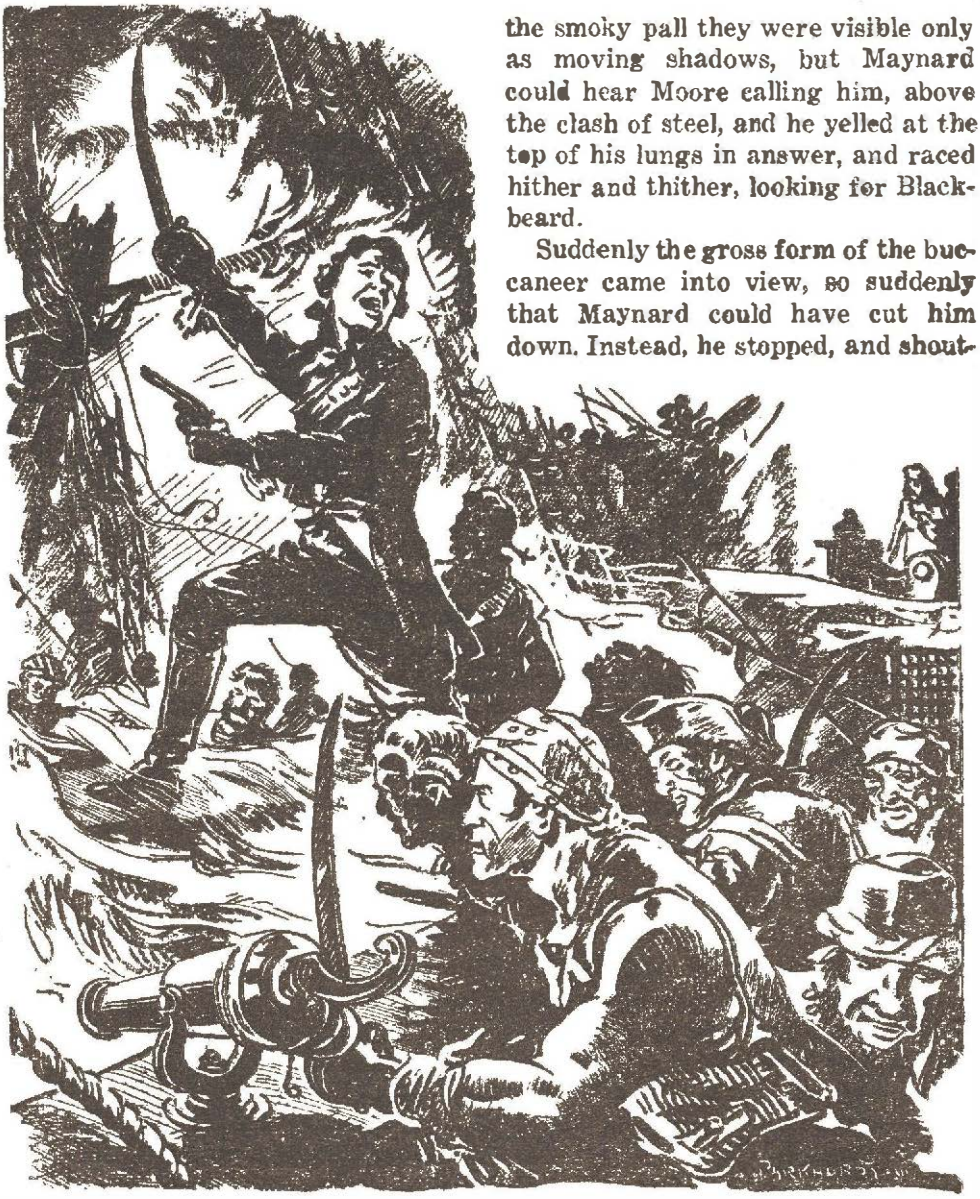


A bunch of yelling devils broke through the smoke from the opposite direction. And at their head was Teach, swinging his cutlass, his face still stained with blood from his broken nose.

THERE must have been more than a dozen of them against only six of Moore's party. Blackbeard recognized Maynard on the instant, and rushed at him with an infuriated bellow, swinging his steel. Maynard, who was unarmed, could only sidestep the blow. It caught one of Moore's men in the upper part of the body, and almost clove him in two.

The dead man toppled over on Maynard without a sound, knocking him down, and affording momentary protection from the next sweep of Teach's weapon. Moore's men scattered before the pirate's furious assault, and the attackers swarmed forward, tramping on Maynard and the dead man. Blackbeard was yelling like a devil, and calling on Maynard to face him, but, in the smoke and the confusion, the gang passed over Maynard unnoticed, giving him the opportunity of disengaging himself from the body atop him.

Maynard seized the cutlass that had fallen from the dead man's hand. Now



he was on his feet again, and he heard his voice go forth from him in a lusty bellow that rivaled Blackbeard's shouts.

Moore's men had reformed after the impetus of the attack had scattered them, and they were exchanging blows with the pirate gang. In the smoky pall they were visible only as moving shadows, but Maynard could hear Moore calling him, above the clash of steel, and he yelled at the top of his lungs in answer, and raced hither and thither, looking for Blackbeard.

Suddenly the gross form of the buccaneer came into view, so suddenly that Maynard could have cut him down. Instead, he stopped, and shouted his name. Blackbeard whirled, and the next instant their cutlasses were clashing wildly, and a shower of sparks shot through the murk.

Blackbeard swung furiously. Maynard could see immediately that he had nothing but brute force to rely upon; nevertheless, his attack was so

violent that Maynard was forced backward. He fenced warily, waiting to tire out the other before delivering his blow. And he was resolved to have Teach's life for the insolence of the man, in offering that insult to Laura.

With the breath coming quick between his lips, he retreated step by step, watching for his opening. Teach's arm was growing weary, he was exposing his guard after every slash. But suddenly Maynard tripped over the body of the dead man, and was flung headlong to the ground. At the same instant, the fighting surged over him, and, when he sprang to his feet, Blackbeard was no longer there.

He sought for him in the confusion, and could not find him. He raged to and fro, hearing the sounds of the conflict die down, grow nearer, and die down again. He stumbled against a man who loomed like a spectre out of the smoke, and recognized Moore.

MOORE was reeling, and blood was dripping from a sabre cut across his forehead. He caught Maynard by the shoulder, and swung him around.

"Where are they? What's happened? I was stunned for a minute or two. Did you get Blackbeard?" he shouted.

"I've lost him. He's taken to his heels," said Maynard, trying to pierce the darkness.

But dawn had been coming up. Now it penetrated the pall of smoke, rolling it up like a curtain, and disclosing the street and the town, with fires blazing in several places, and three dead men lying in the roadway, and wounded men staggering along the street. The shouting, which had sounded vaguely from all points of the city, became localized at the farther end of the street.

Moore's grip on Maynard's shoulder tightened. "The courthouse! The women!" he shouted. "I see it now. Blackbeard saw we were winning. He was leading a delaying party, to hold us here, while he—he—"

Maynard's heart gave a painful leap. They raced like madmen along the street, toward the dimly outlined cluster of buildings at the end, that were the courthouse and the town offices. They could see masses of men struggling there, and their shouts came in bursts upon the breeze.

One of Moore's men came reeling past, his hands outstretched, his fingers clawing at the air. He was bleeding from a hideous slash across the neck. Moore stopped for an instant, and caught him.

"B l a c k b e a r d. The women? Where—?" he began.

But the man was past questioning, and seemed ignorant of the fact that he was being interrogated. He was staggering away, to find a place to die, like a wounded animal. Moore released him, and the two ran on side by side.

Now they could see that the milling crowd about the courthouse had largely disappeared. One wing of the building burst into sudden flame, and a gush of thick smoke, pouring out, veiled everything in darkness. The tumult seemed to be dwindling down the hill, in the direction of the bay. Moore was staggering now, and Maynard supported him as he ran.

THEY were at the courthouse entrance. They burst through the throng of terrified citizens, into the midst of the women. Here were some

women of the town, but here, too, were some of the wives and daughters of the "proprietors," who had been at the ball the night before. Now their finery was torn and bedraggled with mud, and blackened with smoke.

They no longer walked with mincing steps, but huddled together, terror in their eyes. Maynard took them in with one swift glance. He ran up to the foremost.

"Mistress Rutledge — where is she?" he shouted.

The woman pointed down the hill. Another babbled:

"Teach's men took her away—and Mistress Pinckney—"

Even as she spoke, there came a sudden burst of light from the fresh-risen sun. It covered Charleston with a sheen of gold. Instantly the sea sprang into view, a blue stretch rippling past the islands in the bay. And, a little distance from the shore, Maynard could see a ship's boat, its sails billowing in the wind, not far from shore, but making seaway rapidly.

Moore shouted. "By God, it's Teach! He's got those ladies! He's taking them to his sloop! We've got to get him! Can you catch him, Maynard?"

"I'll do it," Maynard answered.

"I'll come with you!"

Maynard glanced at him. Moore was probably incapable even of making the shore; his face was ghastly white under the blood, and he seemed on the point of fainting.

"No," said Maynard, "I'll handle this affair alone." And he started down the hill, running at top speed, his eyes fixed on Teach's boat until it was cut off by the houses of Charleston.

He raced at full speed toward the dock where he had left his own boat when he came ashore. He had come alone in his cutter; it was a tiny boat, but fast enough to equal, if not outdistance Teach's. But he wasn't going to try to intercept Teach just then. He was going to his own sloop, with her fifteen guns, anchored off Castle Pinckney Island, and manned by his own trusted men. Once aboard her, he had no doubt as to the issue of the affair.

He ran alone, plunging out of the sunlight into the swirls of smoke, then out again, past the first straggling houses of the town, meeting no one, and so at last reached the dock. Thank God his boat was there. He leaped aboard, cast off, and quickly ran up his sail. Then, in the freshening breeze, he cut through the water toward his sloop.

CHARLESTON drew together, the scattered houses presented the aspect of a compact town, above which the smoke still eddied. He could hear nothing now. There was no sound of firing. Moore's men had evidently won the day, but what did that signify when Blackbeard had Laura in his power? Far out across the waves Maynard could see the pirate's boat. From the direction Teach was taking, it was evident that he had anchored his sloop beyond the outermost island, and this gave Maynard fresh hope. If he could get the start on Teach, he could overtake him. And, outgunned though he was, he had no fear of the issue of a battle.

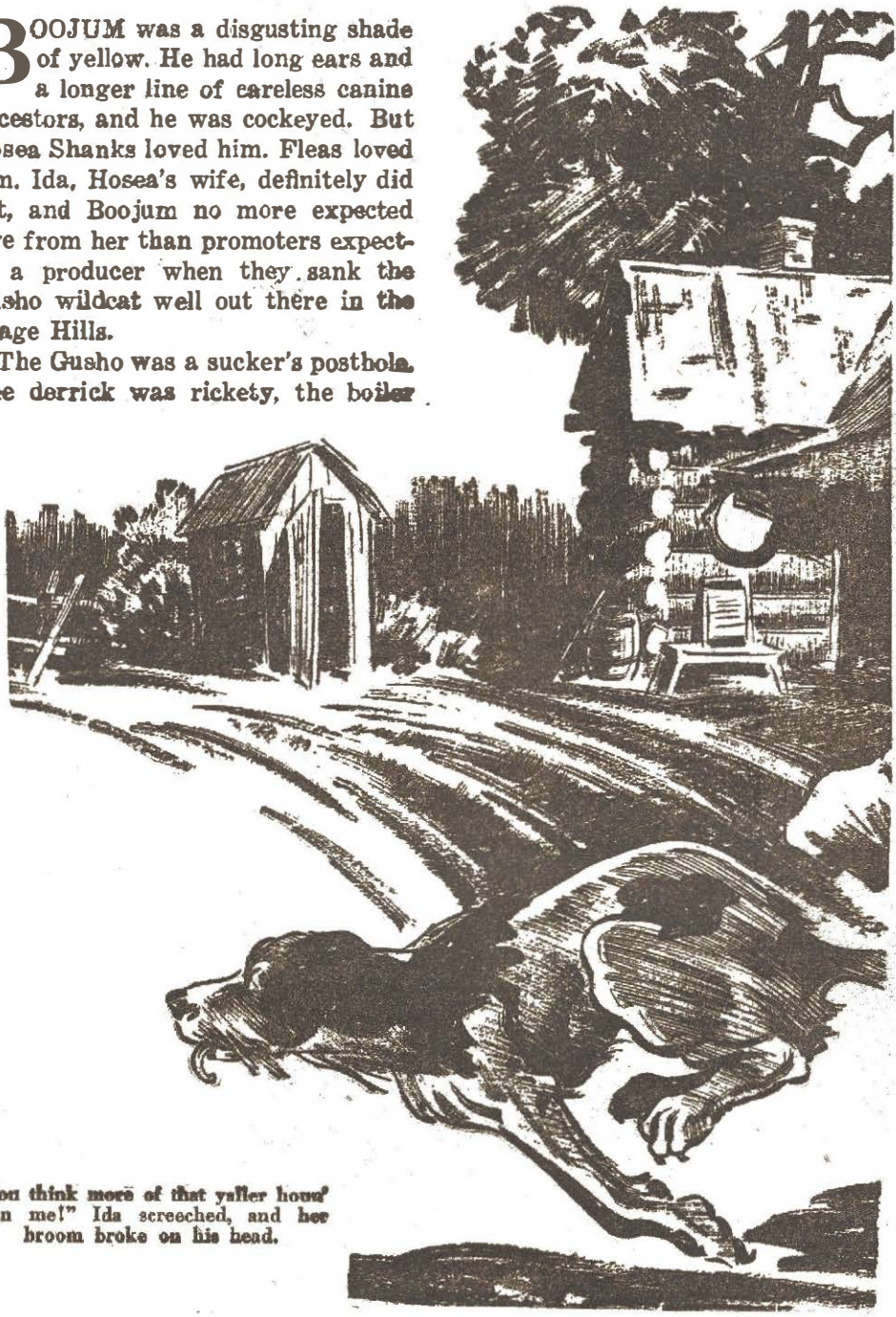
Now he could see his sloop, a little dot far out at sea. The wind was freshening behind him, the cutter skimmed the waves. He was nearing

(Continued on page 88)

THE LUCKY

BOOJUM was a disgusting shade of yellow. He had long ears and a longer line of careless canine ancestors, and he was cockeyed. But Hosea Shanks loved him. Fleas loved him. Ida, Hosea's wife, definitely did not, and Boojum no more expected love from her than promoters expected a producer when they sank the Gusho wildcat well out there in the Osage Hills.

The Gusho was a sucker's posthole. The derrick was rickety, the boiler



"You think more of that yaller hound than me!" Ida screeched, and her broom broke on his head.

PUP

By JAMES P. OLSEN

Boojum was a dog that seemed to bring bad luck wherever he went—until his owner traded him for an oil lease. And then Boojum still brought bad luck—to swindlers

and string of cable tools were junk that the promoters had charged up to stockholders as expensive equipment. But of such manipulations Hosea Shanks knew nothing. To Hosea, to whom the title of hill-billy was tailored, the Gusho was at once a curse and a godsend. The curse was a job pumping water to the boiler, the godsend the few earned dollars that caused Ida Shanks to somewhat dull the sharpness of her tongue.

Now, curse and godsend were history, and it wasn't without trepidation that Hosea headed homeward over the blackjack-covered Oklahoma hills with Boojum slinking at his heels. Nor was he eased by the sight of Ida sitting smack in the doorway of their shack, her broom within reach, the snuff stick between her lips up-tilted at a truculent angle.

"Bin watchin' you, Mister Shanks." Ida's sand-on-tile voice made Hosea wince. "Why ain't you to your job at the ile well, 'stead of here with that mis'rable yaller cur at your heels?"

Man, thought Hosea, stopping out of range of her broom if not her tongue, might's well tell what happened and have it over.

"Job's done," he muttered, "an' it warn't nothin' could be helped. Me an' Boojum was watchin' 'em run the tools in the hole when the tool-dresser got the idee Boojum was gettin' into his ol' dinnerpail an' left the brake to chouse him. The wheels went 'round too fast, line tangled, crown-blocks come in, tools went down the hole, an' the bull-wheels clumb loose an' tore down what was left of their piddlin' li'l ol' rig. Driller an' tool-dresser jumped down into the slush-pit up to their necks, an' Boojum an' me just sorta decided we'd better mosey on along home."

"Boo-jum!" Ida made anathema of the name and Boojum tucked his tail and cringed behind Hosea.

"Idur, put down that broom." Mild panic shook Hosea's voice. "If you'd make the poor purp more cornmeal mursh, he wouldn't be continual hongry like he was."

"You think more o' that yaller houn' than me. Cook his mush yourse'f. Blamin' me is the straw that bruck the camule's back!" Ida screeched, and broke her broom on hapless Hosea's head.

FROM a distance, then, Hosea and Boojum listened to things being slammed around inside the shack. After a bit, Ida came out and, a bundle in one hand, her shoes in the other, turned her bare toes toward a town ten miles across the hills.

"She's gone to stay wiff her sister," Hosea informed Boojum. "But she'll be back. Meantime, we'll consarve us up a li'l peace."

Of peace there was plenty in the days ensuing, with rabbits in the blackjacks, squirrels in the trees along a nearby creek, and mudcat and hickory shad in the stream itself. If Hosea ever chewed remorse's cud, it was when he attacked the postoak woodpile with Ida's blunted axe. He missed her then. Boojum missed her never.

Ida gone, he was master of all he surveyed until he ran his lines to include a peevish polecat. Even then, after he'd aired a bit, he w s a better bedmate than Ida, in that he didn't make Hosea strip down to his shirt, drawers, and socks upon retiring at night.

Peace, however, perished one after-

noon when, asleep under a tree near the shack, Hosea was awakened by Boojum growling at a stranger who rode up on horseback and asked, "Are you Hosea Shanks?"

"Dunno." Hosea played cagey. "If it's ary to do about the li'l accident at the Gusho well, Mister Shanks ain't to home."

"Oh, that." The visitor chuckled. "I heard about it, and you got no call to worry. The accident gave the promoters an excuse to abandon and stick more dry hole money in their pockets. I came to deliver a message from your wife. Her sister's husband knew I was riding this way, and he's eager for you to know your wife's ready to come home when you go to work and get rid of your dog."

"I got to pick atween Idur an' Boojum?" Hosea was dismayed. "Why, I can't rightly decide no such, can I, Boojum, ol' boy?"

Looking down, Hosea saw that Boojum had moseyed away, and then a series of yelps indicated his whereabouts. A rabbit streaked out of the blackjacks with Boojum hot on his tail.

"Hee-yickum!" Hosea yelled, and the cottail turned. Darting into the shack, it circled the stove on which a pot of mush and catfish was simmering, and Boojum crashed into the stove full tilt. Knocked off its supporting chunks of sandstone, the stove rolled over, and while Boojum fled, yelping piteously, live coals started little flames that licked at the tinder-like walls.

"Boojum!" Hosea wailed as the dog ran to him. Kneeling, he inspected Boojum for nonexistent injuries.

"Your house, man," the stranger warned. "It's—well, it's too late now."

"It warn't wuth much, nohow." Hosea played philosophy's fiddle while the shack burned. "An' this takes a load off my mind. Mister, pass word to Idur that I'm sorry but there ain't no house fur her to come back here to."

Word gets a brutal bruiting, and when Hosea and Boojum came drifting into Jugtown a week or so later, folks in the oil field town already had heard about the Gusho derrick and the burned shack, and a few other occurrences that had been recorded since then.

A bootlegger told of giving a man and a cockeyed yellow dog a lift, and then running into a thunder and rain storm that caused him to skid and overturn, smashing his car, his load and an arm while Hosea and Boojum escaped unscathed.

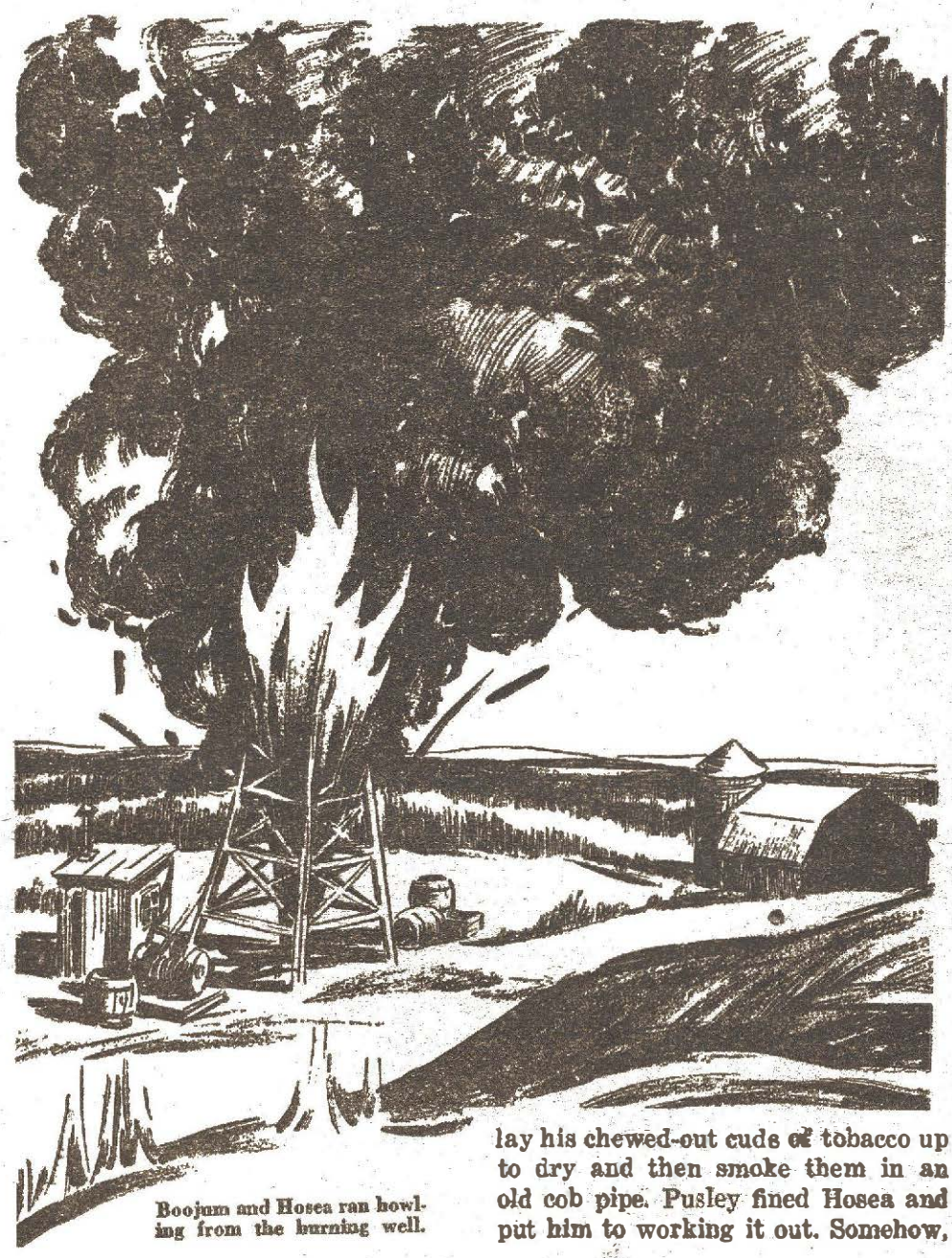
A farmer told of hiring Hosea to blast stumps, and said Boojum dug up a stick of dynamite with the fuse lit and carried it under the smokehouse, where he dropped it and ran just before the smokehouse went up with a bang.

HEARING such things, seeing Hosea and Boojum, folks were outwardly hilarious while inwardly keeping their fingers crossed. Hosea and Boojum had two strikes on them when they came up to the Jugtown plate. Despite that, the owner of the Bijou Moving Picturey gave Hosea a job sweeping out, and then even scoffers at superstition were given pause. Any other dog might chase a cat up any other pole, but Boojum ran one up a terminal power-pole, short-circuited a sub-station and left Jugtown without power and light for two days.

The Bijou had to close and the owner so resented the loss of revenue

he kicked Boojum, starting as sweet a fight as Jugtown had seen. The outcome was a Jugtown revival of the song, "You Gotta Quit Kickin' My Dawg Around," the theater owner messed up in the Bon-Ton Store's plateglass window, and jobless Hosea saying, "G'mornin', jurdge."

Judge Pusley, who owned a lumber yard, was a niggard. He was known to lay his chewed-out cuds of tobacco up to dry and then smoke them in an old cob pipe. Pusley fined Hosea and put him to working it out. Somehow,



Boojum and Hosea ran howling from the burning well.

while unloading cars of cement and lumber, Hosea and Boojum managed to sidetrack trouble. Hosea settled his fine and continued toil in order to accumulate a getaway stake, meanwhile getting a cot in the shed back of Mul-

ligan's Smokeshop and speakeasy in return for janitor's chores. But, having dared the hoodoo that far, Mulligan drew the line and dared Hosea to bring Boojum across the threshold.

Perhaps that was why nothing happened to Mulligan's, while the lumberyard, where Boojum hadn't been banned — purely oversight — was set afire by tramps and burned to the ground a few nights later.

With the rainy season at hand, the world as resolved by Jugtown was a drippy, dismal place to the again jobless Hosea. At the pine counter in Mulligan's back room, where shingle-drip corn sold as good bourbon whiskey, he waited like a trapdoor spider, pouncing on all who entered in an attempt to sell his services. His efforts were spurred by the doleful, graveyard yodeling of Boojum, locked in the shed out back, but the services of Hosea Shanks were something Mulligan's customers seemed to need the least of the most. Hosea met with nothing but callousness and reproach until Colonel Cotton dropped in.

The colonel, who'd gained his title of rank when he ran a carnival shell game, had a threefold purpose in coming into Mulligan's: To get a drink, duck an irate sucker who'd purchased some of the oil stocks and leases the colonel peddled for a livelihood, and to see about getting something to keep other irate suckers away from his door.

"Job?" the colonel responded to Hosea's approach. "I'll buy a drink, but I've no job for you. I've heard of your unlucky dog."

"Boojum ain't unlurky," Hosea defended. "He's a lurky purp, he is. Wasn't it him got me outa the Gusho job an' caused Idur to let me be, then kept her from comin' back? Y'bet it was."

"Idur? Meaning your wife?"

"Was, 'til tother day. Feller from over where she's bin livin' told me Idur'd gone off to Arkansawr wiff a widder-man wiff five kids. Fur's I'm consarned, that deevorces us."

"Convenient, and very lucky." Colonel Cotton nodded. "But what else is Boojum good for outside of a corespondent in divorce?"

"Best rabbit dawg in creation," Hosea vowed.

"Then he's not a watchdog," the colonel said.

As far as Hosea knew, Boojum's watching had been confined to watching for wood and Ida's broom. But no statement that there was something the incomparable Boojum couldn't do could go unchallenged.

"He's the best watchdawg in Ok'ahoma," Hosea swore.

The colonel stood another round, and when it had been gulped and shuddered and shaken down, he signaled for attention.

"Listen to the cries of that da— poor dog," he said. "And you, Hosea, call him lucky. Is he lucky to be locked up while less worthy mutts are free to roam, making the rounds of trees and whatnot? What has he done, that you treat him like a yellow cur?"

The colonel's corn and corny oratory touched the wellspring of Hosea's emotions. Tears puddled in his eyes.

"There's a fenced yard around my place." The colonel pressed his advantage. "I love a fine dog like Boojum. So, Hosea, for the sake of the noble dog, let me take him and give him a proper life."

"Aw, I dunno." Hosea sniffled.

"You could come to see him."

"An' later, I could buy ol' Boojum back?"

"Buy? Ah, certainly. Certainly."

Boojum gave another gnawed-skull-and-mangled-shinbone howl.

"F'gosh sake, let the colonel have him!" Mulligan cried.

"Fur Boojum's sake, an' only fur a li'l while, then, I'll sell him," Hosea sobbed.

"Uh, well, I'd thought giving him a home would suffice," the colonel, who was ever averse to parting with cash from which he'd parted others, demurred. Scowling, he gave thought to the matter, and then he smiled beneficially.

"See how your luck changes, Hosea." The colonel withdrew a map from his pocket and spread it on the bar. Pointing to a tiny red-penciled area, he said, "There you are. A five-acre oil lease that makes you a prospectively wealthy man. I'll assign it to you in return for Boojum."

"Take it, Hosea," Mulligan urged without looking at the map.

SO the hastily-drawn assignment of the lease—*"hereafter to be known as the Lucky Pup Lease"*—was duly witnessed by Mulligan and handed over to Hosea, and the colonel threw in the map.

Except that the sweet sorrow seemed mostly on Hosea's side, the less said of his parting from Boojum, the better; and with the idea of getting his beloved back, Hosea forthwith tried to get rich on his lease. He tackled the next oil man who came in.

"Hosea," the man said, looking at the map in self-defense, "you don't get a well drilled because you're willing to pay for it if it comes in a gusher. Besides, this lease—Hosea, do you know where this lease is located?"

"I don't know ary 'bout maps," Hosea admitted. "All I know's that it's an erl lease. . . . Hey, what're you laffin' at?"

"Oh," the man gasped, leaning against the bar. "Muh-Mulligan, this's something: Hosea's dog causes the Gusho' rig to be wrecked, and then Hosea trades the worthless dog for a worthless lease that offsets the worthless Gusho property!"

"Boojum ain't w u t h l e s s, an' neither's the lease!" Hosea snarled, and the oil man, still gasping, wisely departed.

Overnight, the story became cause for laughter all over town, but Gus Vander, the land-man for Major Petroleum, wasn't in town and he didn't hear it. When he did show up in Mulligan's the next day, however, Vander looked like more than one laugh would be needed to lighten his life.

"You!" Vander rasped when Hosea approached him with the dog-eared map. "What's that dog of yours doing in Cotton's yard?"

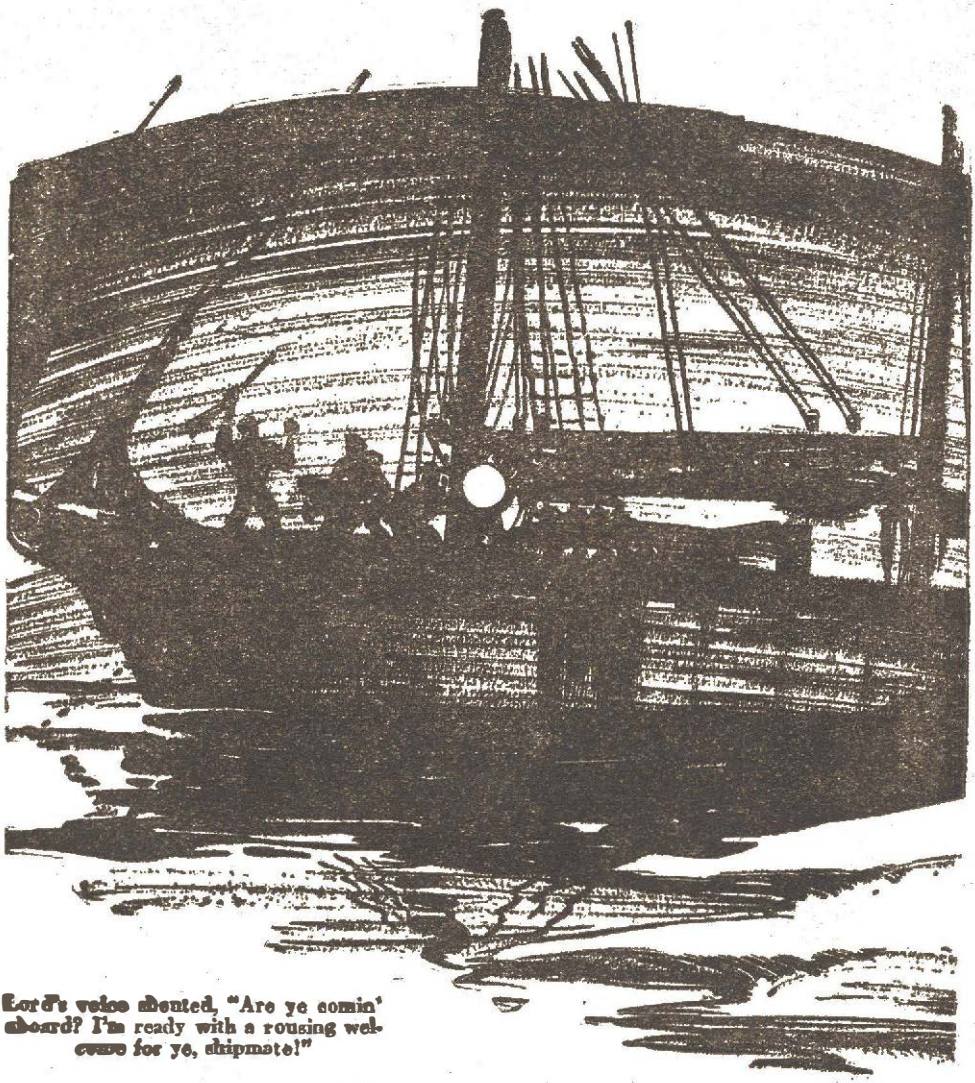
"I traded him to the colonel. Why?"

"Look what he done." Vander indicated a rip in his trousers, close to the seat. "I went to see Cotton, and that huddem Boojum attacked me when I went into the yard."

"I furgot to tell the colonel that Boojum's sorta onpartial to drillin' crews, 'count of how mean they've been to him," Hosea apologized. "Reckon he thought you was one by smellin' erl an' steam an' sech on your clothes."

"Don't give a damn what he thought," Vander grouched. "It's bad enough to have to deal with that

(Continued on page 92)



Lord's voice shouted, "Are ye comin' aboard? I'm ready with a rousing welcome for ye, shipmate!"

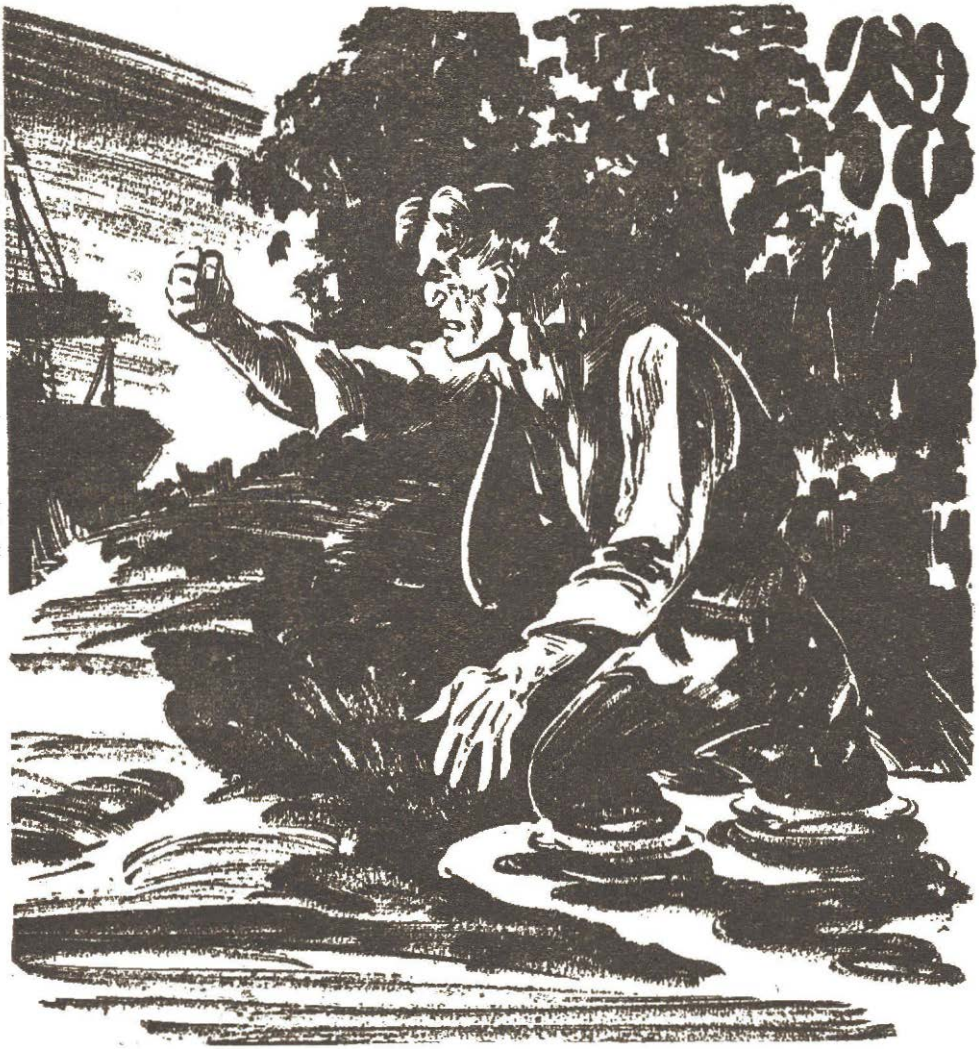
"AHOY THERE! You can't anchor here! Didn't you see my signal?"

Captain M'Shane tugged at his red beard, and watched the officer in the approaching boat, an angry glint in his blue eyes. That red, square beard and those cold, shark-like eyes had made M'Shane famous throughout the South Seas; notorious, rather, in the days before he was converted, and gave up blackbirding and pearl piracy for the much less lucrative trade of government agent.

But this was Port Mahon, on the northern coast of Australia, a little off M'Shane's regular route, and the young English officer was evidently a novice. Quite clearly he didn't recognize his formidable customer, as he shouted again, and the launch put-putted nearer.

Leaning upon the rail of his schooner, M'Shane surveyed him ironically,

M'Shane had been one of the most notorious blackbirders and pearl-pirates in the south seas. But now that he was working for the Australian government, he could go after outlaws himself!



SALVATION M'SHANE

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

while Jumper, his Kanaka, eased the boat in toward the little dock.

"I say you can't anchor here. This is a government experimental station. If you try to ancher or land, I'll have you arrested!" The young officer was standing up in the launch, declaiming angrily, while the half-breed at the engine looked up wonderingly.

"Well, well! And won't mamma be proud her baby boy's grown up," said M'Shane from the rail.

"Are you defying me, sir?" cried the officer. "I represent the Australian Government—"

"Hell's blazing bilges, so do I!" roared M'Shane in sudden explosion. "Come aboard, young man, and I'll prove it to you. There's the ladder, and don't wet your pretty feet."

Young Bride, commandant of the so-called port, reached the deck, to find himself looking down at a man who barely topped five feet four. But that bristling beard and those two blazing eyes quite disconcerted him. And in M'Shane's hand was a paper bearing certain signatures, and a seal, and obviously authentic.

"There you are, me lad. Appointed special agent for the Commonwealth of Australia, to help maintain trade and order in the seas around her coasts, in the name of His Britannic Majesty, King George. Chew on that, melad, while I'm tying up."

EXPLANATIONS being in order, they were made over two glasses of rum in M'Shane's little cabin. The young man was quite apologetic, and it wasn't in the fiery little captain's heart to be angry for long.

"You see," explained Bride, "Port Mahon is closed to all but government representatives, because some important work is being carried on here. Since the secret's out, I don't mind telling you, we're manufacturing a new helicopter. She's a bird, captain. She can rise from a postage stamp—well, almost, and take off quite vertically. We're looking for big things from her. And what might your business here be?"

"No business in Port Mahon," answered M'Shane, "but you see my foresail's patched, and the mainsail's like to go any minute. And not a yard of sailcloth in my lockers. I'll have to trouble you for a day or so, while I'm refitting. I'm after a certain gent named Lord, who I guess you've heard of."

M'Shane poured out two more drinks, and continued, now quite mellowed:

"I see you haven't heard of him. Well, years ago he was the worst blackbirder in these parts. Used to kidnap the islanders wholesale, and sell them to the planters and stock-raisers in cargo lots. The government never got him, but they stopped his goings on, until this war broke out. That gave Lord his chance, the coastal patrol being all required in other parts.

"They wouldn't take me for service. Said they'd picked me for coast patrol work, on account of—well, Mr. Bride, years ago, when I had sin and hell in my heart, I knew this Lord. Intimately, you might say. There's an old quarrel between us, on account of me leaving him, after I saw the light. I've been a great sinner, Mr. Bride, and I'm no more than a dusky lamb even now, but I see this is my retribution, not to go to the war, but to work for the Lord and the Commonwealth of

Australia, against that Lord of darkness.

"It wasn't my intention to put in at Port Mahon, but further along the coast. There's a gang of planters and stockmen at a place called Merrivale, and Lord's sailing there with a shipload of kidnaped natives, and I'm on my way to catch him. You'll keep mum about this, of course, seeing how quick news travels in Australia. And I'll thank you for a few yards of sailcloth, so I can ride out the next storm. The rains are late this year, but the Wet's likely to start any day now, and I've got no time to lose. Lemme fill your glass again."

A SHOUT from Jumper brought the captain running from the cabin. Jumper was dancing on the deck, and pointing to something whirring in the sky, almost immediately overhead, and dropping vertically toward them.

The native had seen an airplane or two in the course of his life, but he had never seen a helicopter, and M'Shane hadn't either. He stared in wonderment at the queer bird, with whirling blades above its body, as it hovered down, with the obvious intention of landing on the deck.

"Ahoy there! You can't land here! This ship is His Majesty's!" cried M'Shane; and then he heard a quiet chuckle behind him, and saw Bride standing there. Bride's sardonic humor didn't decrease the captain's irritation. But anyway, it was too late. Dropping by inches, as if searching out his ground, the pilot landed his strange craft on M'Shane's sacred deck, forcing him to leap back to avoid a glancing wing, shut off his motor and stepped out.

He was another officer, an older one, and, ignoring M'Shane, he went up to Bride. "Hello," he said. "We wondered where you were. Afraid you had been kidnaped. So I came to look see."

"Hell's blazing bilges!" roared M'Shane, "you blasted insolent trespasser—yes, trespasser, sir!"

"Oo. Locke, this is Captain M'Shane, in the service of the government, putting in to refit," Bride introduced them.

Locke gave M'Shane a frosty look, and M'Shane responded with a glare.

"Well, Bride, I hope your welcome was more cordial than mine," said Locke. "I see you're all right, so I'll be hopping. See you at the club tonight."

And, with a jaunty air which appeared unaffected by M'Shane's derisive stare, he stepped into the helicopter and started the motor again. In a moment the great bird rose slowly and cumbrously from the deck, and then began to wing its way shoreward.

"Come, captain," said Bride. "Locke's really a good fellow, you know. And, not being a navy man, he didn't know one really ought to get permission before landing upon a ship."

"You're right," answered M'Shane mournfully. "I sinned, Mr. Bride. The sin of pride. I should have offered him a drink."

CAPTAIN M'SHANE stood before the little mirror in his cabin, a pair of scissors in his hand, surveying his reflection sorrowfully. Behind it he saw Jumper entering.

"What you do along beard, captain?" queried Jumper, making a motion to stay M'Shane's hand.

M'Shane shook his head. "It's a sacrifice, melad," he answered. "E'en let it be acceptable to Thee. A sacrifice of self, Jumper, melad, before going to Merrivale. They're a hard, godless lot, those planters. They may not know M'Shane, but M'Shane's beard is celebrated along the coasts of the South Seas, if I do say it meself. Pride again."

Snip, snip went the scissors, and tufts of the captain's beard began to litter the floor. It was a queer-looking, white-chinned face that turned upon Jumper's. "How d'you like it, melad?" inquired the captain.

"Me no like," replied the Polynesian. "Beard him belong all-along him face, Captain. No ketchum plenty *lubra* now."

"You chocolate scoundrel," shouted the captain, "how dare you cast aspersions on my character? When did you ever see me make up to a *lubra*, or a white woman either?"

"You no like *lubra*, but *lubra* like you plenty, only no tellum, captain," Jumper responded.

"Well, I can't help it if they admire me, can I?" replied the captain, mollified. "Now look, Jumper, we're going over that chart again together."

M'Shane had replaced his sails but during the three days' stay at Port Mahon he had found the official caste singularly cool toward him, doubtless as a result of his altercation with Locke. He hadn't even been invited to the club, which was an affront that only an Englishman in the tropics could fully understand.

As for the mechanics, they were a poor lot, mostly with native blood in them, and etiquette forbade M'Shane to seek the company of the white foremen, whom he considered on a lower social grade than himself.

In short, he was decidedly glad that he was shaking the dust of Port Mahon off his feet, which, anyway, were unsteady on solid soil.

He laid the chart out on the table. "Here's the setup, melad," he said. "This here creek is the only way up to what they call Merrivale, which isn't nothing but a store supplying the planters and the stockmen along the slope of the Walla Walla range. All that country's practically unsurveyed, you understand, Jumper.

"Up this creek that scoundrel Lord has got to bring his schooner. In the dry season, it's supposed to be navigable up to here, but heaven alone knows how deep it is after the Wet begins.

"Here's where we lie in wait for him, taking our soundings careful, hiding behind this cliff—you get me, Jumper?"

"Me understand," answered the Kanaka.

"But you're taking the boat there alone, and you're going to wait for me. I'm going to Merrivale afoot, passing meself off for a tramp stock-hand, so as to pick up what news I can about Lord. And that," said M'Shane mournfully, "is why I cut off my beard."

IT showed the Captain's complete faith in Jumper, that he left him in charge of the ship, but the two had sailed together for several years, and had come through plenty of trouble together. Each had implicit trust in the other, and there was hardly a thing about seamanship that M'Shane knew and Jumper didn't. M'Shane's projected visit to Merrivale in disguise appeared essential, because the

report of Lord's coming lacked complete verification.

If he came, with his load of slaves —as was most probable—there was

M'Shane's beard was celebrated; so he made the sacrifice of trimming it off.

no easy access to Merrivale except by the creek, which ran up to a point within twenty miles of that place, although the limit of navigation, as marked on the chart, was more like seventy miles away.

In the dry season there was a trail overland from Port Mahon to Merrivale. In the Wet, which turned the whole land into an impassable morass, the creek was the only access.

M'Shane had the names of the stockmen who were suspected of using Kanaka slave labor. Chief of

them was old Clegg, one of the first settlers in the district. He was said to own almost all of Port Mahon, and was a tough, hard-fisted man of seventy-odd years.

Then there was Bailey, his son-in-law, whose ranch was adjacent to Clegg's. Between them they controlled a territory about as large as Massachusetts, inhabited by tribes of roving blackfellows, snakes, kangaroos, and wallabies, and subject alternatively to drouth and roaring floods. Nevertheless, cattle seemed to thrive, and there had been sisal and copra plantations before the war.

M'Shane went ashore ten miles from Port Mahon, and started on the overland trail to Merrivale, praying that the Wet wouldn't catch him halfway. If it did, that would probably mean his end. In his bundle he had a billy for cooking, flour, bacon, matches, tobacco, an effervescent laxative that was an excellent substitute for baking-powder, and a piece of soap—the tramp stock-hand's usual outfit. Beneath his old coat he had an automatic and some cartridges.

He covered the three hundred miles in ten days, and the Wet held off. There hadn't been a spot of rain, though the heavens were lowering, and the thunder growled menacingly all night long. On the eleventh day M'Shane came in sight of Clegg's station, with the store, the corrals, the shanties of the blackfellows, and the house itself, a long, plain, yellow wooden building, that stood out against the yellow desert like a bump on a bald man's head.

TRAMP stock-hands were always welcome at Australian stations, and, though M'Shane—or Shane, as he called himself—was obviously raw, he was like a gold mine to old Clegg. It was essential to get the stock onto their mountain grazing lands before the Wet came, or the whole herd might be destroyed. There were the horses to be rounded up and corralled, there was every kind of needed preparation, and there was, at best, a week in which to complete the work.

Old Clegg fitted cleanly into the picture that had been drawn of him. Seventy-four years old, straight as a boy, with corded muscles, and a shrewd, hard old mind, he drove his blackfellows like dogs.

"You're a good lad," he said grudgingly to M'Shane, on the third day. "Green, but willing. I ain't asked ye where ye came from, and that's a question I'll never put to ye, but you're settled for life, Shane. Now git that load of hay into the barn."

M'Shane's first investigation was whether Clegg had any Kanaka's working for him. He soon discovered that all his men were blackfellows and half-castes, with three or four quarter-blood foremen. Inasmuch as the Australian native has the habit of going bush whenever he feels that way, Clegg treated his men fairly well.

"In the old days I used to put the fear of God into them," he growled one evening, as he and M'Shane sat together over a bottle of rum. "Now, with them blasted police at Port Mahon, you can't shoot a blackfellow any more. Now I've got to humor them, and give their *lubras* presents at Christmas. But I've got a card up my sleeve. I ain't the feller to set down and take my punishment. I've got a dinkum card, cobber."

"What's that?" queried M'Shane.

"Got a load of Kanakas coming

the creek. I'll get warning when they've landed. Then you and me will ride and bring them in. Then I'll show these here blackfellows they ain't running old Clegg's show for him. I'll blackfellow them, once I git those Kanakas."

"How soon do you expect them?" inquired M'Shane.

"Any time now—any day. Matter of fact they ought to be here already."

BAILEY, Clegg's son-in-law, was bad medicine. M'Shane spotted that the minute he set eyes on him. He was a furtive fellow, with an eye for the best points of all the *lubras* working about the place, despite the presence of his wife. He was also a bad drunk, which McShane discovered the evening of his visit.

He had brought Dora, Clegg's daughter, and half-a-dozen half-castes, to help wind up the work before the rains, and his idea of work was to loll in a chair on the porch, smoking and drinking. Dora, on the other hand, was a decidedly pretty girl of about five-and-twenty, and obviously bored by life with Bailey. There were recriminations between the two all day. M'Shane, standing in the entrance to the barn, which he had just finished cramming with hay, saw Dora Bailey riding toward him. She sprang from her horse and surveyed him with the frank curiosity of interior Australia, where the arrival of one of the other sex is a portent, almost a miracle.

"What's your name, cobber?" she asked.

"Shane, miss. James Shane."

"Whered'you come from?"

"Oh, from knocking around."

She laughed. "You aren't so terrible old, Shane. "Thirty-eight or nine, I'd call you."

"Forty, missy. Getting to be an old-timer."

"Bah, forty's just a boy. What did you think of that thing I was crazy enough to marry?"

"It ain't for me to say," answered M'Shane uneasily. He scented danger, like the wary old bachelor he was.

"Well, I'd change him, if the right fellow was to come my way," said Dora. "Put on your thinking cap and smoke that in your pipe." And she rode off, leaving M'Shane scratching his head and pondering.

To make the creek after the Wet had really set in would be difficult in the extreme. And he had learned all he needed to know. He had waited in case Bailey would add anything to his stock of information, but Bailey had only inquired of Clegg whether he had heard anything about the shipment, and had remained silent when Clegg said no.

M'Shane decided to ask Clegg for his time that night. There was nothing more to be learned, and he wanted to get away from Dora.

SUPPER that night was worse than the noon meal. Bailey was drunk and quarrelsome and ugly.

"I saw you making up to my wife this afternoon." he bawled at M'Shane. "You leave her alone, or I'll knock your blasted head off. see?"

"And I should think you'd be ashamed to talk that way to Mr. Shane. He's twice as good a man as you are!" screamed the woman.

"Shut up, the two of you, or I'll take my 'roo whip to ye," yelled old Clegg.

It was after Bailey and his wife had departed, still wrangling, to their

quarters, that M'Shane asked Clegg for his time.

"What d'ye mean?" yelled the old man. "What's got into your head now, Shane? Want more money? Thinking of trying your luck in that airplane factory at Port Mahon? I'll give ye more. I can't let ye go. I'm counting on ye to help me herd that shipment of Kanakas back from the creek. What's got into you, I say?"

He stared shrewdly into M'Shane's face. "I'll answer my own question," he said. "It's that Bailey. And now I'll tell ye something. Bailey was just a stock-hand of mine, like you are, and that fool of a girl fell in love with him because he was the only white man around here. They ran away and got married, and I set him up in business. He's a drunk and a lazy rotter. I wish he was like you.

"And now I'll tell ye what's been in my mind. I don't think Bailey's going to last much longer. He don't look like a long-lived feller to me, and I shouldn't be surprised if he was to peg out before the Wet's over. And then you'll take his place, see? I was watching you and Dora, and I'll take my oath you'll make a handsome pair. And when I kick the bucket, you and her will have everything.

"So don't be a fool, Shane, and I'll see Bailey don't trouble you no more."

M'Shane was trembling with rage. The picture old Clegg had drawn of him, as a happy married man, was too much for his equanimity.

"I asked you for my time," he said, trying to keep calm, "and I don't need you to plan my future life for me. I'm leaving now."

Old Clegg sprang to his feet. "Like hell you are! You're staying—get that through your nut!" he shouted.

"Hell's blazing bilges!" roared M'Shane. "I said I'm leaving now, ye crosseyed spawn of a kangaroo!"

And he strode out of the room toward his quarters.

HIS mind was quite made up, and yet his heart misgave him as he packed his roll. "Lord, I have sinned," he muttered. "I sinned in eating his bread under false pretenses, and I sinned with the unruly member of my tongue. Yet what can I do, Lord? I've got to go. It's on Your work I'm called, not for my own vanities."

And, with his roll on his back, and a small amount of provisions which he had kept for just this emergency, he started off in the moonlight in the direction of the creek. His investigations had shown him that a trail ran toward it, probably used as a smugglers' route at various times. Though overgrown with scrub, it was still clearly discernible.

He was afraid that old Clegg would try to prevent his departure, and that he would have to use force on him, but nobody intercepted him, and in a few minutes he was clear of the house and buildings, and moving across the hard terrain toward the lowlands at the base of the hills.

It was an eerie walk that night—underfoot the sun-baked ground, overhead dense blackness—the only light the fitful one cast by the moon when she emerged momentarily from the clouds. The thunder growled, the lightning flashes were continuous. The rains couldn't hold off more than a day or two longer; they might break at any moment. When they did, they wouldn't let up till the wet season was ended.

By dawn M'Shane was deep in the

long valley stretching toward the coast. All about him rose the forest trees, a thin growth of mighty eucalyptus, she-oak, and black wattle, and waist-high rose the withered stalks of

He saw now he had been tracked through the night.

the undergrowth. Lianas, which had survived the drouth, in places offered an impenetrable barrier. And yet the traces of the trail were still distinguishable.

Day was coming up fast. M'Shane halted, and scanned the scene before him. Far in the distance, where the blue-gray hills drew together, must be the creek, and beyond those hills would be the sea. If the rains held off for two days more, he could make it.

The sense of a presence behind him made him start. One of the blackfellows was standing there, his throwing-stick in his hand.

And, though he had been conscious of the approach of no one, now M'Shane realized that a circle of blackfellows was about him, ringing him in. He had been tracked through the night, and the purpose of the natives' presence was obvious. Clegg didn't mean to let him go.

AS M'Shane, affecting to ignore the blackfellows, moved a few steps, still another native appeared, standing squarely in his path, his throwing-stick poised. M'Shane emitted a yell of fury. His hand closed on his automatic, but he refrained. Instead, he leaped like a cat at the intruder.

A stick, flung from behind, caught him in the small of the back, and sent him staggering. He yelled again, and swung about. There were at least a dozen blackfellows watching him. In his pistol lay apparently his sole chance of escaping them. Again his hand closed upon it.

"No!" he shouted "I have a stronger weapon—my trust in Thee, O Lord. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil."

As he chanted the psalm, the blackfellows moved in closer, but the hands that held the throwing-sticks dropped to their sides. They stared in wonder at the white man, the meaning of whose gestures was only partly comprehensible to them.

"Down on your knees, ye black-skinned sons of Satan!" roared M'Shane. "Down, and thank the Lord ye never knew that He's saved ye from my anger! Down, ye black dingoes, down!"

And, as M'Shane knelt, the natives followed suit, following his every gesture with servile imitation. As his voice rang out, they filled the glade with howls and groanings.

Into this gathering rode Bailey, who had lingered behind until the blackfellows had secured their quarry. At the sight of M'Shane kneeling there in the center of his rapt auditors, he galloped forward, brandishing his whip, and shouting:

"M'Shane, by the Lord! There ain't another man in all Australia crazy enough to do that. M'Shane, for all you've shaved your beard off!"

"Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over," roared M'Shane.

"I'll anoint you, my friend, before I'm through with you!"

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life—and now, my man, I'll attend to you!"

The panther-leap of the little captain took Bailey by surprise It seemed impossible that a man could leap from his knees—could leap like that, and claw another man's horse, and pull him from his saddle, and snatch his whip away.

Crack, came the lash on Bailey's

back, and Bailey screamed and struggled unavailingly to escape.

"This is the doing of the Lord who sent you here, and made me the minister of His justice"—crack! "Ye'll learn to treat your wife better"—crack! "Ye'll quit liquoring too much"—crack! "Ye'll stop when ye feel Satan climbing up into the seat your brains have vacated"—crack! "Down on your knees, ye lily-livered limb of limbo, and thank Him for His tender lovingkindness to ye."

And, leaving Bailey prostrate, M'Shane took up his pilgrimage.

THAT night the rains broke. Within half a minute M'Shane, a human waterfall, was struggling up a tree, to avoid a torrent gushing down the trail. By morning, patches of water glittered here and there in the valley, and already sprouts of green were pushing up through the marsh.

The creek, which M'Shane had seen, about ten miles away, before nightfall, was now like an arm of the sea, moving toward him faster than he moved toward it. He had orientated himself fairly well, however. That cliff on the chart had been correctly placed. If Jumper had encountered no obstacle, he should be well on his way to it—might even have reached it.

The cliff was the culmination of a high ridge that ran inland from the sea, and to reach it was vital, not only to the success of the plan, but to M'Shane's life. Within another four-and-twenty hours the entire valley would be one vast swamp, through which it would be impossible to make his way.

So M'Shane struggled on, sometimes plunging into bogholes that mired him to the knees, sometimes calf-deep in water. The lianas, which had grown pliant, snatched at him like detaining fingers, and everywhere young shoots had burst magically from the dry vegetation.

All through that day M'Shane fought to win his way, and toward nightfall he had succeeded in attaining the slopes of the ridge. He was on dry ground now, and the sun had dried his steaming clothes. He examined his cartridges. Being an old sailor, he carried them in a waterproof cover, and he found them perfectly dry. In a brief respite of the rain, he cleaned his automatic.

He ascended until he could get a clear view of the creek. The chart had showed it as a thread, but it was now a lake, extending toward the horizon as far as he could see. But, in the light of the declining sun, he failed to see his schooner.

Jumper hadn't yet arrived, unless he had anchored right behind the curve of the cliff. M'Shane continued to ascend. The rain began again, but less violently. The sun still shone over the rain-clouds.

The peak was precipitous, but from the top of it there would be a clear view of the whole country. Now M'Shane was negotiating the last curving slope. He stopped to catch his breath. Then something like a soaring bird struck him slap on the side of the head and knocked him down, whereupon it soared back again in a graceful spiral, taking the direction by which it had come.

As M'Shane rose to his feet, he looked into the muzzle of an automatic, above which was the face of Lord.

(Continued on page 97)

When the stranger came to Redling, he took it on himself to protect a foolish young man from crooked gamblers. In his own heart was a reason—and it was reason enough to shoot it out with professional gunmen

COMEBACK IN REDLING

By JUSTIN CASE

"Now I'll play," said the stranger, and he stepped in.

HE was not much to look at. Tall, maybe, but even that was mostly due to this thinness. A little more meat on his bones would have shrunk him down to normal height, and then you never would have glanced at him twice.

As for his name, he said it was Jim. "Call me Jim," he said. I didn't learn the rest of it until the very end.

Funny thing, though, we were aware of him the minute he stepped up to the bar in the Red Hitch that Friday morning and said: "I'm looking for Foster Raymond's place."

We were in the thick of a stud game with a hand half played, but we looked up at him. Maybe it was his voice. There was an iron purpose in the way he spoke, as if he had come a long way to say it.

Red Mitchell, who owns the place and was back of the bar, gave the stranger a quick once-over and said: "You want Raymond's place or Foster Raymond himself?"

"Himself."

"He's around. I saw him a short while ago. Know him, do you?"

The stranger shook his head.

"Porky!" Mitch called across to me. "Go along with this feller and point out Foster Raymond. Time you shook the lead out of your pants and earned some of the drinks you mooch around here!"

I overlooked the insult. I had borrowed four bits to get into the game and was ahead nearly two bucks, so I grabbed the excuse to slide out with my winnings. "This here," Mitch said to the stranger, "is Porky Tanner, a capable gent, but lazy. He'll help you."

I put out my hand and the stranger took it, his grip cold but firm. "Call me Jim," he said.

HE had little to say as we went down the street, but looked around in a curious sort of way as though the town held some deep interest for him. As though maybe he had been in Redling before, a long time ago, and was bewildered at how the place had altered. I glanced in Heffner's store and the Redling Lunch for the man we were seeking, but he was not there, so we kept on walking.

After a while this Jim said: "What sort of man is Foster Raymond, anyhow?"

"He owns the Double R outfit."

"Big, is it?"

"The biggest for miles around. Foster Raymond could light his cigars with gold-backs, only he ain't made that way. He is a sober, dignified man, close to fifty. He don't drink or have much to say; he don't take to gambling or get into scrapes. All the bad in that family," I snorted, "is heaped up in his son."

I started to tell about Paul Raymond, the old man's son, but this did not seem to interest him. He had begun to frown. Interrupting me, he muttered: "Are you sure Foster Raymond is that wealthy?"

"Filthy rich," I repeated. "Money don't mean a damn to him." All at once I grabbed the stranger's arm. "There he is now! Down the street there, coming out of the bank!"

The stranger stopped short. I expected him to yell out to old man Raymond, but he just stared.

"Coming out of the bank," I mumbled to myself, "and I'll bet my Sunday shirt he has got two thousand dollars in his pockets. Two thousand bucks that will be in the hands of crooked gamblers by nightfall!" The mere thought of it left me limp. "If *I* had a son like that, I would keep him hog-tied in a corral! Well—" and I looked at the stranger again, pointedly—"ain't you going over there?"

He shook his head. "No. No, I guess not. I guess there would be no point to it," he muttered. His hand closed over my arm and he turned me around. "Perhaps you had better tell me more about Foster Raymond's son."

"Well, I figured he was a mite loose in the mind, but if he wanted to hear about Paul Raymond, I sure could tell him. I could stretch it out all afternoon and maybe mooch a few drinks while doing it.

That's what happened. We went back to the Red Hitch and he bought the drinks while I consumed them. He did not do any drinking himself.

I told him about the scrapes young Raymond had got into. About the kid's explosive temper, his wild idea that a

he-man had to be pouring raw liquor into himself every half hour. I told of his trouble with women, his love of gambling.

"Trouble is," I said, "the kid needs to meet up with someone who can knock the spots out of him, but there is nary a soul in these parts can do it. He is a fighting fool. Meanwhile," I said, "the old man foots the bills while young Paul runs wild. Oh, they have a bunch of arguments about it—had one right here in the Hitch only last week—but the kid just laughs them off and goes on raising the devil. Night before last he got into a game with a couple of bad hombres from down Sooner Basin way, and wound up owing them two thousand dollars."

"That's a lot of money," Jim said gravely.

"Yes, sir," I agreed. "That's a lot of money even for Paul Raymond. He didn't have the cash on him, but handed them an I.O.U. and promised to be here with the money tonight. That is why I said old man Raymond no doubt had two thousand dollars in his pockets when he came out of the bank a while ago."

Jim was quiet for some time. He seemed to be weighing something of great importance in his mind. Then he said: "I'd like to have a look at this Paul Raymond."

"He will be here tonight. He would not dare double-cross those two hombres."

"I'd like a look at him before tonight," Jim said.

Well, he was buying the drinks and I had begun to like him, so I stepped up to the bar and asked Mitch if he knew where Paul Raymond might be, other than sleeping off last night's drinks at the hotel. Mitch advised me to try Henry Levering's stable.

"That is where the kid keeps his horse," Mitch said. "And I'll give him credit for one thing—he sure takes good care of that horse."

The stranger and I went out again and as we approached the stable, he said to me: "Now listen, Porky. If Paul Raymond is here, don't say a word. Maybe I'll talk to him; maybe not. You let me handle this."

HENRY LEVERING was not around, but sure enough the kid was in there taking care of his horse. It was not much of a horse. You would have thought, with all that easy money at his fingertips, he would have flown high and bought himself the most wonderful hunk of horseflesh on the market, but he had ridden this little sad-eyed sorrel for as long as I could remember. He had the horse out of its stall now and was giving it a rub-down.

"Something I can do for you?" he asked Jim, ignoring me.

"No, thanks," Jim replied. "Just want to look around. May want to buy me one of these critters."

Raymond didn't pay us much attention. He looked worried, sort of. Ordinarily he was a handsome young fellow, tall, slim, with an arrogant swagger that bordered on conceit, but today he wore an anxious frown and carried lead weights in his shoulders. I figured it was a hangover.

We walked around, looking at Levering's horses, and after a time got back to him. The stranger put an admiring hand on the sorrel's neck. "This horse for sale?" he asked.

"This one?" Raymond replied quick-

(Continued on page 76)

LONG PIG

By HUGH SPEER

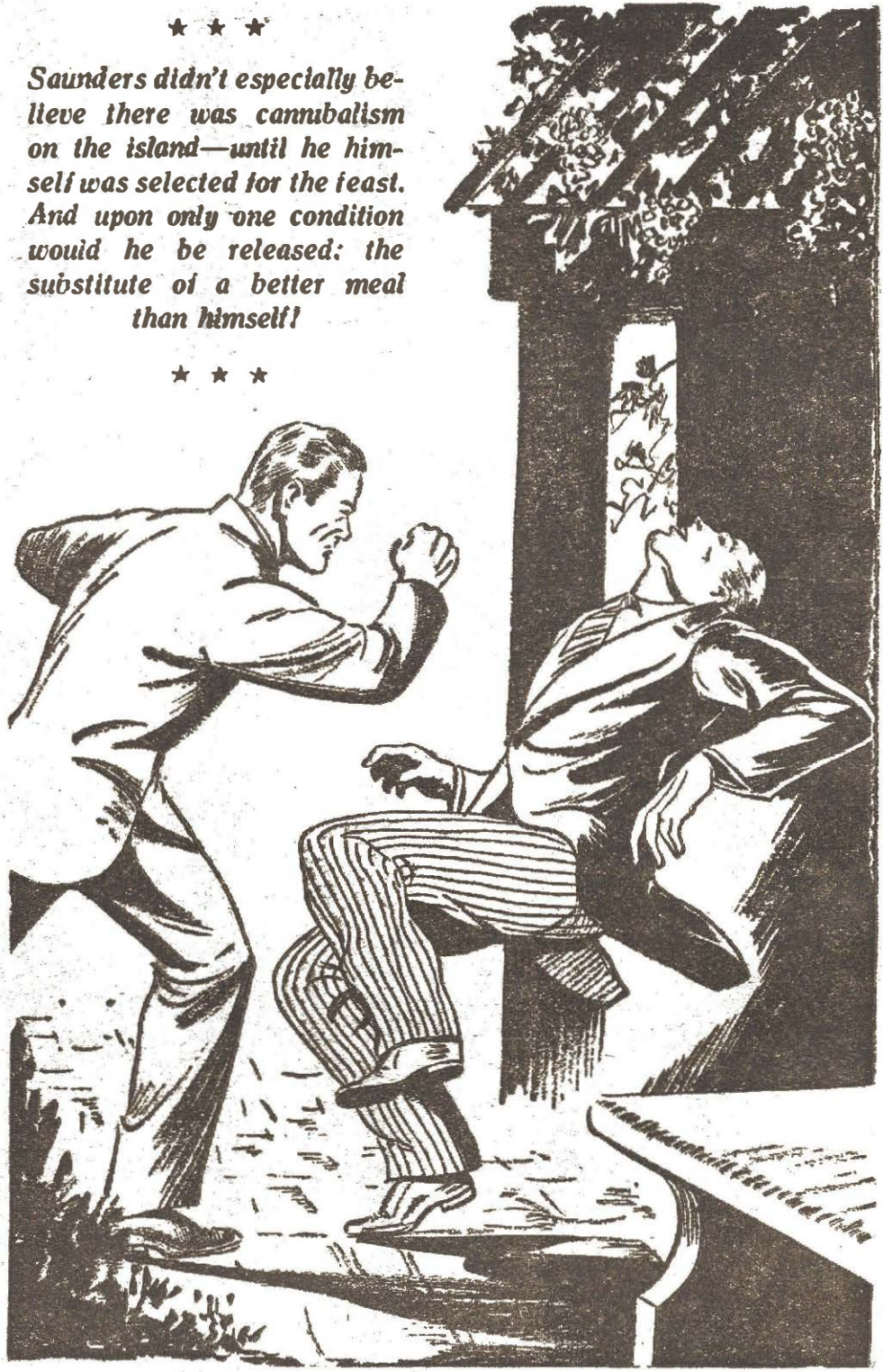
HE was the biggest porker that had ever been seen. He was as large as a full-grown hippopotamus, and he had strained the scales at the Department of Agriculture, where they tried to weigh him. The government had scoured the country for him, and he had been discovered, the pet and prodigy of a Negro farmer's family, in the lower

Emily screamed, and the gardener came running up.

★ ★ ★

Saunders didn't especially believe there was cannibalism on the island—until he himself was selected for the feast. And upon only one condition would he be released: the substitute of a better meal than himself!

★ ★ ★



reaches of the Mississippi Delta. The family had let him go reluctantly—the girls in tears, and only because he had eaten up the first and second mortgage moneys.

He occupied an entire freight car on the journey north. Crowds acclaimed him, in ignorance of his destiny. He was loaded aboard ship in the dead of night. His voyage was meant to be kept secret. But the passengers discovered him—this was in that antediluvian decade before the War; and thereafter he was the sensation of the vessel.

She was a tourist ship, sailing from San Francisco, touching at Manila, Borneo, Bali, and Ceylon. But incidentally she was unloading her famous passenger at the wharf of Bongi, a little town on the shore of one of the least known and least progressive of the Islands.

She did so, and the disappointed tourists sailed on, and spoke about their lost pet every day, until they forgot him in the delights of Bali, where you buy batik work, and the girls have such expressive shoulders.

The fate of Mr. P., as the pig was dubbed by those most interested in his lot, was unknown to the public, although at a later date he was to come back—in death, with a mighty whack. For the present his memory was crowded off the scroll of time. The passing of Mr. P. was celebrated at a family dinner in the suburb of Golden Glow, Maryland.

Present were Winthrop Bryson, Third, his wife, and their daughter, Emily.

"Yes, the pig has arrived," said Winthrop Bryson. "And so—"

"Dear Tillotson will soon be home," remarked his wife.

Emily said nothing at all, but seemed to be in a state of mental abstraction.

WINTHROP BRYSON, Third, was stuffy, and wore striped pants, even through the heat of a Washington summer. He had a wife and one daughter, and commuted to Washington from Golden Glow, where he owned a small country place in an exclusive section of that thriving commuters' paradise.

Winthrop Bryson's place was one of the finest. He employed three servants, including a butler-gardener who cultivated hothouse grapes and peaches. His car was shiny black. He belonged to the best clubs, and attended ambassadors' receptions. He was eminently one of the Best People, and his official nonchalance was proof against everything except ridicule, which he detested as low and ungentlemanly.

But he hadn't obtained promotion for some years, being in disfavor with the Right Political Party. His job was secure, since he was technically a member of the Civil Service. Actually, he was important enough to be dependent for preferment upon the good will of the government. And he had lost it, away back in the prosperity era, because of certain views he had expressed at his club.

A club is the sanctum of a gentleman. One can express oneself freely there. So Winthrop Bryson had thought. Instead, he was labeled dangerously reactionary. It was all very irregular, and he remained a soured and disappointed man.

He had charge of a number of native chiefs in his Section of the Is-

lands Government. Through the correct channels he supervised their progress with keen interest, for he believed in the White Man's Burden, civilization, and uplift. His charges would never know of his existence, but that made no difference to him. If it had not been improper, he might have considered himself an artist, the way he brooded like a father over Krak, the paramount chief of the group.

He would have been ashamed if anyone had known, but he often speculated about Krak, whom he had persuaded to adopt many little by-products of civilization, such as the substitution of earrings for nose-rings, the abolition of head-hunting, and, especially, the stamping out of cannibalism. He wondered what Krak looked like, and how he got along with his wives. In fact, there was a human element buried somewhere in Winthrop Bryson, deep underneath the morning-coat, waistcoat, and starched shit.

"The Reverend Mr. Burroughs informs me that he has had a long talk on religious subjects with Krak," wrote the resident commissioner, "and he has professed his desire to adopt the white man's religion. He has to go slow, because this people are still attached to their idols."

Cummings, the head of the section, a person of not the least consequence, laid the letter on Winthrop Bryson's desk. "Your pal Krak's coming along," he grinned. "Maybe this will brighten your day for you Bryson."

Winthrop Bryson scowled. He disliked Cummings's levity, he resented his approach to ridicule, and he despised him as an outsider who had been jacked into the position of Chief of the Islands Government Section because he had political pull. But he was glad to hear the news about Krak.

JIM WILLIS was in the Department of Mandated Islands, whose authority overlapped that of the Islands Government Section. They were, in fact, two separate departments with no clear dividing line of authority. Washington had frequently considered creating a third department for the purpose of harmonizing their relationship, and clearing up the tangle, but nothing had yet been done in this regard.

Being young, enthusiastic, and adaptable, Jim quickly rose to a position of authority. His chief, who rarely showed up, was glad to give his talented young subordinate as much work as he was able to handle.

It was, as Winthrop Bryson afterward admitted, a fatal error when he invited young Jim Willis to his home to meet the congress of South Seas missionaries. Jim and Emily met for the first time, looked at each other and knew that they were in love. They spent two hours in Elysium, wandering about the grounds, and through the hothouses, telling each other of their lives and dreams. It was in the Morocco Grape House that Tillotson Saunders found them.

Tillotson Saunders had not the slightest claim upon Emily, except that her parents had decided he was an eligible young man. He had a Harvard background, and wore striped pants and a cutaway. He had been through the ambassadorial school, and, being in high favor with the authorities, was awaiting his first appointment to an embassy somewhere or other. Coming upon Jim and Emily,

he provoked what is euphemistically called a "scene."

"Emily, your mother has been looking for you this past hour," he said, ignoring Jim, and offering the girl his arm.

"Tell mother I'll be back quite soon," said Emily.

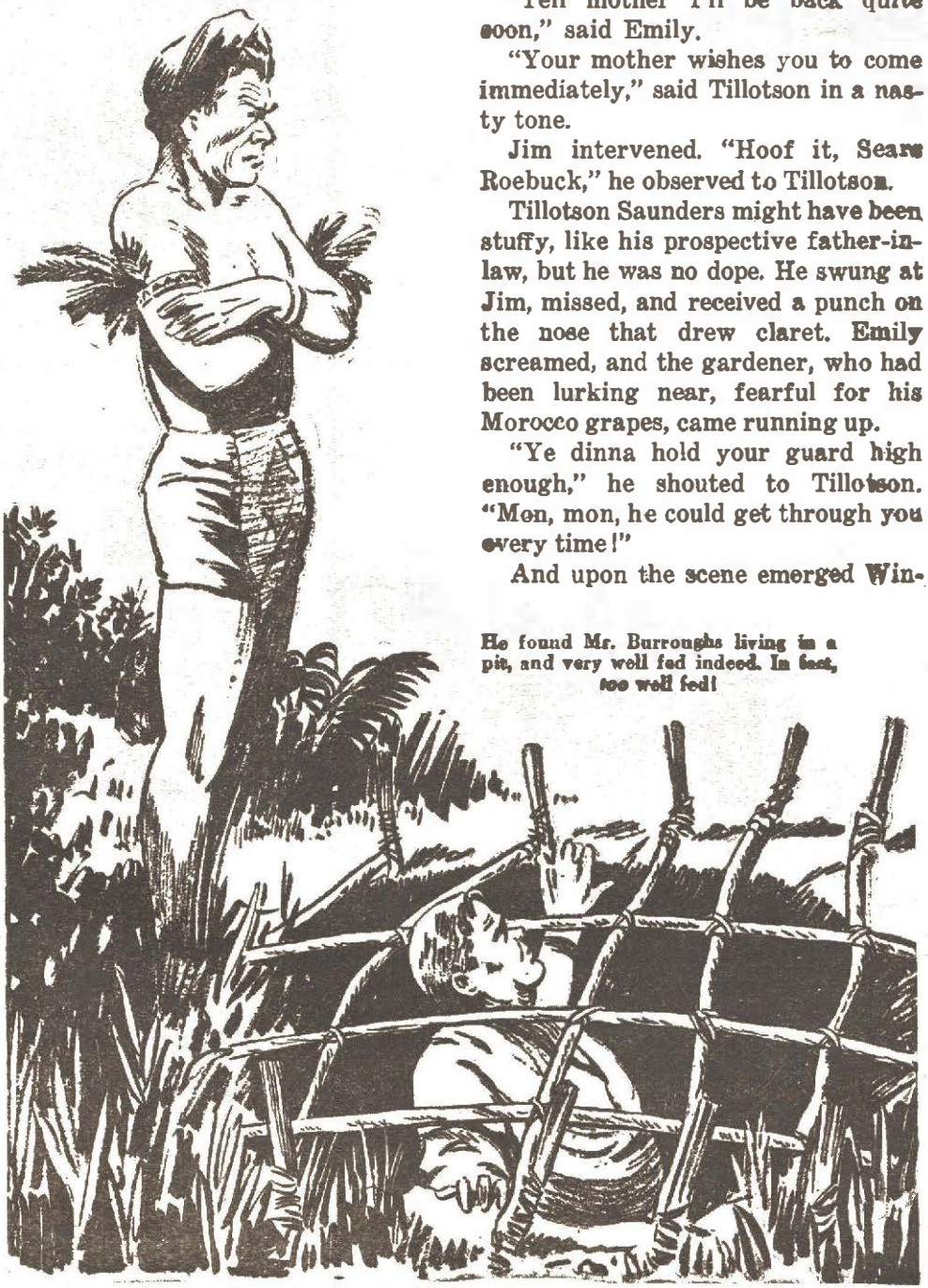
"Your mother wishes you to come immediately," said Tillotson in a nasty tone.

Jim intervened. "Hoof it, Sears Roebuck," he observed to Tillotson.

Tillotson Saunders might have been stuffy, like his prospective father-in-law, but he was no dope. He swung at Jim, missed, and received a punch on the nose that drew claret. Emily screamed, and the gardener, who had been lurking near, fearful for his Morocco grapes, came running up.

"Ye dinna hold your guard high enough," he shouted to Tillotson. "Mon, mon, he could get through you every time!"

And upon the scene emerged Win-



He found Mr. Burroughs living in a pit, and very well fed indeed. In fact, too well fed!

throp Bryson himself, escorting the Methodist Bishop of the South Seas. Even Jim felt abashed.

THE scandal was terrible. Bill Cannon, a rising young newspaperman, and an intimate of Jim's, called on him that night. "What's this about a set-to between you and Tillotson Saunders at old Bryson's shebeen this afternoon?" he asked. "Oh boy, it sounds juicy."

"Not a word," said Jim. "My fault entirely."

"Yeah, but what about you and him and Emily Bryson?"

"Not a word, and you love me."

"Well, old man, if you say so." Bill was indebted to Jim for a lot of inside information from his department. "But I'd like to take a slug at those striped pants, Bryson and Saunders."

In the interim, Mrs. Bryson had been taxing Emily with her share in the affair.

"Jim and I love each other, and we'll always be true to each other, as long as we live," answered Emily.

"Really? You discovered that within two hours of your first meeting? It was your first meeting, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but that makes no difference. We feel that we've known each other a thousand years."

"And it is for this," said her horrified mother, "that we sent you to the most exclusive finishing school in the country! If the news of that dreadful fight ever gets out, your father's a ruined man."

That was a little strong. But Winthrop Bryson was properly infuriated. What irked him more than the disgrace of the fray was that young Wil-

lis should have dared to look amorously upon his daughter.

A man of no consequence at all, and a junior member of a department which he considered far inferior to his own. Jim quickly learned from Emily that they were never to see each other again.

Thereafter their interviews had to be stolen ones. It came to Winthrop Bryson's ears that they had been seen together in an ice-cream parlor—for to such straits were they reduced for intercourse. He walked over to the Department of Mandated Islands.

"I understand that you have been seen in the company of my daughter," he said. "Furthermore, that you have been meeting her in low haunts. I have forbidden her ever to see or communicate with you again, and I shall expect you to respect my decisions.

"What's the matter with me?" asked Jim.

"Our social standards, antecedents, and associations are different," replied Wilthrop Bryson ponderously. "Furthermore, your conduct while your were my guest has placed an indelible stigma upon you. Whether you are able to see it or not is a matter of indifference to me. If you persist, I shall take appropriate action."

The threat was, of course, an empty one, but it left Jim brooding.

WINTHROP BRYSON was not such a bad fellow as he tried to be, and just now he had other worries. For instance, there was a long communication from the resident commissioner, informing the Section that a certain chief named Bilbo was threatening to make war on Krak, the paramount ruler. This Bilbo was not only an idolator, but a notorious headhunter. Furthermore, he was suspected of winking at the practice of cannibalism among his tribesmen.

The resident commissioner advocated the landing of a few marines, to put Bilbo in his place, or to capture him, if that could be done. A bomber might not be amiss, he added, but he awaited instructions.

Bryson talked the matter over with his chief, Cummings. "Krak's got to be protected," he insisted. "He's a good man, and pro-American to the core."

"Oh, do what you think best, Bryson," answered Cummings testily. "You understand the handling of those johnnies better than I do. If you want marines, or a bomber, I'll notify the navy department. Only for God's sake keep it out of the papers, or there'll be all sorts of questions in Congress."

But on the same day that the cable dispatch was received from the commissioner, the Department of Mandated Islands received a long written communication from the head missionary on Bongi. He had been sadly deceived in Krak, Mr. Burroughs wrote. His profession of conversion had been merely a pretense, for the purpose of currying favor with the resident commissioner. He had been adopting a tyrannous and overbearing attitude toward the sub-chiefs, notably one Bilbo, a man of excellent disposition and humane character, of whom he had high hopes.

Mr. Burroughs advocated the sending of a small naval force, which, while doing its utmost to avoid bloodshed, should depose Krak from his position as paramount chief, and install Bilbo in his place.

Jim Willis's chief laid the communi-

cation on Jim Willis's desk. "Rush this over to the navy department and ask them to take appropriate action," he said.

Jim read the letter. "You know, Burroughs is apt to go off the handle at times," he said. "Do you think we should take any action on this?"

"Yes," snapped his superior. "This will be one in the eye for Winthrop Bryson. I'm sick and tired of his constant memos about that fellow Krak."

"BUT there's been no actual outbreak of fighting," objected the navy department.

Winthrop Bryson and Jim Willis had arrived at identically the same moment. Since their business was one and the same, they had been admitted together, over Winthrop Bryson's protest. Each had stated his case, and shown his communication. Whereupon the navy department had uttered its sage remark.

"But there may be at any moment," urged Winthrop Bryson. "We've got to protect our citizens."

"The commissioner has a guard of native police. He makes no suggestion that he himself is in danger. If he is, we can get a bomber there in a day. There are no white women at Bongi."

"But we've got to protect Krak," said Winthrop Bryson. "We elevated him to his present position, and his prestige, and ours, are at stake."

"But Burroughs seems to be sold on this other fellow, Bilbo," said the navy. "It looks to me like a tempest in a teapot. A dozen pocket mirrors and a few yards of calico will work wonders. You see, Bryson, Bongi being a Mandate, we'd have to justify any action to the League of Nations, and heaven knows what else."

Winthrop Bryson held his ground doggedly. "Is it to be made public that the navy department winks at the practice of cannibalism?" he asked in his suavest manner.

"Well, suppose there has been an instance of cannibalism," Jim put in. "Everybody knows that there is no mammalian food on Bongi. It is only when the craving becomes irresistible that the practice is indulged in. Anthropologists are in general agreement that the cannibal populations of the world are, in general, of superior physical development, and have a cranial index in excess of that of the non-cannibalistic tribes and—"

"No, no, gentlemen," said the navy, still flinching under Winthrop Bryson's attack. "We cannot tolerate cannibalistic practices. But the commissioner says, 'suspected.' I'll tell you what we'll do. Mr. Willis, get your department head to wire the commissioner, asking for definite information, from himself and the Reverend Burroughs, as to any instance of cannibalism on Bongi. Then we'll see about it."

With which decision Winthrop Bryson and Jim Willis were forced to retire, both fuming, and each affecting to be ignorant of the presence of the other.

JIM was feeling pretty sorry for himself that day. Only a few days before, he had received a short and incoherent note from Emily, telling him that she loved him just the same, and would always love him, but that their meetings must come to an end, and she must ask him to forget her.

It was so doleful, Jim was really afraid she might commit some act of violence upon herself. Wherefore, his

reaction was profound when, happening to pass the Monument Hotel, he saw her coming out of its fashionable restaurant, in the company of Tillotson Saunders.

She was laughing in a very animated way, apparently at something Tillotson had said, and there wasn't a sign of dolefulness about her.

Jim was glad that he had spotted them before they saw him, though it was improbable that they would have done so anyway, since they seemed to be entirely wrapped up in each other. Jim watched them enter a shiny black car, at the wheel of which sat a driver whose face was familiar to Jim. Although he couldn't place him for the moment, it was actually the butler-gardener, who also acted as chauffeur upon occasion.

As Jim turned away moodily, a hand fell on his arm, and he looked into the face of Bill Cannon.

"What's troubling you, Jim?" asked Bill.

"Oh, nothing, nothing much. Do I look as if something was?"

"You look," said Bill reflectively, "like a small boy watching another boy eating an apple. By the way—I'm glad I met you. Wanted to ask you something. I hear an old flame of yours is getting engaged. Yeah, Emily Bryson. It's not been announced officially, but when it comes out—well, won't you let me make a crack about that episode at that at-home of her father's? Nothing coarse, you know—just a hint to those readers who'll understand."

"You certainly can't, as far as I'm concerned," said Jim.

"Okay, old man. I'll respect your feelings. But it certainly would be juicy," answered Bill Cannon, rather disconsolately.

IN the meantime, two Departments of State were anxiously awaiting a reply from the commissioner at Bongi, asking for specific instances of cannibalism on the island. A great deal depended on it. If Bilbo had really gone cannibal, then Krak must be supported to the full. On the other hand, if Mr. Burroughs' analysis of Bilbo's character was correct, it would never do to get the South Seas missionaries up in arms against the government.

It appeared that the commissioner had gone on a trip into the interior, and no definite reply could be expected till his return. So much from his assistant, a mere lad who was canny enough not to implicate himself in what was becoming a formidable quarrel between two government departments.

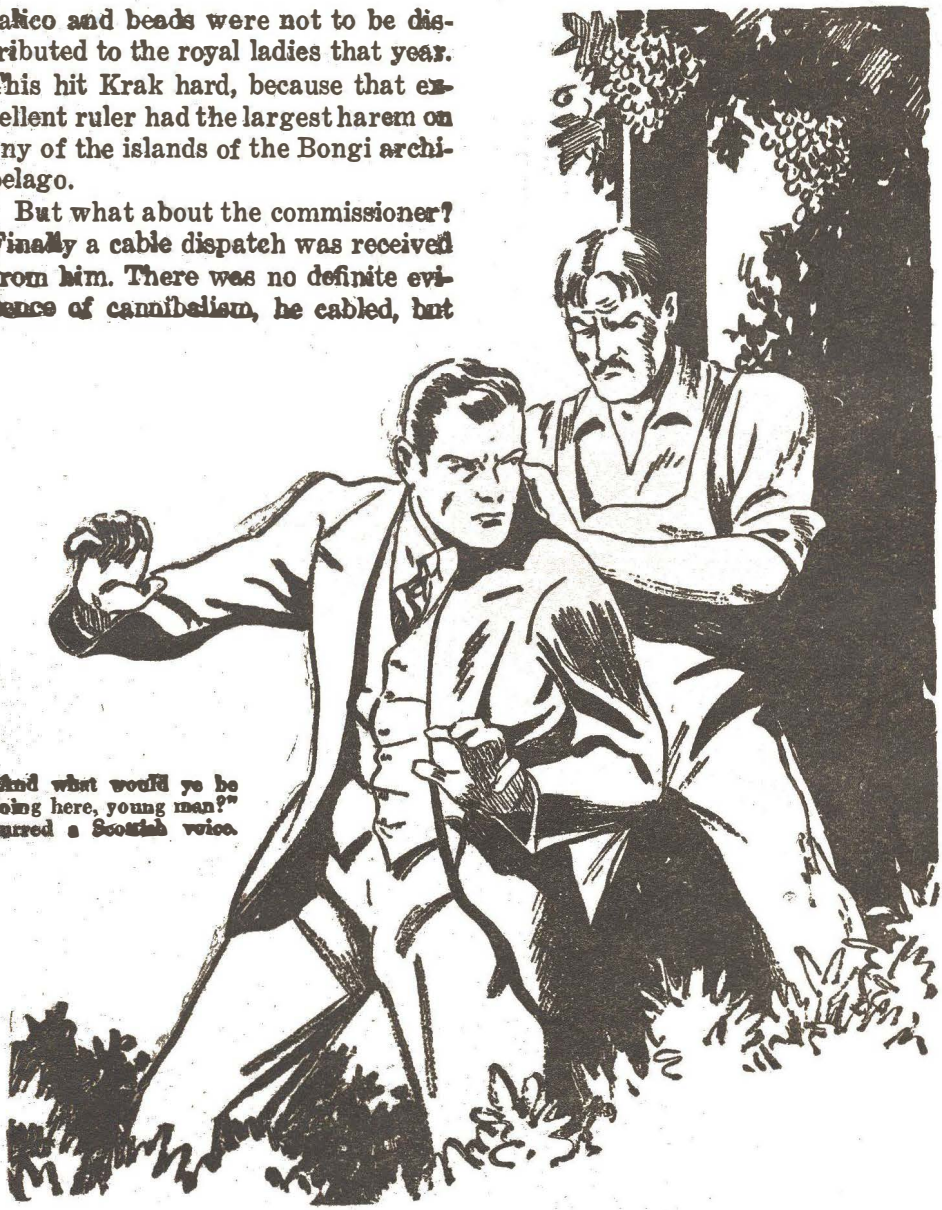
While Winthrop Bryson was demanding that Krak be supported with American might, the Department of Mandated Islands was insisting that Krak be deposed in favor of Bilbo. The only thing that tempered the fury of this vicarious warfare was the fear of the news getting into the press.

Jim, afraid that Bill Cannon would get on the scent, had to be extremely careful in his association with that newspaper bloodhound. But he took out Emily's defection on her father, as Winthrop Bryson was very well aware.

When Winthrop Bryson had a departmental order issued that all the tribal collections of dried enemy skulls should be surrendered to the government, under pain of fine and imprisonment, Jim countered with an order that the customary annual gifts of

calico and beads were not to be distributed to the royal ladies that year. This hit Krak hard, because that excellent ruler had the largest harem on any of the islands of the Bongi archipelago.

But what about the commissioner? Finally a cable dispatch was received from him. There was no definite evidence of cannibalism, he cabled, but



"And what would ye be doing here, young man?" purred a Scottish voice.

the Reverend Mr. Burroughs, who had accompanied him on his trip into the interior, and had insisted on visiting his protégé, Bilbo, had been detained by him.

The commissioner, failing to effect his release, had gone to the village with half-a-dozen of the native constabulary, to find the whole village in war array. Deeming prudence the only possible procedure, he had entered into negotiations with the subchief, through the agency of Mr. Burroughs, who spoke the language fluently.

He had found Mr. Burroughs liv-

ing in a pit, very well fed indeed—in fact, distinctly fleshy, and quite disillusioned as to Bilbo's character. Bilbo had declined to surrender Mr. Burroughs without a guarantee of independence so far as Krak was concerned, and the commissioner had been forced to agree to his conditions.

THIS was distinctly one in the eye for Winthrop Bryson. The storm that raged threatened to find reverberations in the newspapers. There were hurried conferences, at which Jim Willis stated Bilbo's case for the Department of Mandated Islands with unanswerable logic.

The American Government had never formally recognized Krak's claim to overlordship. The commissioner had entered into a treaty with Bilbo, in which the good faith of the country was concerned.

On the other hand, the South Seas missionaries were up in arms at the treatment of their representative, and demanded action.

And now the press got wind of the affair. It was Bill Cannon who broke the news to the public, and his paper came out with a vigorous editorial, demanding by what right we proposed to interfere in the domestic affairs of a Mandated Island.

"It's all damned nonsense," snorted the navy. "Here are you two fellows in Washington, starting a private war of your own with these two simple children of nature as your pawns. What we need is to send out a government representative to hold a meeting and bring them to terms."

The simplicity of this solution appealed to most people. The only dissentient was Winthrop Bryson, who still considered that Krak had been ill-used. By this time Winthrop Bryson was coming back into favor, however. He had lived down his unfortunate speech at the club. He was hoping for promotion. Everything—everything depended on his handling the matter without exposing himself to ridicule or disfavor.

The matter simmered for some days, and finally a proposal came from a very high quarter that completely reconciled Winthrop Bryson to the situation:

"That young fellow Tillotson Saunders—he's a close friend of yours, isn't he, Bryson? Nice young fellow, good personality, and adroit. We'll send him out to Bongi to look into the situation, and see if he can reconcile the disputants without the need of sending bombers or marines."

A few days later young Saunders received his commission. It was his first plunge into the field of diplomacy, a wonderful opportunity which, if he availed himself of it satisfactorily, ought to lead straight to a diplomatic post at one of the capitals of the world.

"And that's the straight goods," said Bill Cannon to Jim. "I'm tipping you off, seeing you didn't know, because of favors received from you in the past, and a lively expectation of favors to come."

(At this time Mr. P. was a weanling, rooting on the farm in the Mississippi Delta, distinguished already for his excellent appetite, but not yet touched by the fame that was to be his lot.)

HINTS of Emily's prospective engagement to Tillotson Saunders had already appeared in society columns. It was the news that Winthrop

Bryson was tendering young Saunders a farewell dinner that sent Jim haywire.

That was what sent him out to Golden Glow, after the fall of darkness, to seek a final interview with Emily before she pledged herself irredeemably to become Saunders's wife.

Jim stepped off the trolley at the Golden Glow depot. He walked past the rows of commuters' bungalows, and ascended the elevation toward Winthrop Bryson's house, which was ablaze with lights. He stopped outside and looked through a window of the dining-room.

Eight or ten persons were seated around it, and the butler-gardener-chauffeur, assisted by a young man imported for the occasion, was handing the viands around. At the head of the table sat Winthrop Bryson, expansive and affable in his evening clothes. Facing him sat Mrs. Winthrop Bryson, resplendent in jewels.

Young Saunders and Emily were facing each other across the table, and both seemed in the highest spirits. The dinner had just come to an end, and the ladies were withdrawing to the drawing-room, in accordance with convention, leaving the gentlemen to their wine.

Eager and desperate, Jim stood in the dark outside, peering in. He saw Winthrop Bryson lean forward and clasp young Saunders on the shoulder. That seemed to settle it: Saunders and Emily were engaged. A groan broke from Jim's lips, and he withdrew to the nearby shelter of a clump of rhododendrons.

Suddenly a shadow precipitated itself toward him. A hand clutched his collar. "And what would ye be doing there, young man?" purred a Scottish voice.

It was the butler-gardener-chauffeur. But recognition was mutual. The Scot released Jim. "Begging your pardon, sir, but still, what would ye be wanting?"

"You remember me," moaned Jim.

"Sure I remember ye. You're the gennelman who cracked young Saunders on the snout, and a guid punch it was. And I'm thinking it's Miss Emily you was hanging around in that rhododendron catawbiense for to see. You hang around a little longer, and I'll see if I can bring her to ye."

"God bless you!" Jim ejaculated with fervor, wringing the other's hand. "Tell me, she's not engaged to Saunders?"

"Weel, noo, I wouldna commit mysel' as to that, Mr. Willis. There was some quite broad hints about it this evening, but naething which ye might call deefinite."

HIS heart drummed madly as he saw her coming toward him, accompanied by the gardener. Looking about her, a little bewildered. "But what is it, Alexander?" Jim heard her say. Then Alexander was gone, and Jim and Emily stood face to face.

A little gasp came from her lips. "You? What are you doing here? How dared you come here, after my letter to you?"

"Emily, have you forgotten? Don't you know we were going to be true to each other forever?"

"That—that was a month ago. I—I'm as good as engaged to marry—marry—Tillotson. Oh, how I hate him!"

"Darling!" Emily was in Jim's

(Continued on page 102)

GALLOWS

With a yell, the Partisans rushed forward into battle.

BIG IVAN, the "American"—he had once worked in the Kentucky coal mines—was the first of the Partisans to enter Khosk. Used as he was to scenes of terror, in villages that had been in the possession of the Nazi hordes, he had never seen anything as bad as this.

His comrades, emerging from the forest, stood still, staring in horror at the spectacle that met their eyes.

Not one of the wooden houses remained standing. In place of them were piles of half-burned logs, their ends protruding from the still-frozen snow. In the little square, opposite the place where the church had stood, was a row of gibbets. Their dreadful occupants had been taken down, but the kites and crows that circled overhead told that they had been occupied till very lately.

Beneath these gibbets the snow had been heaped in a great mound. And

MEAT

By ANDREW BEDELL

Freed after nearly three years of Nazi terrorism, the people of Khosk are almost too dazed to realize the significance of their liberation. And Von Stimmer, the Wolf, is delivered into their hands . . . .

out of this mound protruded skulls and bones, very white bones, and tiny feet and fingers that must have belonged to infants.

Because they could not be disposed of during the winter, the bodies of the murdered inhabitants had been covered with snow, to await the coming of Spring. But the surprise attack of the Russian army had driven the invaders in headlong flight. The regulars had gone on, and the Partisans —the guerrillas who had harassed the Nazis ceaselessly from the forests, throughout the Winter—had come out to take over the lines of communication. Many of them had been inhabitants of Khosk, and neighboring villages.

A few bodies of Germans, slain in the battle that had swept through Khosk, lay in the snow.

The Partisans gathered about the ghastly snow-mound beneath the gibbets, and looked at one another silently. All were thinking the same thing: how to avenge these horrors, and what they would do with their prisoners when they got them.

Those who had lived in Khosk—some of them, at least, were thinking, as they saw the little bones: "That may have been my child—my little brother or sister."

Dumb with horror and fury, they stood there in the heart of the deserted village.

BUT now Khosk was no longer deserted. Gaunt spectres were beginning to crawl from beneath the logs, women, most of them worn almost to skeletons by hunger. A few of the women had infants with them, carrying them or bending to guide their toddling footsteps, and these were the only ones in that grisly crew who seemed fairly well fed. At once they were surrounded by an eager throng of the Partisans. Here and there was recognition—here was a wife, here a mother or grandmother

or aunt, here a grandfather.

There were cries of joy, embraces, eager questions. But this was mostly on the side of the Partisans. The people of Khosk, freed after nearly three years of Nazi terrorism, were still too dazed to exhibit much interest or emotion. They stood like animals, either mute or monosyllabic.

Big Ivan stared at the young woman with the little boy who had stopped in front of him. Big Ivan had a dog, a big shepherd, by name Boris. The dog had accompanied him all through the campaign. Now the dog suddenly went mad. It leaped at the young woman and almost devoured her with its kisses. That was how Big Ivan recognized his wife, Natasha, whom he had hardly expected to see again.

He had dreamed of her nightly in the forests, and now here she was, standing in person before him. But she stared at him, stolid and listless, when he caught her in his arms.

"Natasha, it is Ivan. Do you not recognize me?"

She answered in a dull monotone, "Yes, I know you, Ivan."

"God be praised you are alive, and your sorrows are now at an end. A neighbor's child?" asked Ivan.

"No, he is mine," she answered.

"But that is wonderful. How old is he? Two years? And all the while I never knew! God has been very good to us," said Ivan, whose religious faith had survived the years of Bolshevism, and the war, too, like that of many of his comrades.

"I shall not ask you questions now. See, they are distributing food. Afterward it will be wonderful to talk together, as in the old times. For the Nazis are on the run everywhere. Soon this war will be over, and there will be you, and I, and little—how did you name him? Has he been baptized?"

Natasha raised her eyes listlessly to Ivan's. "He is named Mikhail, and he has never been baptized, and he is not your child," she answered.

"Eh? What do you mean? Whose child is he?"

"His father was one of those Nazi beasts, an officer. He is lying wounded in a cellar. Would you like me to take you to him?"

IT was the only cellar in Khosk, and the house that had once stood above it had been the mayor's. The mayor had been hanged, and of his house there remained only the charred beams, which had been heaped up to provide protection against the snow for those living in the cellar.

The heavy fetor that emanated from this place indicated that scores of human beings had huddled together there for warmth.

His comrades had followed big Ivan, and the inhabitants came in their wake, all ravenously munching the slices of black bread that the Partisans had given them. Ivan gave a big hunk to Natasha, and for the first time her apathy seemed to leave her. She ate greedily, and the child at her side gnawed at his crust too. Bread was handed to the inhabitants of the cellar, who had been too weak to emerge to greet the newcomers.

Everybody knew by now that there were some two dozen children in Khosk, the offspring of Nazi fathers, and born during the occupation. Some of the mothers had been married women, or widows, two or three had other children, but Natasha was the

only one whose husband had returned with the Partisans.

In a corner of the cellar the wounded Nazi officer was lying on a heap of straw. A blood-stained bandage was about his face and head, but he opened his eyes as the Partisans gathered about him, and mumbled something.

He was a blond young man, rather good-looking, and evidently very weak from loss of blood. He looked indifferently at the Russians, but he seemed to realize his position.

With a savage growl the dog, Boris, recognizing the hated uniform, leaped for the man's throat. Of all the dogs among the Partisans, Boris was the keenest to detect a lurking enemy. He had been wounded once, by a Nazi who had fired at him from ambush, but he had caught the man and nearly killed him before big Ivan appeared and completed his work with a timely bullet.

Ivan dragged the big dog off with difficulty. He chained him to a broken rafter, and Boris howled dismally. The Partisans shook their heads. All felt that Boris should have been allowed to play his part.

Natasha's child toddled to the big dog's side, and laid his hand upon his head. At once the dog ceased his lamentations and began licking the child's face. Perhaps he recognized the smell of Natasha, whom he had adored.

IVAN looked down at the officer, and presently, as if conscious of the scrutiny, the Nazi opened his eyes again, and stared back. Such a flood of tumultuous thoughts was racing through Ivan's head, that he could only stand stock-still, and stare. He tried to summon up all the hate that had burned in him throughout the years in the forests, but now it would not come. His mind seemed destitute of any emotion.

Then he realized that his companions were all looking at him, and waiting for him to say what should be done. He looked at Natasha, but again she had relapsed into her condition of an automaton; she was watching him, like the rest, but in seeming indifference.

"Do you love him?" asked Ivan hoarsely.

She shrugged her shoulders. "He is a Nazi swine," she answered, "but—"

Little Dmitry, the youngest of the group, a boy of fifteen, came pushing forward. "What is all this business? What are we waiting for?" he asked. He drew his pistol and aimed it at the Nazi's head. And neither the watching Nazi nor any of the watching crowd stirred or spoke.

The silence seemed to bother Dmitry. "Well, what's the matter, then? Why are you silent, Ivan?" he demanded.

The child, who had been playing with the dog, came toddling forward into the midst of the group. He pushed through them, went to the side of the Nazi, and laid a tiny hand upon his arm. "Papa!" he said, "Papa!"

He laid his head upon the officer's chest, eyeing the crowd in proud possessiveness. "My papa," he said again.

SERGE OLENOFF, the sergeant, shouted: "Let it wait. It's Von Stimmer we want. Let's finish our business with him first!"

There were shouts of approval. General Von Stimmer had made Khosk his headquarters during a good part of the war; his bestial cruelties had

been notorious throughout the length and breadth of the country. Now he was in flight, his armies cut off from their base by the Russian pincers, unless he could effect his escape through the forests. And that was where the Partisans came in.

At this decision, the dazed inhabitants of Khosk began to tell of their sufferings under the Nazi rule. It was Von Stimmer who was personally responsible for the worst barbarities. It was Von Stimmer who had ordered all males killed above the age of ten, who were too old or weak for slave labor in Germany. As for the children, they had been held as hostages for the behavior of the Russian girls in Khosk.

A score and more had been put to death in this manner. That was the meaning of the little finger-bones that protruded through the snow in the little square.

The Partisans were mad with hate, but, curiously enough, none thought of wreaking vengeance upon the wounded officer. As for Big Ivan, he didn't even offer a suggestion to Natasha. He ordered the man to be kept in close confinement, but not to be harmed. The women would see to that. Perhaps every man there had the same idea stirring in his brain: vengeance must fall first upon Von Stimmer.

Big Ivan kissed Natasha, and started off with his men. Now the stolidity of the women was broken. They clung to the departing Partisans, fearful that they would never see them again, and that the Nazis would return. But, as soon as the last man had vanished in the eternal forests, they started on the work of reconstructing their village. It did not occur to any of them to flee, for Khosk was the only home they had ever known. They could no more leave it than a tree can quit the soil in which it grows.

ABOUT seventy Partisans had entered Khosk. As many more were camped not far away. Slowly driblets began filtering through the forests, until a respectable little army was assembled. Meanwhile, they were in touch with the regular army that was following the roads. And the news that came in was progressively better.

The Nazi's defeat had been a disastrous one. The enemy were in disorderly retreat. Von Stimmer, with a dwindling force, was about twenty miles ahead, trying to strike through the forests and reach his base by a circuitous route. He was fifteen miles ahead—he was twelve—he was ten.

And now the Partisans could plainly hear the roar of the artillery with which Von Stimmer, his tanks all gone, was trying to cover his flight.

"Tomorrow we shall catch the wolf," said Big Ivan to Serge Olenoff, as they huddled under their thin blankets in the forest. "Tomorrow, with God's aid, we shall have him."

"What shall we do with him?" asked Serge.

"I think we should flay him alive, beginning at his toes and fingers. But that would be a sin. I suppose we must be content with hanging him."

"Our orders are to bring him back alive. But the men could not be held back," said Serge. "I suppose we must hang him or shoot him."

That was not the intention of the Partisans, though, with the Russian love of analysis, they had debated the matter ceaselessly since leaving Khosk. Fat little Father Cyril, a vil-

Wounded, weak, helpless, he realised that it was a Nazi who approached.

lage priest, who had shouldered his rifle for eighteen months, celebrated mass, and buried the dead, explained:

"By the law of Christ we are forbidden to hate our enemies. But physical death and physical suffering have nothing to do with the soul. Hate is of the soul, and must be trampled on. Whatever is decided must be in love, comrades, even if we should put him to death."

"We'll boil him!" shouted little Dmitry. Which sentiment won widespread approval.

THE hopes of catching Von Stimmer were growing hourly, as the Partisans tramped along the forest trails. For the net was closing on the remnants of Von Stimmer's division. His guns had bogged down in the Spring mud, and had had to be abandoned, his petrol was gone, and he had only horses to drag his supply train. Each hundred yards the Partisans came upon field-pieces that had been demolished, broken down carts, with their supplies hastily burned. The dogs were restive; they knew as well as the men what was afoot.

Boris especially. He hated the Nazis with a consuming enmity, and he had had a sense of outrage ever since the affair in the cellar. Big Ivan knew very well what was in the dog's thoughts. He himself had been unable

to come to any conclusion. It was a point about which his mind, pinned, as it were, was unable to function.

It was on a waste of marshland, thinly covered with a scattering of birch, and separating two arms of the forest, that the ambush was to be laid. The movements of Von Stimmer were known exactly. The Partisans had executed a march around his flank, and were now ahead of him. They would trap the Nazi columns as they debouched from the forest.

They marched hard all that last day, hearing the sounds of battle on their left, for every square mile of forest sheltered its band of guerrillas. Toward evening they took up their position.

They lay among the reeds, their eyes glued on the strip of forest beyond the marsh, their eyes alert, while the dogs strained at their chains, and could with difficu ty be prevented from giving tongue. And then they began to feel Von Stimmer's approach.

They felt rather than heard it. The firing had died away, and there was no sound. But there was something in the air; it was as if some unclean monster was moving out of its lair, some obscene dragon, winding its mile-long length across the soil of Holy Russia. It was still more than an hour to dark, but a thick cloud of snow was drifting down, distances were foreshortened, and every detail of the forest across the marsh appeared visible.

"They are coming!" whispered Serge Olenoff.

THE steady tramp of men resounded across the marsh, the creak of ungreased wagon-wheels, the blending of the myriad sounds made by moving men. And now the foremost files began to debouch out of the forest, a long column, winding like a serpent, that tried the marsh, and found the crossing, and came on toward the reeds. At the rear were the carts, drawn by the exhausted horses, and the few guns that stil remained. Midway was a little knot of mounted men, consisting of Von Stimmer and his staff.

The one prayer from the ambuscade was that the sun might be stayed, like Joshua's sun. But a pall of lowering darkness was already falling, and the snow was blotting out the scene.

A hell of fire broke from the semicircle in the reeds. Rifles, tommy-guns, joined in the clatter. The head of the column was sloughed off, and it turned, and writhed, and twisted, like the wounded cobra that it was. In a moment the marsh was dotted with fallen bodies, and with frantic men, run ing this way and that—into the mouths of the rifles, back into the mouths of other rifles, then falling, to add their quota to the wounded and the dying. Those who escaped back to the column, threw it into worse confusion.

The yells of the Partisans rose in a hoarse crescendo, and they rushed forward with their bayonets, through the thick of the whirling snow.

Von Stimmer didn't lose his head. He could be seen galloping up and down the column, forcing it into line of battle. The guns were swun about. But already the Partisans were among the Germans, firing, thrusting, charging up to the gun muzzles. In the gathering darkness, it was difficult to tell friend from foe.

In a confused medley the masses of

men heaved and swayed through that gray twilight, breaking up into little knots that formed out of the swirling débris of battle, and charging again and again against the formless masses of their enemies.

BIG IVAN had attempted to keep his men from charging forward until the confusion in the ranks of the enemy became complete. Then, when he found it impossible to restrain them, he yielded to the same impulse, and headed the attacking Partisans.

Beside him bounded his dog, Boris, saliva drooling from his open jaws. They were a good pair, Ivan and Boris. Half-consciously they had worked out a perfect partnership of attack. They had revived the ancient compact made between man and dog, for better hunting. While Boris pinioned his enemy, Ivan impaled him on his bayonet; then on to the next, and the next.

Now, as he ran, Ivan was able to make his numbed wits work. Now he could see clearly what had happened to Natasha, while he was away. That understanding filled him with fury. He fought like a madman, racing through the snow, with a blood-spattered dog beside him, tireless as Boris, and impelled only by the lust of slaughter.

He could see very little of the battle, for he fought in a blinding blizzard, out of which figures emerged and disappeared again; in a hell of tumult through which he sought Nazi uniforms, and worked ever closer to the center of the broken column, where he hoped to find Von Stimmer.

But gradually the sounds of combat seemed to die away. He was fighting now in a gray and formless mist, and his arms, tired from thrusting with his bayonet, no longer seemed responsive to his will. Boris was no longer at his side, and now Ivan's lust of battle was drowned in his anxiety for the dog.

He called him, but no response came back. He went groping for him, to and fro through the night, wondering that the silence was so complete, shouting to his men, and receiving no reply. He stopped, bewildered.

Then he discovered that all this had been in imagination only. He wasn't on his feet, but lying on his side, at the edge of the forest, and he could neither shout nor move. An immovable weight was crushing one side of his head.

Now he knew that he must have been wounded. He tried to stir, and succeeded in extending one arm. His fingers came in contact with a furry body, and a little whimper filled Big Ivan's heart with happiness. Boris was still alive; Boris was with him.

"DRINK a little of this!"

The words, in a German accent, brought Big Ivan back to consciousness. He opened his eyes. The snow had ceased, and he could see, from the position of the stars, above the tree-tops, that the dawn was not far away. He must have lain unconscious through the greater part of the night.

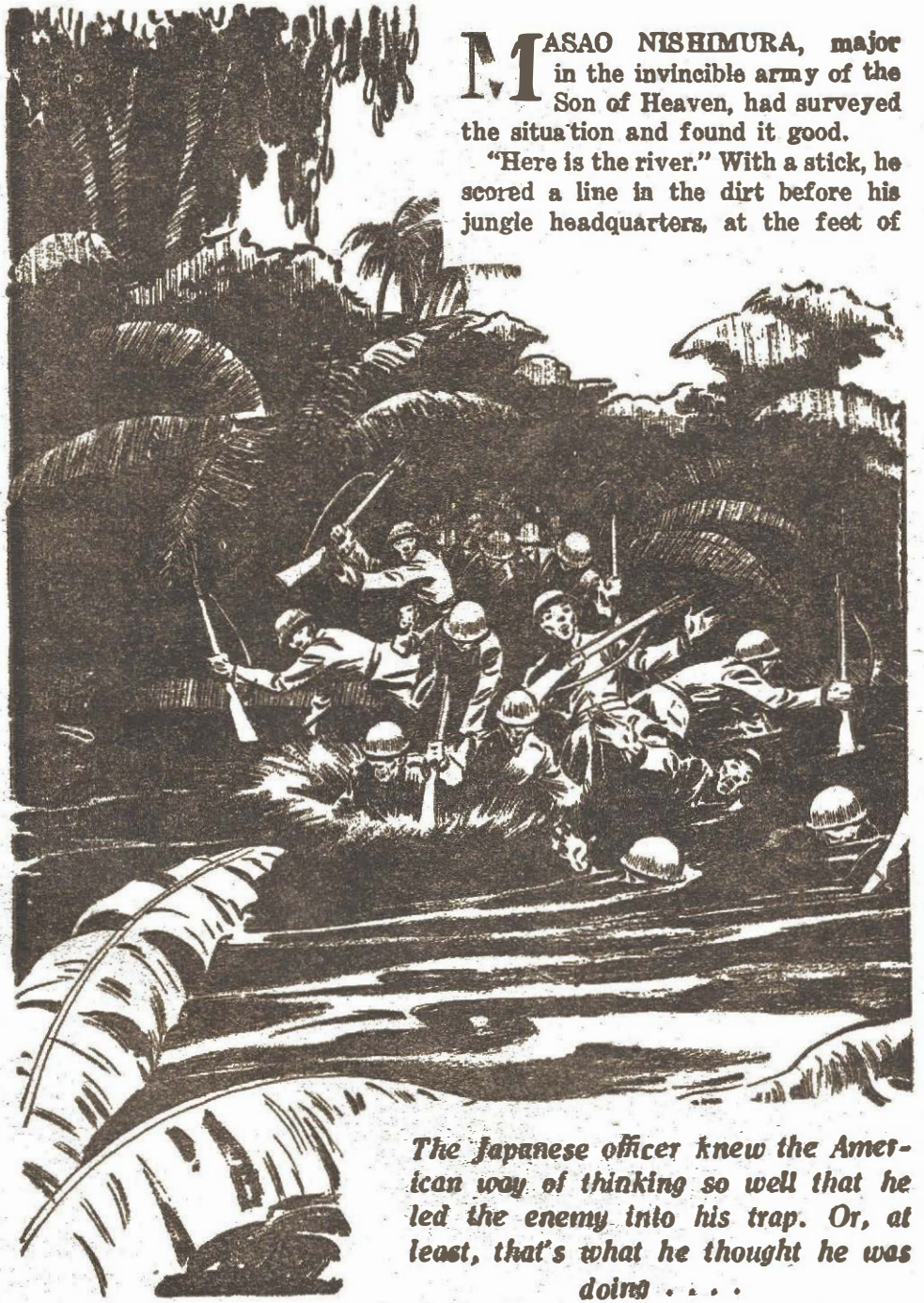
"My dog—" he mumbled weakly.

"I have seen to him. He was hit in the shoulder, but he should get well. He is there beside you. Drink!"

Big Ivan felt the warm body beside him, heard Boris whimper, and let the brandy roll over his tongue. He felt stronger almost immediately.

(Continued on page 83)

HE KNEW THE



MASAO NISHIMURA, major in the invincible army of the Son of Heaven, had surveyed the situation and found it good.

"Here is the river." With a stick, he scored a line in the dirt before his jungle headquarters, at the feet of

The Japanese officer knew the American way of thinking so well that he led the enemy into his trap. Or, at least, that's what he thought he was doing . . . .

ENEMY

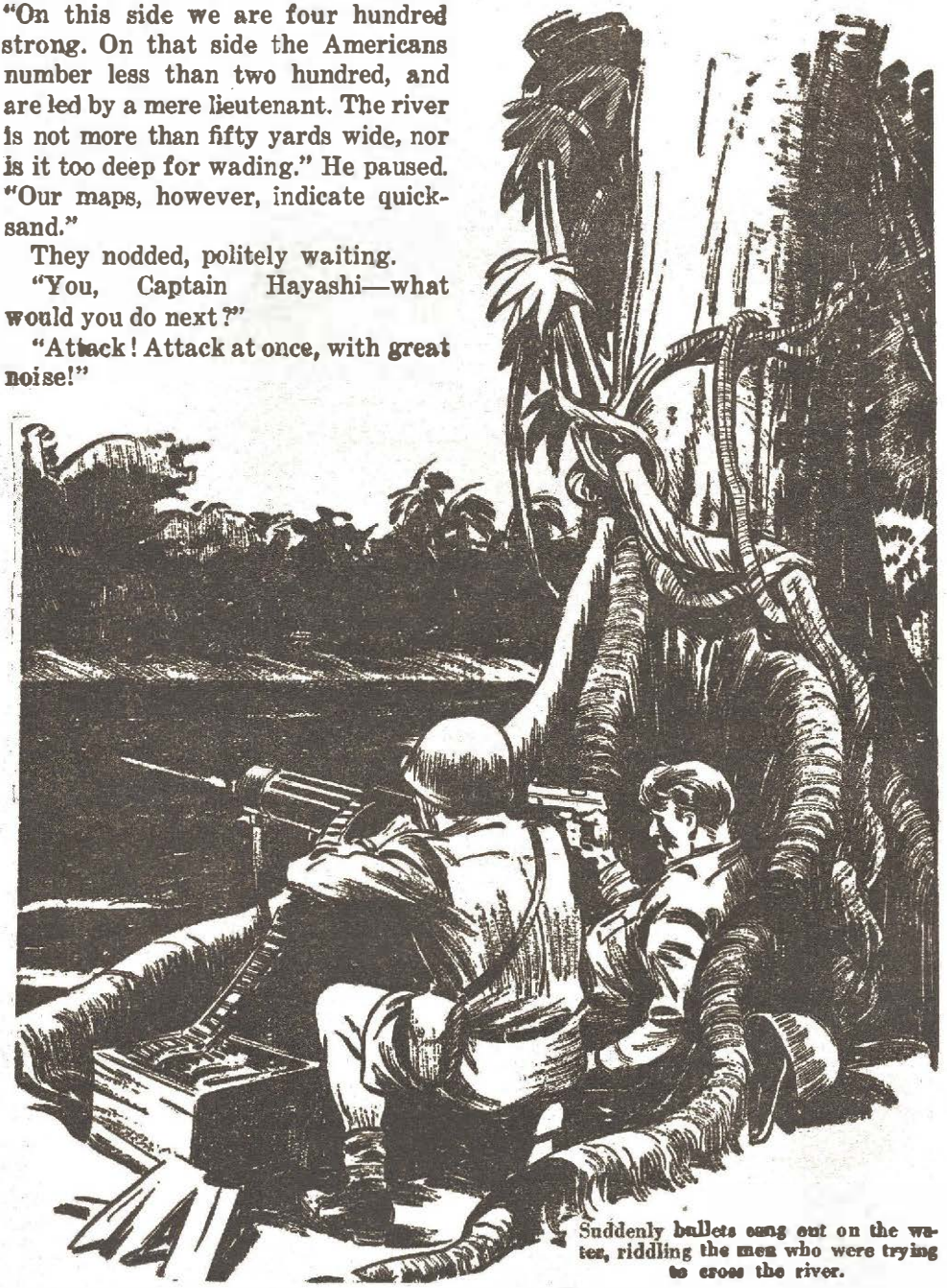
By HUGH B. CAVE

those gathered to hear his decision. "On this side we are four hundred strong. On that side the Americans number less than two hundred, and are led by a mere lieutenant. The river is not more than fifty yards wide, nor is it too deep for wading." He paused. "Our maps, however, indicate quicksand."

They nodded, politely waiting.

"You, Captain Hayashi—what would you do next?"

"Attack! Attack at once, with great noise!"



Suddenly bullets sang out on the water, riddling the men who were trying to cross the river.

"You, lieutenant?"

"The same!"

Nishimura's teeth gleamed in a face stained green as the jungle. His smile was indulgent. "And—the quicksand?"

They lowered their eyes and were silent.

"It would be too great a risk," Nishimura murmured, "and there is no need for it. You do not know the enemy as I do. We have driven him into an untenable situation, with swamp on his right and the sea at his left and rear. He can do one of two things—die slowly of hunger and sickness, or re-cross the river to attack us. He will attack. You may be sure of it."

They did not argue. How could they? They were not university men, as he was, nor had they excelled in sports, as he had. Nishimura stroked his eyes and recalled pleasantly the day in Yokohama when, a mere stripling, he had played shortstop for the Japanese All Stars against a team of touring American baseball players.

Even then he had been clever. He had watched the Americans. He had studied them. He sighed happily, remembering the shrieking crowds and the applause.

A FIGURE, gliding from the jungle, halted before him. "Your permission, excellency! It is reported the Americans are gathering in force for an attempted crossing of the river!"

Nishimura rose without haste. "You see? We have waited for the enemy to show us how. He knew this terrain. Having already crossed the stream, he knew where to cross it most safely—which we did not. Prepare to repel the attack!"

It was good. Holding a telephone to his cheek, Nishimura stood quietly on a reedy wart of ground, concealed by kunai grass through which an opening had been cut that he might observe the action. Very stupid, these Americans—or perhaps only very tired after their four days of sullen retreat through pestilential jungle. They made much unnecessary noise while moving into position. Their attack, when it came, lacked the surprise it so sorely needed.

The guns unleashed a feeble barrage. American soldiers leaped yelling into the river. Nishimura held the telephone close to his smile, and waited.

Guns high in the humid air above their heads, the Americans plunged forward through water that was knee-deep and dark. Not many of them, Nishimura noted. Not nearly the number he had expected. Perhaps they were afraid.

He gave the order his men awaited. "Fire!" And grinned with extreme satisfaction, not to mention a certain justifiable self-esteem, as Japanese bullets made the stream untenable.

The Americans faltered with surprising suddenness. Their shouting ceased. Short of mid-stream they turned and ran, scrambling in panic back to the safety of the jungle.

A few—too few—fell in the stream and did not rise again. Nishimura made a mental note to scold his men for their unsatisfactory marksmanship.

But it mattered little. What mattered was that the Americans, who knew the river, had shown Major Nishimura where to attack. He touched the telephone to his lips and

breathed into it. "Forward—after me! For the Emperor!" Snatching up his rifle, he rushed into the river.

Ah, it was good for a brave officer to lead his men so! It was the way of heroes! Behind him in a shrieking, eager wave poured the men of his command. Some of the swifter ones overtook and passed him, sending up spray as they burst through the sluggish water. On the opposite bank the hidden Americans were too frightened even to begin firing!

Nishimura thought of the shouting crowds in Yokohama. Of how he had watched the American champions and studied them.

Suddenly in mid-stream he stopped, and looked down at his legs. In his eagerness he had not noticed until now how heavy his feet had become. He struggled to free them. The water had not deepened, but he was deeper in it. And going still deeper!

His smile had vanished. Panic supplanted it. He dropped his gun and flung himself backward. But his feet did not budge.

Quicksand held him fast.

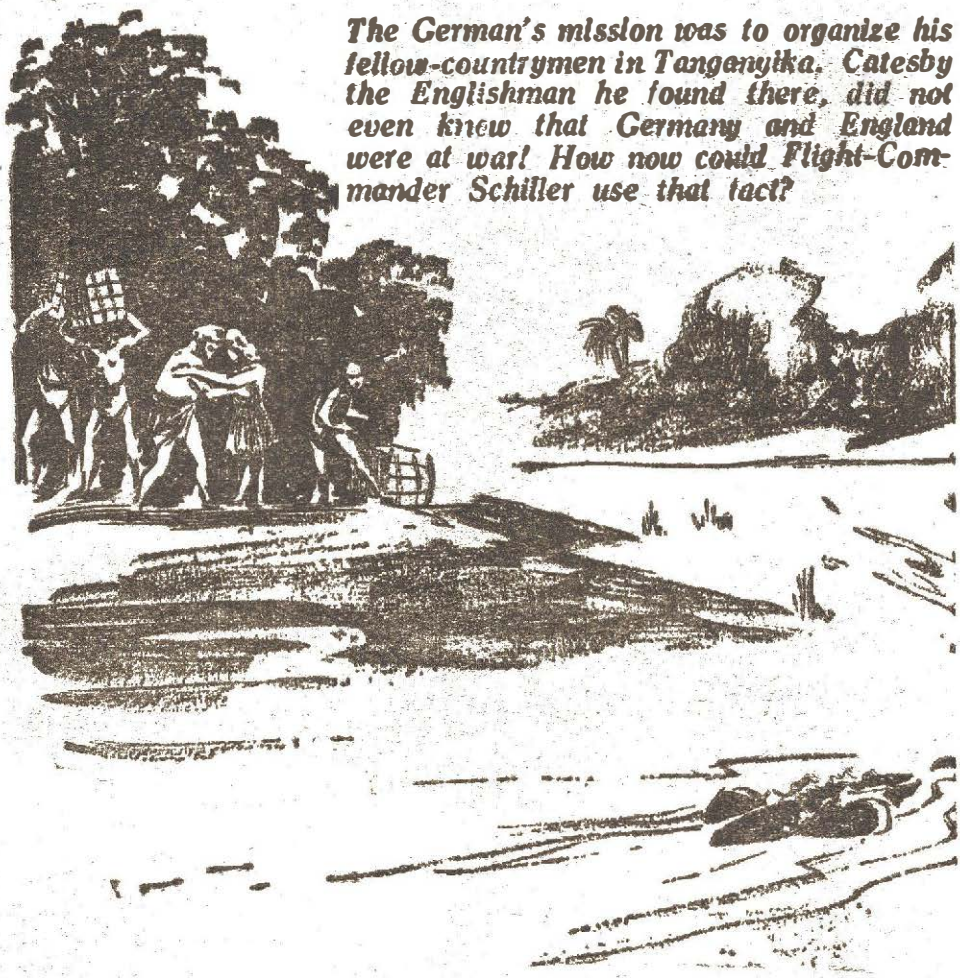
All about him, his men cried out in terror. Having reached that portion of the stream just short of which the American attack had disintegrated, they no longer poured forward to the kill but thrashed about in frantic and futile attempts to escape. The sand held some of them where they stood. Others, half caught, stumbled and fell and were drowning. Others, but not many, turned in time to retreat.

And now the Americans were shooting. Bullets sang on the water. Rifle and machine-gun fire reached out like forest flame from the far side of the river to sweep methodically back and forth, searing everything it touched.

Nishimura stopped struggling. Below his heart the green of his uniform ran red, forming drops which spread upon the stream and moved slowly with the current. He sighed and fell forward. For just an instant the water's coolness was refreshing.

In that moment Masao Nishimura, major in the army of the Son of Heaven, remembered again the baseball game at Yokohama. Remembered the shrieking crowds, and the applause. And the score.

Home Team, 0. Visitors, 10.



The German's mission was to organize his fellow-countrymen in Tanganyika. Catesby the Englishman he found there, did not even know that Germany and England were at war! How now could Flight-Commander Schiller use that fact?

FLIGHT-COMMANDER ERICH SCHILLER was in difficulties. His petrol was nearly gone, and the lifting mist disclosed nothing beneath him but water. And his was a land plane; it had no pontoons.

Flight-Commander Schiller was engaged on a spectacular, but at present very secret journey. He had flown nearly all the way across the African Continent, from the west. He had held up four little Belgian outposts in Congo Territory, to obtain fresh petrol and supplies. His mission was to Tanganyika Territory, to organize the German settlers there.

There were several thousands of them, and they had been chafing under British rule ever since the Territory had been annexed by Britain after the first World War. There was a sizable army of them, all ready for revolt. They had their rifles, which they had secreted, but they were extremely short of small-arms ammunition.

Therefore, instead of bombs, Erich Schiller was carrying many thousand rounds of cartridges, sufficient to enable the settlers to surprise and capture certain British posts, and possess themselves of cannon and the other requisites of civilized warfare.

By
LEW MERRILL

For a furious moment the crocodiles fought over their prey.

RATS NEVER LEARN

Nothing but those few thousand rounds of cartridges stood between the settlers and a successful rebellion. Such an outbreak, by diverting British troops from other parts of Africa, might change the whole course of the war. For it was touch-and-go in Libya, where a half-dozen tanks on one side or the other might decide the fate of the Continent, perhaps of the world.

Erich Schiller's mission was, therefore, of supreme importance.

He surveyed himself in the little mirror before him as he flew. He was a blonde young man, just now wearing a rather worried expression. His clean-shaven face and head, the hard features betokened one who had been trained from boyhood in the Nazi doctrine. Gratitude, pity, faith—he had thrown these superstitions overboard, with a lot more useless lumber. He was one of the Master Race.

PHIL CATESBY had once been an Englishman, but he remembered that fact, as he remembered others, dimly. He had been wounded in the head during the first World War, when fighting in Tanganyika. They had wanted to invalid him home, but he hated the cold of England, and he knew he would be placed in a home for the mentally unsound, perhaps for the rest of his life.

He had no relatives of any kind in England. His people had been fairly prosperous middle-class shopkeepers, and they had disowned him after his first term of imprisonment, for a very trivial embezzlement. Until he was drafted, he had passed from one prison to another, with brief intermediate spells during which he lived by his wits. Those wits always led him back to Pentonville or Holloway prison. The governors of those institutions knew him very well; the guards welcomed him as an old friend.

So Catesby took advantage of a dark night to escape from the hospital, and turned his face westward. What happened in the next two or three months he couldn't remember. But he recalled stealing the dugout and paddling to the island.

Umbezi Island is four miles long by half a mile in width, and lies in Victoria Nyanza, the largest of the African lakes. Its inhabitants have lived there from time immemorial. There are no boats or dugouts on Umbezi, because the islanders are not permitted to cross to the mainland. If they do, they are put to death.

Neither will any of the mainland natives cross to Umbezi. It is known as the Accursed Island, and is supposed to be tenanted by the souls of the dead.

Phil Catesby didn't know this, when he landed among the unwarlike inhabitants, who had never seen a white man before, and believed him to belong to a Master Race. He quickly became king, and took to himself a wife, the daughter of the former chief, who gladly abdicated in Catesby's favor.

Though the inhabitants had a negroid strain, they were in the main descended from a party of Arabs who had sought refuge on Umbezi Island long before recorded African history.

ONLY once had white men come to Umbezi during the twenty-odd years that Catesby had lived there. That was a party of Arab traders, who, having no superstitions about its inhabitants, had made themselves dugout, and paddled over, mainly as a matter of curiosity.

They were disappointed that Umbezi possessed nothing of value. The slave-trade had been abolished in those parts for some years, and they dared not attempt to remove the salable boys and girls across the African Continent to the slave-shipping ports of the east coast. Abdul Hassan proved a delightful guest of Catesby's though they could converse only in

signs. The youngish Arab chieftain was particularly charmed with Dorothy, Gatesby's little daughter. He bounced her on his knee, and fed her with sticky Turkish sweetmeats.

By signs he indicated, that, when she was grown up, he would take her for a wife, and pay a considerable dowry. He indicated nine years. In nine years Dorothy would be fifteen.

Every year since then, on the anniversary of Abdul Hassan's visit, the bush tom-toms had indicated that Abdul Hassan was waiting for his bride. Nine beats—then eight the next year—then seven, and so forth. Now Dorothy was fourteen. That year a single tom-tom was boomed, far away over the water of Victoria Nyanza.

Often Catesby would go down to the beach, and stare out across the waters. Especially when the storm whipped the floating *sudd* into the strait between the island and the mainland, so that the treacherous surface seemed to be dry land. Then Catesby was reminded of the coast of his native England. When Abdul Hassan came for his bride, he would exact enough silver to return, and live by his wits again.

He longed more and more for England, for the prisons, with their smell of disinfectants, for the shabby slum streets he had known. But then, as he would have admitted, his head wound had affected his mind.

At other times he wanted nothing more than to enjoy his peaceful, happy life on the island, with his wife, Fatima, and his child, Dorothy. Three other children, sons, had died in an epidemic.

Standing one night on the seashore, he was amazed to hear the sound of an airplane propeller, high up over the fog.

ERICH SCHILLER was a very much worried young man. He had lost his bearings. He knew, however, that this was Victoria Nyanza, and that, if he succeeded in crossing it, he would be in Tanganyika Territory. But his petrol was almost gone.

A storm was whipping the lake, and to drop into those waters meant certain death. Far on the horizon Schiller could see a line of palm trees. He knew this must be an island, for he was still a long way from the east coast of the lake. He would have to land there.

He forced his plane up, so that, when he had to cut his engines, he could make a long glide down toward his objective. His petrol ran out when he was about five thousand feet above the fog. Schiller began his glide, down into the fog, watching his altimeter needle with a sinking heart. Down to two thousand—down to one, and then, through a rift in the fog, he saw the island not far ahead of him.

Gliding at an altitude of about a hundred feet, Erich perceived that a narrow isthmus connecting the island and what looked like the mainland was fringed with the snouts of crocodiles. The explanation was simple: the current drove the numerous fish that inhabited that part of the lake into that region. The crocodiles lay nearly submerged, but that geometrical arrangement of snouts filled Erich with horror.

However, as the plane approached, they executed a simultaneous dive beneath the surface.

Erich Schiller drove hard toward the stony beach. He saw the figure of Phil Catesby standing there, face up-

turned, and tried to reach him. He made it—he all but made it. But he had miscalculated the size of the rocks that strewed the shore. The body of the plane was ripped by the sharp edge of one; it collapsed, a broken tangle of metal, struts, and plywood, precipitating the bruised and bleeding body of Erich Schiller at Phil Catesby's feet.

THE hum of voices, the comfort of a bed, with sheets of palm-bark, awakened Erich. He found himself in bed in a room half-native, half-European fashion. The inhabitants had fashioned the furniture under Catesby's directions, and done it very well.

A handsome woman of about thirty-five was standing by the bedside. She was about as dark as a Spaniard. Her nose was aquiline; only the slight fuzz in her hair betokened negroid blood. As Erich looked at her, she turned, and her smile revealed two rows of teeth, of pearly whiteness.

"Wo bin ich?" Erich demanded, and then, seeing she didn't understand, re-

Two men dropped, riddled like colanders.

peated the question in English.

"You are on Umbezi," she answered, speaking with a pretty accent. "You were in a plane, which crashed."

"I must get on my way."

"Phil!" she called, and Phil Cates-

by came in from the porch, where he had been sunning himself. His clothes had long since gone, and in his loose robe of palm-fibre, he presented an appearance so comical that Erich burst out laughing.

Catesby was as short as the typical cockney, he had scant reddish hair, a beard that had grown in patches and hung down to his chest, and he had developed a paunch. He looked, to Erich, like an overfed, mangy rat.

"Where am I?" asked Erich again.

"You are on Umbezi Island, in Victoria Nyanza."

"Where is my plane?"

"Oh, lord, it couldn't be called a plane any more," said Catesby. "That wreck will never fly again. It's been lying on the beach this week past."

"This week? How long am I here then?"

"Nine days. You had a brain concussion, I think. And your leg is broken above the knee. It is in splints now. You will recover nicely."

Erich studied him. "Where's the military post?" he asked.

"There is no post on Umbezi. Nobody ever comes here. You are a German, of course. You will get help at Tavirondo, which is a hundred and fifty miles due east. But a boat must be built for you to cross the strait."

Erich studied his man. He was not a prisoner then. Perhaps he could make his way into Tanganyika Territory, and still fulfill a part of his mission, although he must probably lose a part of the ammunition, unless—

"Can I get porters to go over to the mainland?" he asked.

Catesby shook his head. "The natives over there ain't friendly to us," he said. "You couldn't get a man to cross for love or money."

Still studying his man, Erich decided on frankness. "You and I don't have to be enemies, old man, just because our countries are at war," he said.

"At war?" Catesby's look of bewilderment was grotesquely amusing.

"Yes," said Erich softly. "Didn't you know?"

Catesby's bewilderment was evidently genuine. Erich's spirits began to soar. "Yes, we are at war again," he said. "But that's no reason why we shouldn't be friends, old man." He raised his arm. "*Heil Hitler!*" he shouted.

Phil Catesby only stared at him.

IT was three weeks before Erich could leave his bed, but the bone had been well set, and now he was able to use the leg nicely. He had been taking in the situation during that period. From the opening in the wall he could look out at the gardens of bananas, millet, and maize, neatly tended by the happy natives; at the orderly rows of beehive huts on the wide street. All this was Catesby's doing.

Catesby was the biggest fool Erich had ever dreamed of. He hadn't known there was a war on. Erich soft-pedaled that war. No use rubbing in the fact that England was *kaput*, finished, so long as he remained an honored guest on Umbezi, where every native had a smile for him.

As soon as he was able to make the journey, Erich went to investigate his plane. The first glance showed him that it could not be salvaged. Not even with a machine-shop at hand could it

have been made to fly again. It was a hopeless wreck.

Moreover, the boxes of ammunition had been burst open, and most of their contents were buried in the sand. There were plenty of cartridges lying about, but they had been rendered useless by the water.

Nevertheless, Erich found one box that was undamaged, owing to a section of the wrecked plane having fallen across it and protected it.

He also retrieved his automatic, and a quantity of cartridges for it, and returned to Catesby's hut well pleased with himself.

He could still complete the trip to the Territory, even though the activities of the settlers would be greatly curtailed as a result of the accident. But Erich was in no hurry to go on. He relished the good food and the luxury on Umbezi. There were corn and bananas, and native fruits, and birds and fish from the lake. And there was Fatima.

The child, Dorothy, was too young to interest Erich—not when there was Fatima, always smiling, always ready to wait on him.

"I don't like that man," said Dorothy. "He is bad. I know it."

Catesby and her mother scolded her. It was heaven to Catesby, to have somebody to yarn with, over a gourd of palm-heart toddy. Especially a white man. And Erich spoke excellent English. He played down the war. It was a misunderstanding, he said, and it would soon be over.

IT was the stormy season. The *sudd* was thickening in the channel, and the snouts of the crocodiles appeared every few feet along either side of it. On these floating islands the vegetation was profuse. There were even trees on them, their roots threading through the débris of muck that was sustained by the enormous leaves of the water-plants.

The rains left the crocodiles unmoved. Not so the rats. They were the indigenous black rat, for the brown rat of the modern world had not yet penetrated to those parts, and could probably not have crossed the water. They hated the rain and the wet, and sought refuge in the huts of the inhabitants. They scurried out of all possible hiding-places.

"That man is like a rat," said Dorothy to her mother. "He lives here, like the rats. Some day he will bite us."

"If you speak that way about him again, I shall tell your father to thrash you," said Fatima.

"Ha, you dare not! I am the bride of Abdul Hassan. Next year there will be no more tom-toms in the bush!" said the child grandiloquently.

Catesby laughed when Fatima told him. He was also amused by Erich's fear of the rats.

"We are used to them," he said. "I've seen worse in Drury Lane. Still, if you want me to get rid of them, I'll show you how it's done."

He took an enormous pail, made from a section of a giant bamboo. It was about four feet in depth, and three in diameter. He filled it half-full of water, and strewed corn on top of the water, so that the surface appeared to be a solid mass of grains. He put the pail in the house entrance, just outside Erich's room and set up an inclined plank as a runway.

All night Erich was disturbed by the plopping and squealing of the rats, as they leaped from the runway into the water. All night he heard the little

swimmers, battling their way around and around the pail. In the morning a dozen rats were floating there.

The sight turned Erich sick. A superman, devoid of fear and pity alike, he yet possessed that queer atavistic horror of rats, reptiles, and creeping things that is man's legacy from the days when he was at the mercy of the dinosaur.

ERICH was almost well now, save for a slight limp. He was living on what fat the land afforded. He was in no hurry to depart. There was Fatima, for instance. . . .

Well, Fatima was a woman, and perhaps she was bored by Catesby's company after so many years. Only Dorothy saw, and Dorothy was bound to silence because she was a woman too.

Catesby and Erich had become boon friends. Catesby, weeping over his palm-toddy, would detail his dreams to Erich. "As soon as I have sold her to the chief," he would say, "I shall make tracks for England. Ah, there is the life! We must meet again, Erich, and enjoy life together."

"But you must come to Berlin, Philip," Erich would answer. "You must be my guest there for as long as you will. I suppose you don't plan to take your woman with you?"

"That's the trouble," admitted Catesby. "Of course a native wouldn't do in Europe. But she's been with me so long. I love her, Erich," said Catesby, weeping.

Erich put his arm about his shoulder. "I know, old man," he said. "These things are hard. She's a nice-looking woman. She's been like a mother to me. And you—"

"You are the best friend I've ever had," sobbed Catesby, reaching for the gourd of palm-toddy.

"By the way, I was thinking, no use wasting those machine-guns in the plane. You might need them some day, if ever this island was attacked. I'd like some of your boys to help me remove two of them, and set them up in front of your house. I think there's a little ammunition too."

"Just as you like," said Catesby. "You can have everything you want."

"Another thing, how am I going to build a boat to get to the mainland? Do any of your boys understand boat-building? Have you any tools?"

"That's harder," said Catesby. "It would be best to burn out a bamboo stem. You could make the mainland in that. But I'd hate to have you go. I couldn't live here after losing you."

"Oh, well, there's no hurry, no hurry, old man," said Erich, chuckling. He drained his gourd and refilled it from the bigger one. Catesby certainly was the biggest fool that God had ever created.

THE guns had been removed, and set up in front of the house, and the natives had assembled, staring at them in admiration. Erich had enough ammunition for several belts. He had filled one and adjusted it.

Br-r-r-r! With a roar and a rattle one of the guns belched steel. Two men, who had been standing in the line of fire, dropped, riddled like colanders. A native hut, its props cut through, collapsed with a crash. The inhabitants had certainly heard legends of the white man's weapon, but they had never seen or heard one in action. They fled, howling.

Erich swung the muzzle, and a line of men went down, writhing in death.

Erich laughed. He had held himself in too long. He was going to show them he was a superman.

Catesby, his face white with terror, came running up to him. " 'Strewth, you've gone crazy, Erich!" he shouted. "Stop it, there's a good fellow. Stop it, I say!"

Erich got up, and stuck the muzzle of his automatic into Catesby's chest.

"He is a bigger chief than you," she persisted.

"You stupid English mule, this is war," he yelled. "So stupid, not to kill me when I was helpless! Such a fool of an Englishman! Did I not tell you about the glorious rebirth of mankind, under our Fuehrer? We Germans have beaten all the world. We have taken Paris, all France, all Europe, except the heard of Russia, and by this time Miscow will be ours too. And then London—"

"'Strewth, not London?" babbled Catesby.

"London? We have bombed her to bits. There is not a single house left standing. All the world is ours. *Heil Hitler!*"

Dim memories of the first war were stirring in Catesby's brain. These Germans had been his enemies. He hadn't hated them, though. He hadn't been fighting for the Fourteen Points, or for Democracy, but for the pubs and slums of London, for the drab Edgware Road, and Wapping on a rainy night, and the insides of Pentonville and Holloway, with their smell of carbolic acid, and the friendly governors who shook hands with him when he came out, and hoped he wouldn't be back.

"I'm king of this place," shouted Erich. "Get out of my sight, you dog!"

ERICH beckoned to Fatima, who was standing in the entrance of the house with Dorothy. Fatima went toward him, moving in a furtive, slithering way, but Dorothy remained where she had been standing.

Erich grabbed Fatima about the waist. "Now tell him what you told me!" he shouted.

"In truth, I am now his woman, because he is a bigger chief than you," said Fatima to Catesby. "Go away, dog, until he calls you."

Gatesby remained standing, with a look of bewilderment on his face. Erich grabbed him and kicked him, knocked him down, and ordered him to stand up again. "Raise your arm and say as I say," he commanded.

Catesby said, "*Heil Hitler,*" but he had no notion what the words signified. Erich grabbed Fatima and pulled her inside the house.

Enough of the terrified natives had remained within hearing for the change to be understood. By twos and threes they came creeping out of the jungle. They wormed their way toward the house, ignoring Catesby. When Erich appeared, a booming salutation broke from their throats. This was their great new chief, this was something they understood. They had not further use for Catesby.

Within two days no native passed another without an elevated arm, and a "*Heil Hitler.*"

It was not for three days that Catesby ventured back. His spirit was broken, not so much by the revolt as by his friend's treachery. He came up humbly to the house that had been his. Dorothy saw him first, laughed, and ran to tell her mother. Fatima came out, laughed, and spat. Then Erich came to the door.

"Well, how do you like it, Philip, my dear friend?" he shouted, a little unsteady from palm toddy. "I'm going to make a clean sweep of this place before I'm through. You English liar, come in here!"

Humbly and hopelessly Catesby entered.

"Have a drink, English liar," said Erich, pushing the gourd toward him.

Catesby tried to pour out the tod-

dy, but his hand trembled so that he spilled the contents. Erich snatched the gourd away.

"Erich, I thought you were my friend. Won't you be my friend again? Even if there is a war, we can still be friends. I took you in and set your leg—"

ERICH spat out an oath. "That is just what you fools of Englishmen don't understand," he yelled. He rolled his eyeballs, in the Nazi fashion, producing a terrifying effect on Catesby. "*Ja*, so I must explain to you fool of an Englishman. Do you think I should show gratitude, because you set my leg? That is a slave quality. We of the Master Race know no gratitude, no pity."

"The Master Race?" asked Catesby in wonder.

"*Ja*," said Erich complacently, "I have not explained that to you yet. The Aryan is the great race, and the German is the Master Race among the Aryans. You Englishmen come high among the inferior races, on account of your German blood, but it has been corrupted by admixtures with Jews and other mongrel tribes. After the war, you will probably be treated kindly. You will be allowed to live, and work for us."

"Give it to him!" shrilled Fatima from the doorway. "Give it to the English dog!"

Erich raised a threatening fist, and she fled. He went on:

"You have lied to me, Englishman, when you said that Umbezi is an island, for I have been around it, and there is a narrow neck of solid land connecting it with the mainland. So I shall not need a dugout after all. Now why did you lie to me?"

"Erich—Erich—" began Catesby, in anguished tones. And suddenly he stopped. An idea had begun to penetrate his mind, but only a confused idea. He still loved Erich, and he thought they might still be friends.

"Ha, you are properly confused," said Erich complacently. "Well, I am leaving shortly, with Fatima, and then you shall become king of Umbezi again. Take a drink, English liar."

Catesby managed to get some palm-toddy out of the big gourd into the little gourd. He drank, and his muddled brain began to clear.

"You can occupy one of the huts," said Erich magnanimously. "I am going to need you. You can speak the language."

IT was Dorothy came creeping into Catesby's hut after dark that night. "What are you going to do about that German pig?" she asked him.

"What can I do? What do you want me to do?"

"You can kill him. He is asleep now, and very drunk."

"Dorothy, you don't understand. Erich is my friend. He has been a little harsh with me, but he has had a bad shock, poor fellow, and we must be patient with him. Besides, I thought you were on his side."

"Listen, pa, I laughed at you to pretend, because I do not want him to know how much I hate him. Yesterday he kissed me. And I am the bride of Abdul Hassan. That is a wicked thing, pa, and it will make me worth much less silver, if Abdul Hassan ever discovers it. Now we must kill him, for fear that worse things may happen."

"No, I cannot, I cannot. You don't

(Continued on page 106)

Comeback in Redling

(Continued from page 39)

ly. "He sure is not!"

"Too bad. I'd be willing to pay a fine price for such a horse. A mighty fine price!"

"All the money in the world wouldn't buy him!" the kid declared with finality.

The stranger shrugged and we went on out. As we started across the stable yard, he seemed to have forgotten me entirely. There was a far-off look in his eyes. "So that's the son of Foster Raymond," he said softly. "Sixteen years is sure a long time!"

I wondered what he meant. I wondered who he was, and why he had come to Redling looking for Foster Raymond, and why he was interested in Raymond's no-good son. Then suddenly I stopped wondering and grabbed his arm.

"Here comes the old man himself!" I whispered. "Looky!"

Foster Raymond didn't see us, or if he did he was not interested. He came striding from the opposite end of the yard, kicking up explosions of dust. The stranger drew me back against the fence and said: "Wait."

There was nothing to wait for, at first. We could not see inside the barn from where we stood, and whatever talk was made in there was too low to carry out to us.

The talk got louder, though. I heard the old man shouting: "I don't care who you owe it to! You lost the money, and, by the Lord, this time you're going to pay it out of your own pocket!"

"But I haven't got it!" the kid protested.

"You should have thought of that!"

"But, dad, I've got to pay! I gave them my I.O.U. It's a debt of honor!"

"Honor! What in tarnation do you know about honor?"

"But they're hard hombres, dad! They—"

"They can break every worthless bone in your body, for all of me!" yelled the old man. "And that's final! I'm through with you!"

He came thundering out of the barn, swinging his arms and muttering behind his teeth. He stormed by so close to us he could have touched us, but never even knew we were there. I swear you could feel lightning in the air, and hear thunder, after he passed.

You could hear something else, too. A sort of strangled sob.

"There," I said, scowling at Jim, "goes a man with a busted heart. As fine a man as you could ever hope to meet, too. It sure is a rotten shame!"

Jim nodded. His hand closed on my arm and I could feel his fingers trembling through my shirt. "Let's go," he said. "And remember this, Porky: a thing is never all black until you can't see through it."

WE went back to the Red Hitch and about an hour later Paul Raymond came in. He was alone and he did not look too sure of himself. Stepping up to the bar, he ordered a drink of whiskey and said to Mitch: "Is there someone around here could run an errand for me?"

"You could try Porky Tanner," Mitch replied, nodding in my direction.

The kid came over to the table where I was sitting with Jim. He gave Jim an odd look, as if wondering who he was and what he was hanging around for. "Can you run an errand for me, Porky?" he asked. "I want a note delivered to my dad."

I told him I was busy.

"Give you five dollars," Paul said.

That was a lot of money just for riding out to the Double R and back. I looked at Jim, hopefully, but he shooked his head. "I'll be needing you," he said. "You stay here."

This riled the boy. He had come to believe that money talks, especially the kind of money he could throw around. Glaring at the stranger, he snapped. "And who might you be?"

"I hardly think that matters," Jim said. "When I want to know a man, Raymond, I introduce myself. But I'm particular who I know."

Ordinarily the kid would have started swinging at words like those! It never did take much to explode his temper. But just now he had other things on his mind and was evidently in no mood for fighting. He said something under his breath and turned away, and went into the back room where a game was in progress.

A while later one of the Double R waddies came out of the back room, winked at Mitch and said softly, in passing: "He has to write letters for his money now. I hope the old man turns him down!" There was an envelope sticking out of the fellow's shirt pocket. Chick Ebart, his name was.

He strode out, and the stranger got up from our table. "Wait here for me, Porky," he said. Funny, there was no extra pressure in the way he said it, but I knew it was a command, and I nodded. He drifted out the side door. The door swung shut after him, and that was the last I saw of him for some time.

I went up to the bar and told Mitch about our visit to the stable, and the stranger's attempt to buy Paul Raymond's sorrel. "What do you make of him?" I asked, frowning.

Mitch shook his head. "He sure is up to something. But what?"

"That's what I'd like to know! What!"

I had been drinking pretty steadily and was sort of hungry, so I slipped into the kitchen and made up a sandwich, and then lay down to catch a small snooze. Being official handyman in return for my bed and board, I could do this without asking permission. It was close to eight o'clock when I woke up. I hurried out front and there was the stranger, back again at our table.

He asked me if I had slept well, so evidently he had known where I was. Mitch must have told him.

There were three or four customers in the Hitch by now. Ed Burlingame and Andy Wier from the Leaning Y outfit were at the bar, matching quarters. A table at one side was occupied by some Double R men. But I didn't see any sign of the Double R rider, Chick Ebart, who had gone out to deliver Paul Raymond's letter.

I sat down, rubbing sleep out of my eyes. The door of the back room opened and Paul Raymond came striding out. "Isn't that guy back yet?" he demanded angrily. "What's keeping him, anyway?"

The stranger stirred beside me. "Off hand," he drawled, "I'd say your

pa was keeping him, sonny. And a good thing, too, if you ask me!"

THE kid turned slowly to face us. There was a sudden stoppage of activity, a queer stillness in which you could hear the whirring of Andy Wier's quarter on the bar. The quarter stopped spinning and fell flat with a clunk. The kid walked over to our table and looked down at Jim.

"What was that remark?"

"Why, I remarked it will do you a heap of good, sonny, to have to play your own fiddle for once. From what I hear, you generally do the dancing while your dad fiddles."

I heard Mitch gasp. The Leaning Y men were gaping, and the fellows at the other table—men who knew Raymond inside out from having worked under him—were like statues. No one had ever talked to Paul like that before! It wasn't healthy!

"Stand up, stranger!" the kid snarled. At least, it was supposed to be a snarl, but his voice was so out of control that it rose to a shrill squeak. His face was dead white and he shook all over.

"You want trouble, sonny?" the stranger said softly. "Better be careful. I'm older and I weigh a lot less, but I've played my own fiddle long enough to be fairly good at it."

"Stand up!"

"Why sure, if you insist," Jim said. He drew his legs under him and pushed back his chair.

The kid threw a punch before the stranger was to his feet. By all rights that punch should have torn Jim's head off. I had seen Paul Raymond in action before; he was a wildcat when aroused, and he had never yet been on the floor in a fight. But this time something was out of kilter. The kid swung his Sunday punch straight at the stranger's head—swung so hard it turned the kid himself clear around and threw him off balance when he missed.

"You should wait for a man to get all the way up, sonny," Jim drawled.

The kid sailed in again. He was raving mad. He threw so many punches I couldn't follow them. But not one of his punches hit pay-dirt. They bounced off the stranger's arms and hands and shoulders. They were like flies trying to dart through a screen.

"You see," the stranger murmured, "your fiddle's way out of tune. Now I'll play."

He stepped in. What he did to Paul Raymond was something you do not see too often in a rough and tumble cow-town like Redling. It was scientific. He backed the kid across the room step by step, his blows blasting through the other's defense like bullets through paper. He could have knocked Paul kicking with any one of a score of blows, but didn't. Just toyed with him, stung him, taunted him. And all the while he kept up a running flow of talk.

"At your age, sonny, you ought to be in the pink of condition—but look at you! Weak from whiskey and loose living! Lost your temper already at a time when you need it most! Full of sound and fury, but nothing to back it up! I could break every bone your body, sonny, if I had a mind to. But you're not worth it. I save my real fighting for men who can take it.—You're still damp behind the ears. You're soft. You don't think straight. You're a disgrace to the name Raymond, a disgrace to your father and your neighbors. See if your easy

money can buy an answer to *this!*"

He drove a hard one to the kid's jaw, slamming him against the wall. Paul shook himself erect again, blinking his eyes. I'll say this for him: he had guts. He came back for more.

But now the stranger was through fooling. Maybe he had heard, as I had, the sound of hoof-beats in the dark street outside. Maybe he had been listening for that very sound. Anyway, he measured the kid and drove home a right-hand punch that floored him. Then, swiftly, he picked Paul Raymond up and carried him into the back room.

THE front door swung wide at that moment and in walked the two gamblers from Sooner Basin. Hard, big men, alert for trouble, their guns at their hips in defiance of a local ordinance that said no man could wear his shooting irons in a public drinking place.

They looked around. Jim came out of the back room, shutting the door behind him. He glanced at the Sooner men and sat down, and I slid away from the wall to take my seat beside him. The fight was over. Paul Raymond had been soundly whipped and now lay unconscious in the back room. But there was a new kind of tension in the Red Hitch now!

One of the Sooner men, a six-footer with sharp, swarthy features that would have been handsome except for his eyes, called for whiskey and said to Mitch: "You seen young Raymond around?"

Mitch did not get a chance to answer. The stranger beside me spoke up first. "I'll undertake to represent him," he declared gently. "What can I do for you gents?"

They turned to stare at him, and I did not like the shape of their scowls or the furtive glances that streaked between them.

"Who in blazes are you?" one demanded.

"Name don't matter," Jim declared, rising. "You've got some promise-to-pay notes signed by Paul Raymond. How much?"

"Two thousand dollars!"

The stranger hauled a roll from his pocket and peeled off green-backs until he had two thousand dollars counted out. It made a mighty big pile on the table, I want to tell you! "I'm told," he said gently, "your way of winning this was open to suspicion, gents, but since I was not here to watch the play, I'm paying without protest. A word of warning, though. If I ever hear of you gents in a game with young Raymond again, I'll consider it a personal affront. Get that?"

That brittle silence came back, and you could feel the tension in the air. There he stood, this tall skinny stranger, facing two of the toughest hombres that ever walked into the Red Hitch! And what happened after those challenging words of his was inevitable.

The big fellow laid his irons on the bar and said: "Come outside, mister. I don't aim to dirty up Mitch's place with the likes of you."

They went outside. The money lay there on the table and not a man of us moved. We heard the thud of fists and the scuff of heavy boots pounding the ground in the dark out there. We heard grunts and then the sound of someone falling. Then the door swung wide and the stranger walked in again.

He was a mite dusty, that's all. Otherwise there was not a mark on

him as he confronted the other Sooner Basin bad man. "You want to step outside, too?" he asked quietly. I noticed his hand was right close to the irons on the bar, in case the Sooner man took a notion to turn it into a shooting affair.

The fellow did not take any such notion. He gaped at the door, pop-eyed. He slapped Paul Raymond's I.O.U. on the bar and went out, in such a mighty big hurry that he forgot the two thousand dollars in bills lying right there on the table.

Maybe he wanted to forget that money. Maybe he just wanted to get out of there and forget the whole thing. He left his friend's shooting irons behind, too.

Mitch put the guns under the bar in a dazed, shaky sort of way. Then we heard a noise at the door of the back room and turned to see Paul Raymond standing there. The kid had seen what happened, and was wide-eyed with amazement. With something else, too. The way he looked at this fellow Jim made me realize something.

The kid was not sore about getting licked. He had found himself a hero, a man he could look up to. Maybe that was what he had needed all along. Anyhow, he slowly shook himself out of his trance and limped forward.

JIM grinned at him and handed him an envelope. "This here," Jim said, "is the letter you wrote to your dad, son. I took the liberty of making sure it was not delivered. If I were you, I would keep it for a souvenir, to remind you of the kind of letter you won't ever be writing again. You run along now. Tell your dad the debt is paid." He held out his hand, the same right hand that just a short while ago had knocked the kid senseless—and pounded sense into him. "Shake, son?"

Paul Raymond looked around at the lot of us. He must have felt like crawling into a hole, and if he had been been all bad, no doubt that is what he'd have done. But I remembered what the stranger had said about him, after Paul had refused to sell that little sorrel. "A thing is never all black until you can't see through it!"

So I was not surprised when the kid had enough in him to hold his head up and return our stares without flinching. I had begun to see through him, same as the stranger had.

"Shake?" he said, sort of in a whisper. "You bet I will!"

"And give this two thousand dollars to your dad," the stranger said. "It belongs to him."

"But you said he never got my letter!"

"Tell him, when you give him the money, it is from Jim Lerner, and *that* debt is paid, too."

The kid stared. "Jim Lerner?" he said, frowning. "Seems to me I've heard dad mention that name . . ."

"Jim Lerner and your dad used to be partners, son. They might have been partners to this day, but Lerner pulled a fast deal and skipped, thinking money and success meant more than friendship. That was a long time ago, years ago. You were just a shaver. It's taken all this time for Jim Lerner to strangle his pride and come back here with the money he stole."

He put the money in the kid's hand and turned away, and I did a heap of thinking in the length of time it took him to reach the door. I began to understand why this Jim—this Jim

Lerner—had not wanted to meet Paul Raymond's father after finding out the old boy was rolling in wealth. Jim had come to Redling to pay an old debt, but handing a man money when he already has more than he knows what to do with—that isn't paying a debt.

Jim had paid it off another way. A bigger way. I may be short on perspective sometimes, but I could figure that out.

I was right, too. Because the stranger paused at the door, turned and said with a quiet smile: "You behave yourself, son. I'll have an ear to the ground and if I hear of you doing a back-slide, why I'll just naturally have to come hot-footing back here to straighten you out. When I pay a debt, it has to stay paid.

"But shucks," he added, grinning, "you wouldn't do that to me."

Killer With the Light Blue Eyes

A GREAT favorite with Western story writers is the strong, silent hero with the bottomless eyes; you know, the kind of eyes into which the villain looks, and sees nothing but death. And then the slug hits him.

Fiction, this hero? Not at all! Such a man lived, and old-timers swear that today's Western heroes are modeled not on a swashbuckler like Bill Hickok, or a fearless gent like Wyatt Earp or Bill Cody, but a road agent named Henry Plummer, who plied his trade in Montana when that State was infested with hold-up men.

Henry Plummer was the leader of the Montana road agents. He was one of the most gentlemanly characters to be found this side of a French dancing school. His conversational tones were low, earnest, and impressive. His dress was always neat and smug. He never chiseled anybody out of his money or property except in his professional capacity as leader of the highwaymen.

Plummer used to go out upon the street and take little children, who had neither shoes nor stockings, and buy for them anything that would make them comfortable. He picked up one old lawyer, who had lost a decision to John Barleycorn, and who went around the streets almost as bare as if in his birthday suit, and fitted him with new clothes from head to foot.

There was one peculiar mark about Plummer. When you looked into his light-blue eyes they looked as if there were no bottom to them. You could see way down into their depths, like one of those limpid pools in Yellowstone Park or Marineland, Florida.

PLUMMER was not known, outside of the road agent band, to be their leader. He was, in fact, the sheriff of two counties, duly elected by popular vote! When, as sheriff, he was entrusted with the safety of valuables, he invariably protected them. Wise ones among the leading merchants and miners who suspected Plummer's dual roles, took advantage of his faithfulness as sheriff.

George Crispin, the leading merchant of Bannack, Montana, used to

keep large amounts of money on hand. There were no safes or banks. He had Plummer sleep in his store, for fear the road agents might rob it.

He never lost a nickel. He had taken a foolproof course to save his treasure!

A similar bit of quick thinking benefited Samuel T. Hauser, another merchant who suspected Plummer's Hyde character. Contemplating a trip from Bannack to Salt Lake with a large amount of treasure, Hauser entered the coach at Virginia City and immediately recognized Plummer as one of the passengers.

Taking this to mean that Plummer had knowledge of the sum he was carrying, Hauser's suspicions were further strengthened by the fact that some time earlier, in Bannack, the road agent suspect had presented him with a woolen scarf. Plummer (as friend and sheriff) had said Hauser would find it welcome on cold nights during the trip. Now, Hauser realized, that scarf could easily become an identifying mark should road agents stop the stage!

Hauser thought fast and, with other passengers listening said: "Sheriff, I am carrying a large amount of money to Salt Lake. I'd feel safer knowing it was in your charge. Please take it." He passed the money over to the courtly Plummer, who gravely accepted the responsibility.

The stage was not molested.

ONLY once was Plummer's reign as king of the Montana road agents threatened. A venturesome chap named Cleveland attempted to set himself up as leader. Some of the road agents were on a poaching expedition around Fort Benton, Montana. Back in Bannack, Cleveland was in a normal condition of intoxication and was talking too much. For a long time Plummer had been waiting for an opportunity to kill him.

He got it now. Coolly, he took two shots at Cleveland. The intruder fell to the floor. "Don't shoot while I'm down," he cried.

"Well, get up then," commanded Plummer.

Cleveland came up shooting. Plummer fired another shot, and Cleveland lay weltering in his blood.

No one dared go to his assistance. But some moments later, a doctor arrived. Plummer left the scene, coolly turning his back on his opponent, whose guns were still within reach.

While the doctor was looking at Cleveland, another road agent, George Ives, rode up. He dismounted, went over to Cleveland in a loud voice asked: "How are you feeling?" Then, in a hoarse whisper aside to the physician, he said: "If you don't go away and let this——die, I'll shoot you dead as a doornail." The doctor got out of the way without argument—road agents' threats were invariably redeemable in cemetery lots — and Cleveland died that night.

Henry Plummer was never brought to trial. To the voters, his shooting of Cleveland had been performed in line of duty.

Maybe it was. No one ever thought to ask if he had killed as a Sheriff. Or as a road agent whose leadership had been threatened!

Gallows Meat

(Continued from page 59)

"Who are you?" he asked.

"An enemy," replied the other harshly. "I should have passed you by, but I saw that the dog was wounded, and I am a lover of dogs. They know no nationality."

"Who won the fight?"

"You ambushed us. I think most of our men fought their way through you. I could fight no longer, because my ankle was broken."

Ivan lay still a long time, stroking Boris, who snuggled up to him. He was considering all this. Boris and he had been rescued by a wounded enemy. That was all right; they were both men. But the other was a Nazi, one of those fiends who had committed such atrocities in Khosk, and a thousand other towns and villages.

He must have fallen into a doze, for when he opened his eyes again it was daylight, though the snow, drifting softly down, made it a sort of dim twilight. He was lying in a thicket of young birches, and the forest was all about him. He must have run on after being wounded, until he dropped here. There was no sign of the battle anywhere about him.

He put his hand to his head, and found that it was bandaged. He could move his limbs now, and knew that the injury must be transient. He looked at Boris, and uttered his name. The dog rose stiffly to his feet and licked Big Ivan's hands. He had been bandaged too.

A rush of gratitude filled Ivan's heart. The other might be a Nazi, but he was also a man.

He saw him limping toward him, with a canteen in one hand and a package in the other. From the broken top of the package hard biscuits protruded.

Ivan studied the man. He was wearing a soldier's great-coat, with no badge of rank, but he was obviously an officer, and Ivan knew his face. Where had he seen it? The man's voice was rasping, his demeanor unconsciously arrogant. . . . Suddenly Ivan knew.

"You're Von Stimmer!" he said, and the general made him a satirical little bow.

HERE was a bigger problem still, and Ivan thought it over during the three days and nights that followed. He had almost recovered from his head injury, whereas Von Stimmer's foot was growing worse, and badly swollen. It was now Ivan who went to the spring for water. He had tried to bandage Von Stimmer's foot, but the least touch gave him intolerable pain.

As for Boris, he was bewildered. The dog was quickly regaining strength, and his wound, which had not touched the bone, was healing nicely. But here was the hated Nazi uniform, and its wearer apparently on good terms with his master. He compromised in his canine mind by growling whenever Von Stimmer came near him, but he made no other demonstrations.

Big Ivan couldn't understand. This was the man who might be flayed alive

if caught by the Partisans, and here was he, helped by him, his dog perhaps saved; and here was Von Stimmer, a sick and helpless man.

He thought of the bestialities that had been perpetrated at Khosk; he thought of Natasha, and fury racked him. But then it was that other man whom he had saved for a holocaust of vengeance—he realized that now, though he hadn't known at the time why he had spared him.

"If only Father Cyril was here, he would tell me what to do," he thought.

Big Ivan and Boris were well enough now to rejoin the Partisans, and the forest was an open book to both of them. But Ivan couldn't take Von Stimmer with him, unless he carried him on his back. Yet he couldn't leave him, for he must die, as an act of impersonal vengeance. Besides, he was growing worse hourly, and that foot would probably have to be amputated.

Ivan didn't know whether Von Stimmer had a pistol under that soldier's greatcoat, which he always kept buttoned. He could easily have overpowered him and taken it, and he never knew why he didn't find out. On the whole, Big Ivan was a badly perplexed man.

IN spite of his belief in human equality, Ivan secretly quailed when Von Stimmer addressed him in that rasping voice of command, in very poor Russian.

"Well, you see how ill I am," he said on the third night. "You'd like to earn some gold, I suppose? You'll find out where my command is, and report back to me. Then you'll start back and have my plans for rescue carried out. There will be more money for you than you have ever seen in your life. I'll pay you fifty thousand rubles."

Ivan opened his mouth and eyes. That was more money than he had ever heard of a man's possessing, unless he was one of the old barons.

"Well, make up your mind," rasped Von Stimmer. "What have you got to say about it?"

"But I can't do that," stammered Big Ivan. "You've got to be hanged, you know, because of what you did at Khosk. I was hoping you would get well enough to accompany me."

"So?" asked Von Stimmer. "It is quite warm today, is it not?"

He made a careless gesture of unbuttoning his overcoat. It was Boris who saw and understood. With a deep growl he was at Von Stimmer's throat, his teeth tearing at the collar of the overcoat, trying to reach the flesh beneath. Nevertheless, the Nazi managed to get and fire his automatic. But the shot went wild, and next moment Ivan had the weapon in his hand. Von Stimmer, who had twisted his ankle in his little struggle, groaned, and sank back upon his bed of pine-branches.

"I am sorry this has happened, comrade," said Ivan humbly. "But I thought you understood that it had to be."

The dog, seeing that his master had the situation in hand, had left Von Stimmer, and was standing in the attitude of a hunting dog, head pointing, body stiff, and tail outstretched. He was looking into the woods. Suddenly he darted off like an arrow.

"You're a fool," Von Stimmer rasped. "I've saved your life and taken care of you. I'm offering you money. Don't you like money? Don't you know what it means? I am a German

officer; you can trust my word of honor."

Big Ivan hardly heard him, for he was listening to sounds in the forest—Boris's bark, and then voices.

SERGE OLENOFF led the party of some two dozen Partisans, which included Father Cyril and little Dmitry. Among them Ivan recognized a number of former inhabitants of Khosk, who had not been with him on the occasion of his visit to his village. They came running forward with loud cries, Boris bounding along beside them, and came crowding about the prisoner, who sat propped against a tree, his swollen foot extended.

"God be praised, comrade!" shouted Serge. "We thought you were dead. We are on our way to Khosk. The invaders are in full flight. So you have captured one!"

"You know him?" asked Big Ivan.

Father Cyril knew him, and made the sign of the cross. He didn't speak, but somehow the identification passed from his mind to the minds of his companions, who stood looking at Von Stimmer half-incredulous.

Then little Dmitry swore, and ran forward with upraised rifle-butt, but Ivan caught his arm. "No, no, comrade, he understands that he must die," he said. "But we take him to Khosk. That is right, is it not, father?" he asked the priest.

"It is not within my province," answered Father Cyril. "You are in command, Ivan Gregorvitch."

"Good! Make a litter, for he is unable to walk, as you see. And do not jolt him, for he is in great pain."

They set about constructing a litter from saplings, fastening strips of burlap for the body. In half-an-hour they were ready to start. Von Stimmer, who had kept silence, said:

"Fools, you will all die for this! I am a German officer. Keep your filthy hands off me! Take me to my headquarters, and you shall have your liberty, and ten thousand rubles apiece!"

There was compassion on the faces of all the Partisans. The priest, who was a simple soul, answered: "But you have to die, brother, to atone for your many crimes."

They forced him, raging, into the litter. Then Serge said: "I forgot to tell you, Comrade Ivan, but we have some eight or ten officers of his staff, who were captured in the battle. We left them under guard about a verst away, when the dog came to us. All of them were in Khosk during the occupation. So we are taking them there."

VON STIMMER alternated between offers of bribes, curses, and sullen apathy. So did most of his staff. They were unable to understand these childlike Russians, who were so solicitous for their comfort, and bandaged their wounds, and were never too tired to attend to them with almost slavish attention.

They couldn't understand that their fixed purpose was to hang them, and that therefore they regarded them as men already dead.

There were two outbreaks during the journey back to Khosk. The first was a Nazi captain who ran amok, crazed with fear. He possessed himself of one of the Partisans' pistols, and wounded him before he was struck down. The other was a concerted attempt at escape. The dogs saw to that. Another of the Partisans was wounded, but that made not the

least difference in their treatment of their prisoners.

And now they were entering Khosk again. In the brief period that had passed since their departure the women had worked incessantly, and already the framework of the wooden houses was beginning to rise along the single street. They were hard at work, with stones for hammers, and notched knives for saws, when the Partisans and their prisoners came down the roadway.

Then all work was dropped, and the women came crowding about them. In the period that had passed they had shaken off their apathy, for food had been sent to them. The whole crowd moved instinctively toward the little square opposite the place where the church had stood.

The church was already being rebuilt, though only a few uprights had been placed in position. The ghastly mound of snow was gone, the remnants of the victims had been laid away. But the gibbets had not been removed. There they stood, a dozen of them, with wet ropes dangling from the cross-pieces.

And now there was recognition between the Partisans who had not been there with Ivan, and their wives. The women came toward them, holding babes at their breasts, or leading children by the hand. And instinctively the crowd began to divide.

No one had given that order, and yet the crowd had separated into several parts. There were the Partisans, there were their wives, and there were the captured Nazis. And there were the onlookers.

Another woman was coming along the street. Beside her was the wounded Nazi who had been captured. And between them was little Mikhail, and one of his hands was in his mother's, and the other clung to the officer's hand.

Natasha took her stand, with the child, among the other women, and Ivan moved a little nearer the rest of the Partisans.

Little Mikhail looked back at the wounded officer, and cried, "Papa!"

SUDDENLY a wave of fury swept the Partisans. They rushed upon their prisoners, and dragged them to the foot of the gibbets. "String them up! Let's have done with it!" they screamed, and flung the ropes about their necks.

Now the calm was broken. The women screamed, and ran hysterically from man to man, some clinging to their husbands, others trying to shield the Nazis. The children joined in the uproar; even the infants in arms added their cries to it.

Natasha ran to Big Ivan. "You cannot do it," she cried. "Look at the child! Look at his child! He almost seems to understand!"

"Do you love him?" Big Ivan asked again.

"I love you," said Natasha.

"Then why—why—why—?" he cried in fury.

They were holding the prisoners on the traps. Each trap was crudely made; it was a platform held in position by a bolt at the side, which had only to be withdrawn. Von Stimmer stood stiffly erect, silent, but some of the prisoners were struggling with their captors. The wounded officer was leaning against the shoulder of the guard, the rope dangling about his neck. Natasha rushed forward. "Stop

it! He is the father of my child!"

The Partisans appeared divided; some were for mercy. "It is for the Government to decide," they cried. Others shouted to the women to get out of the way, and demanded that the job be finished. Suddenly Big Ivan grew articulate. Now he knew exactly what had troubled him through the march, and what he had wanted to say.

"It's this way, comrades," he cried. "These beasts came here and murdered and tortured. They made slaves of our men, and they murdered our old people, and they took our women. Never in all the history of war did such things happen before.

"And now it is for us to impose a lesson that all men, of all nations, shall hear and shudder at. We shall hang them before the eyes of the children whom our women have borne to them, and the children, even if they are too young to remember, shall know all their lives what they are, and what vengeance was exacted on their fathers."

They surged toward the gibbets again, beneath which the captives, silent now, awaited their fate. The women tried to rush between them, and were flung back. But the Partisans recoiled before Father Cyril, who stood with his cross uplifted.

"OUT of the way, Father! This is no business of yours. If you had a wife, you'd understand!"

"Listen to me," cried the fat little priest. "It may be right that these men should suffer for their crimes, which have been against God and man. But what you wish cannot be done, Ivan, because that, too, would be an affront to God. You would perpetrate these wrongs forever, by creating an everlasting hate to answer them. Whatever is done, must be done in love."

"Love? You are crazy, Father!" shouted a Partisan.

"Now I understand why the Government doesn't love our priests," cried another.

They had noticed only vaguely that other men had joined the gathering, soldiers of the regular army, who stood agape, watching the silent, doomed men, and the priest and the Partisans.

"Out of the way, priest!" There came a concerted rush. Father Cyril was borne backward, but still he struggled valiantly, and his cross could be seen bobbing above the crowd.

"Would you send them to their death unconfessed?" he shouted.

"To the devil with their confessions!" The crowd was swarming about the gibbets, fighting the screaming, frantic women. But suddenly a flying wedge broke through its ranks, and a platoon of soldiers stood in line before the gibbets.

"Take them away!" an officer proclaimed. "These men are prisoners, at the disposal of the Government."

Stupefied at this last-minute baulking of their vengeance, the Partisans watched the captives herded along the street.

Father Cyril said, "God has saved us from committing a great sin, brothers."

Big Ivan stood confronting Natasha, who was clutching little Mikhail by the hand.

"My Papa has gone away," whimpered the child.

Big Ivan stooped, picked him up in his arms, and kissed him. "Come, show me our home," he said to Natasha.

Goodbye to Blackbeard

(Continued from page 15)

her fast. Teach's boat had disappeared. But Maynard's sloop was growing larger. He could distinguish her ports, with the black muzzles of his guns protruding He had made all arrangements for battle, if need be, and he could trust his men.

A hail! He answered. The rail was lined with his crew, watching him. He pulled alongside, and made fast, ran up the jacob's ladder He trod his own deck, and his men gathered about him. . . . Quickly he told them what had happened. "We'll clean the seas of that pirate. Make ready for battle!"

A thunder of cheers answered him. Now Maynard was in his own element again. The rattle of the capstans, as bow and stern anchors came clattering up, was music in his ears. Men were swarming aloft, unfurling sails. The spanker boom came amidships. Maynard took the wheel, a recent invention that had replaced the old whipstaff. Slowly the sloop began to move.

Maynard stood at the wheel, peering seaward. His heart thrilled at the prospect of battle. He took in, half-consciously, all the movements aboard his ship. He saw the men at the close-fights, the wooden barriers in the waist, stretching netting to catch falling spars. He looked with pride at his guns, stationed at the port-holes, three great bombards and twelve eighteen-pounders, each manned by two trusty gunners, with linstocks ready, and the leaden aprons cleared from the touch-holes.

The ship was getting under way. The wind was with him. He guessed where Blackbeard lay. Teach's sloop was slow and ponderous compared with Maynard's. It should not be hard to get on Teach's windward quarter. The sailing-master was shouting orders. And tumultuous thoughts raced through Maynard's mind. The joy of battle conflicted with fears for Laura. Would Blackbeard make a hard fight of it? Of the issue there could be no doubt. Maynard called his quartermaster, and, relinquishing the wheel to him, went up the break of the poop and took his post on the quarter-deck, watching intently.

He had given the quartermaster his directions. Peering seaward, for a long time Maynard could distinguish nothing through the mist that hung above the waves. And then of a sudden he saw Blackbeard's sloop.

It lay, a tiny dot upon the ocean. Blackbird had all sails set, except his skysails, and he was making south, evidently for one of his haunts along the coast, from where he could send his demands for ransom to Charleston at his leisure. Imprudent though the pirate was, he would hardly challenge en embattled city such as Charleston, now that his friends, the "proprietors," had ceased to rule her.

But what would he do with Laura? How safe was she in the hold of such a ruffian?

MAYNARD waited through an eternity of agony, while his sloop slowly overhauled the pirate. He could sail closer to the wind, and, with

his seaman's eye, he could discern that Teach was making frantic efforts to escape, rather than accept the gage of a battle in which he had everything to lose, and nothing to gain. He was boxhauling and tacking wildly, while Maynard slowly gained on him and took up position on his windward side. And then Blackbeard's sloop, accepting the inevitable, prepared to fight.

The sun glinted on the muzzles of his guns as they were run out. There were twelve on the larboard side, and there must be an equal number to starboard—nearly twice the number of Maynard's. A flag went fluttering up to the main truck. It straightened in the breeze. It was the Union flag, and Maynard laughed. Teach wasn't showing the Jolly Roger—not when he was engaged in a bigger enterprise than plundering some helpless merchantman. That showed he had doubts as to the outcome. Teach was afraid.

"Get to your grapnels!" shouted Maynard, and the men scurried to obey. With creak of halliards the sloop bore down on Teach, who had slackened sail, and was now prepared to accept the gage of battle.

Hardly two ship's lengths now separated the two sloops. Maynard could see Teach's men at their guns, others in the tops, others along the deck, their muskets and pikes in their hands. And Teach himself, standing in the waist. And a woman at his side —Laura Rutledge.

Teach's voice came bellowing across the water: "Stand off, Maynard! Stand off, damn ye, or I'll blast ye out of the sea!"

Roars of defiance came from Teach's ship. Aboard Maynard's the silence was so intense that Maynard could hear the orders of the master-gunner:

"Blow your matches!"

"Cock your matches!"

"Guard your pans!"

"Present!"

All eyes were turned to him. Maynard could see the glowing, redhot ends of the gunners' linstocks. They were waiting for his command.

He turned his eyes from Laura with a mighty effort. "Give fire!" he called.

TWO lengths apart, the two sloops opened fire simultaneously. But there was a vast difference in the result. For Maynard's sloop presented only her bow and a bulge of sleek waist on either side of her, while Teach's ship was larboard side on. The discharge from Maynard's twelve guns tore into Teach's sloop, producing fearful havoc.

The whole deck seemed to crumble, the mainmast, shot away, hung over the side in a tangle of sheets and yards, and then snapped with the crack of a monstrous pistol, and smothered the ship's side with the wreckage. And, reeling like a wounded monster under the shock, the pirate's sloop dipped into the trough of a huge wave, and lay, crippled and wallowing, in it.

Maynard's ship, on the other hand, was unscathed, save for three roundshot that pierced the prow, and created some havoc in the waist.

As Teach's ship recoiled from the concussion, Maynard darted forward into the waist. "Heave your grapnels!" he shouted, and with answering cheers, the seamen hurled the ponderous mechanisms onto the other deck.

The iron flukes clawed, grappled and bit deep. Maynard's men heaved on the grapnel chains, and gradually drew the two ships together by main force. Meanwhile, from the tops, the musketeers were spreading confusion among Teach's men, with well-directed firing.

Maynard could see Blackbeard rallying his followers. Whatever else he might be, he was no coward. He raced among them like a mad bull, slashing at them with his cutlass. Laura stood motionless where she had been, and now another lady had joined her. That must be Mistress Pinckney. They were looking across at Maynard, as if devoid of fear.

"Boarding party!" Maynard shouted.

"Aye, aye!" By now the two ships' decks were flush with one another, the grapnel chains strained taut. Cutlasses in their hands, Maynard's men swarmed over the side onto the deck of Teach's ship.

And, with his cutlass in his right hand, and pistol in his left, Maynard led them.

THE fury of their rush carried them into the heart of the thickly serried ranks of Blackbeard's men. Followed half-a-minute of furious melee, the oaths and yells of the combatants, the swish of weapons, and their dull thud as they lopped off limbs and sliced into necks and shoulders. Fighting like a madman, Maynard drove his flying wedge forward, waving his dripping blade.

He was driving toward the break in the poop, where the two terrified women were now crouching. He was dimly aware of them there, but he perceived them with an unoccupied corner of his mind; all his will was set upon victory.

Again and again during that half-minute, which seemed extended into an eternity, he was aware of the great bulk of Blackbeard barring his way. But each time that he strove to reach him Blackbeard was no longer there, and Maynard was panting, gasping, as he wielded his blade. So thick was the press by now that it was impossible to swing a weapon. Men seized each other with their hands, fists crashed into faces, cutlass handles knocked out teeth and inflicted hideous wounds. Maynard was still striving toward his objective, but each yard seemed like a mile, and still Laura and Mistress Pinckney seemed far away.

But suddenly a great shout came from the throats of the boarding party. Suddenly Teach's men gave in panic, and the attackers were through driving them along the slippery deck, or cutting them down, or hurling them overboard.

Blackbeard, borne back by the rush, saw Maynard, and burst through the ranks of his assailants. He leaped in front of the two girls, a fearful object, red from head to foot, waving his bloodstained weapon.

With a howl of fury, Blackbeard swung. The blow glanced off Maynard's cutlass, and Blackbeard's weapon imbedded itself in the stump of the mainmast, cleaving deep into the wood. Then, as Blackbeard tugged at it wildly, Maynard stepped forward and raised his pistol.

He saw the look of terror in the pirate's eyes. "Better this way than to swing in chains between high and low water," he said ironically, and shot

Blackbeard through the head.

A sobbing, whistling moan came from Blackbeard's lips. He reeled, swayed, stumbled. Then he was down, and gasping out the last remnants of his life at Laura's feet.

Maynard caught the girl in his arms and carried her away.

HE had set her down, and bidden Mistress Pinckney attend her, while he went back to the fight. But the fight was over. A remnant of Blackbeard's men, who had gathered at the bow, to fight it out to the last, had surrendered in dismay when they saw their leader fall. Maynard went to and fro, issuing the needed orders. It was perhaps fifteen minutes later when he went back to Laura.

He must have presented a fearsome spectacle, for she uttered a little cry, and looked as if she would faint again; then stood up bravely, and smiled.

"Our heartfelt thanks to you, Master Maynard," she said. "Had you not come, I don't know what we should have done. And now?" she questioned.

"I take you and Mistress Pinckney back to Charleston," answered Maynard. "The city is in the hands of the people, but I am sure none of your own will be harmed, for that is not our English way of fighting. And, as I understand, there was little resistance, save on the part of Blackbeard and his crew, who stood to profit by the disturbance."

"But you," she hesitated. "You must not return. They say you are a sea-rover, too—like Blackbeard—no, not like him, or course, but still—"

Maynard smiled grimly. "Holding His Majesty's commission, and under orders to hunt down that man. I used a little subterfuge," he answered. "Does that fact give me ground for hope, Mistress Laura?"

She smiled, and blushed under his gaze. "I think you know the answer, Captain Maynard," she replied.

The Lucky Pup

(Continued from page 23)

scoundrelly Cotton, without having that yellow hyena trying to tear a tenderloin out of me."

"What'd the colonel say about it?" Mulligan inquired

"I never got on in to see him," Vander grunted. "That's why I'm here: I want Hosea to go tell Cotton to come down here."

"I'll do 'er," Hosea agreed, "if you'll look at the lease I traded the colonel for while I'm gone."

"Traded the colonel?" Vander glanced at the map. "Hosea! Don't go yet. You say you traded Boojum for this lease?"

"Here's the papers what proves it." Hosea produced them.

Vander, then, seemed to be having difficulty keeping his face straight. His voice uneven, he said. "To hell with Cotton, Hosea. This's the lease I went to see him about. I'll be honest with you—Major Petroleum's checked the geology up there, and is willing to make a test. We've taken over the Gusho holdings and mean to fish out the tools and drill ahead. Your five acres next to the well are important to us, and I'll give you a hundred dollars an acre and the usual royalties for your lease."

WORD of the deal deluged Jugtown, and within ten minutes after its completion, Colonel Cotton heard it via telephone. The colonel, having sighted a certain stranger in town that day, had since been home behind Boojum, locked doors, and drawn blinds, but now he answered the phone's persistent pealing.

"Shoo, Cotton? . . . This's me."

The colonel scowled, wondering why an enemy should call him.

"Want to be the first to tell you you skinned yourself, you old skunk," the caller enlightened him. "Hosea sold his lease . . ."

Slowly, the colonel replaced the receiver. Slowly, he shook his head. Swiftly, though, he went to peek out the window when Boojum set up a racket out in the yard.

"Come in." Colonel Spider unlocked and opened the parlor door for Hosea Fly.

Shedding rainwater, Boojum bounded in, followed by Hosea, who announced, "Colonel, I've come to buy ol' Boojum back."

"I'm glad you have," the colonel told him. "The poor fellow is pining away without you, Hosea. Just look at him."

Hosea looked at Boojum, curled in the colonel's easy-chair.

"Guess he got the gollies fur me," he agreed.

"He's dying of a broken heart, Hosea. So I've decided to let you trade me back the lease for him."

"But I can't, colonel. I done sold that-there lease."

"So I just heard," the colonel admitted. "And lucky for you that you did. You'll never get any royalties, though, because there is no oil there. I'm a geologist and I know So give me back the royalty and half the money and take Boojum with you."

"Hold on, now," Hosea protested. "First you say it's a erl lease, an' now you say it ain't."

"Never believe the colonel," a man in the doorway advised.

Shaking his head when the colonel showed signs of stampeding, the newcomer warned, "Easy. You don't like this any less than Uncle likes the way you've sold worthless oil stocks through the mails, but don't be foolish. Just come along peaceable."

"You spotted me this morning?" the colonel croaked.

"This morning? Why, no. I came to Jugtown on other business, and didn't know you were here. But I heard the story of a crooked colonel, a dog and a lease a while ago, and thought I'd drop in and see if Colonel Cotton mightn't be Colonel Devoe—and so he is."

"That hoddam hoodoo dog!"

The colonel shredded the words through his teeth as the postal inspector snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

So, hero or hoodoo? Lucky or unlucky? Jugtown couldn't agree as to which Boojum was. Mulligan favored the former, arguing that if Boojum hadn't kept Vander away from the colonel, that old crook might have regained the lease before Hosea learned that Major Pete wanted it, and there would have been no story to lead the postal inspector to the colonel.

For the cons, many said that Boojum was downright poison for the man owning him, pointing out the colonel in substantiation. Their stand was strengthened when Hosea, who'd always hankered for all the bananas he could eat, but never before had the money to satisfy his desire, consumed half a stalk of them and required the services of two doctors to unbend him and pump him out.

Major Petroleum, which had built a new rig and was drilling ahead on the old Gusho hole, took no sides in the controversy. Officials of the company simply gave orders to keep Hosea and Boojum to hell off the lease!

A TRADE attraction now welcome in the back room, Boojum was a part apart from these debates. Curled up in Mulligan's favorite chair, he was too full of choice cuts of beef to stir about and cast his shadow for good or evil, so the wildcat test well came to be regarded as a test for Boojum, too—one that would settle all arguments as to his being lucky or unlucky.

Of the outcome, Hosea entertained not the slightest doubt.

"Any day, now," he declared, "the ol' Lurky Purp'll come in boomin' an' gushin'. She'll fill mine an' Boojum's pockets wiff more money than we even got a'ready, an' I'll build us a house—"

"Don't spend more for it than you've got left of that five hundred," Gus Vander interrupted him, walking in. "In three days, they've hammered up bits making only twenty feet of hole. Looks like we're on a sort of granite dome, and we're shutting it down—hanging 'em on the wrenches. I guess," he added by way of kidding Hosea, "we shouldn't have called the lease the Lucky Pup."

"Boojum ain't unlurky!" Hosea yelled. "I don't care 'bout the money, but I won't stand folks callin' him that. You can't stop drillin' twell you strike erl out there."

"There's no chance for a well, Hosea," Vander said. "Now that it

can't do any harm, go out and see for yourself."

Which invitation Hosea accepted with alacrity. Shortly thereafter, he drove out of Jugtown in a rented buckboard, with Boojum roosting on the seat beside him.

Steam plumed from the boiler when Hosea pulled up beside the derrick, but the walking beam was idle. Open dinner-pails beside them, the driller and tool-dresser took their ease on a lazy-bench. So maybe it was the dinner-pails, or maybe that he disliked drilling crews in general that caused Boojum to jump from the buckboard to the derrick floor and head for the two men.

Climbing the derrick, the toolie howled, "Get 'im away!"

"Make the yellow hoodoo beat it," the driller ordered from his perch on top of the high drilling stool.

"I reckon Boojum don't like it 'cause you ain't drillin'," Hosea replied, and Boojum, delighted to have a couple of humans treed, barked and growled ferociously.

"Don't care if he don't like it," the driller swore. "We got orders to shut 'er down and take it easy till quitting time."

"Long as you're here, you might's well be peckin' away," Hosea reasoned. "You can't strike erl by just a-sottin' here."

"Stop shaking this stool!" the driller squawked. "You trying to shake me down so that hound can chew me like he did Vander?"

"Drillin' or chawin'? Which'd you druther?"

The driller cussed and gave Hosea his answer by calling to the toolie to climb down and throw in the clutch, assuring him, "The dog won't bother you while he's watchin' me up here."

"You can't tell *which* way that poolroom poodle's looking," the toolie called back down. "And besides, the view is a lot better from up here."

"I've seed how it's done," Hosea volunteered, pulling the clutch that set the steam engine rolling.

Five minutes. Ten. The driller cussed and let out screw, and the hollow echoes from the casing assumed a different note as the tools hammered at a softer formation than heretofore. The driller stopped cussing and let out more screw, and then a little more.

"Hey, the tools've stopped bouncing," the toolie called.

"There's gas!" the driller yelled. "You, Hosea, throw in the clutch. There's gas pouring outta the casing-head."

"Keep peckin'," Hosea ordered, giving the drilling stool a shake. "Gas don't count. It's black-erl we're lookin' fur."

"You hill-billy fool," the driller cried, seeing the slack in the drilling line, "she's blowing the tools back outta the hole. Run, you darn fool, run!"

HOSEA stood bewildered while the driller took off like a bird on the wing, the toolie let go all holds on the derrick and jumped into the slushpit, and oil and water began boiling out over the casinghead. It splashed Boojum and scared him and sent him yelping and running, and Hosea came to life and took out after him. Behind them sounded a rushing, rumbling roar, a shattering of wood as the tools were hurled up into the derrick, and then a dull *whump!* as the hot boiler ignited gas and oil.

Stopping at a safe distance. Hosea turned to behold a geyser of flame consuming the rig, and dense, elephantine clouds of black smoke billowing heavenward.

"Erl, Boojum—it's erl!" he screamed. "Oh, Boojum, you lurky, lurky lurky purp!"

"Lucky." The word was echoed by the hundreds who came out from Jugtown to look at the burning well.

"Lucky?" Gus Vander looked at the flames and figured the cost of subduing that mammoth torch and getting it on production.

"It was luck that Hosea and Boojum were responsible for drilling on through that caprock, or whatever it was," the man with Vander reasoned. "It was luck that the gas didn't bring up salt water instead of oil, even if it was unlucky that Hosea wouldn't let the driller shut down when that gas started heading up."

Others were arguing on all sides of them. Boojum was lucky, Boojum was unlucky. Boojum was so and so. The argument raged on, and Vander winced as Boojum's name and the word "luck" hammered his ears.

"It's another 'Unfinished Symphony'," he swore. and then snapped his fingers like a man with a sudden idea. Striding over where a crowd was packed around Hosea and Boojum, Vander elbowed his way through.

"Ol' Boojum," Hosea was orating, "is the lurkiest purp in the world. He knowed there was erl in the Lucky Purp well."

"Hosea," Vander said very sweetly. "Hosea, Boojum is right. Hosea, Boojum is wrong. He's lucky, he's unlucky—" Vander choked, and then bellowed, "But from now on, this lease ain't going to be blessed and cursed with the name of 'Lucky Pup'! You hear?"

"Shore, Mister Vander." Hosea nodded. "What's it gonna be?"

So that's how that lease, and later that big, new oil field came by such an odd name: Walking away. Vander shouted so that all might hear. "It's going to be the Unfinished Argument!"

Rustlers Still Ride the Range

IT is not unusual for Eastern tourists driving along the back-country roads of West Texas, New Mexico, or Arizona to come across crudely lettered signs nailed to trees reading as follows:

$1,000 REWARD
For Capture of Cattle Thieves
If You Catch Them Alive
We Won't Have No Trial

Most of these Easterners will stop, scan the poster, and then chuckle at the "stupidity" of these Westerners in trying to make people believe that rustlers still ride the range. But these signs do not lie, and they are not put there to make an impression upon tourists.

Cattle rustling is still big business in the West. But the methods used are not the slip-shod ones of sixty and

seventy years ago. The motor truck has supplanted the horse, and the tommy-gun the six shooter. Large gangs, with headquarters in Fort Worth, Austin, or Phoenix, roam the range in refrigerated trucks. As soon as a few isolated steers are found, the truck stops, several men get out, lasso the cattle, and *butcher and process them on the spot.* Then, the processed beef safely tucked away in the refrigerator compartments, the trucks speed away.

Western sheriffs are almost completely helpless against such tactics. Such a sheriff may have only five deputies to cover all crime in a county bigger than the State of Connecticut. Not only that, but the cattle owner may not miss his stolen steers until the next roundup.

Cattlemen are reverting to the direct action methods of the Old West to combat the current wave of lawlessness on the range. Police records will show very few rustlers caught and fewer convictions. But the records will show many unexplained killings, many unsolved disappearances. Bodies have been found rotting on the prairies, with bullets through their heads. Many men, of unsavory reputation, have suddenly disappeared, never to be heard from again.

The West still knows how to deal with its bad men. It seems they have again taken to the ways of their forebears. That is why there is less and less howling from cattlemen about rustling. They have the situation well in hand.

Salvation M'Shane

(Continued from page 35)

LORD'S leering face was covered with a heavy growth of gray beard, his nose and cheeks were bloodshot, his nautical attire was filthy. Lord had evidently been on a bender for a considerable time.

"Why, it's my old pal M'Shane," Lord hiccoughed. "I guessed you might be in these parts, you revenue rat. But where's that beard of yours, M'Shane? Where is that ladies' delight of yours? No, no, M'Shane, don't try it," he continued, as the captain tried to grab his gun. "I was looking for you. I was tipped off about you.

"I'll take your gun first, and then I'll let you know what I'm going to do with you, you dirty yaller turncoat."

With a yelp, M'Shane leaped forward, and at that precise instant another of the soaring birds came out of a thicket, bloodied his nose and sent him flop, and then returned gracefully upon its course. Lord thrust his gun into the pit of the captain's stomach and removed his automatic.

"You come along, Brandyboy," shouted Lord, and a grinning blackfellow emerged from the scrub, carrying what M'Shane now recognized as a couple of boomerangs.

"One on you, eh, M'Shane?" grinned Lord. "Clegg sent that fellow to look for me. I've been waiting for him some days. And I've got my blackbirds safe below-decks. You remember the old *Susie Ann*, M'Shane? You sailed aboard her before you took up religion, you rose of Jericho.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do with you, Salvation Shane," hiccoughed Lord. "You love the blacks, don't you. Well, I'm going to strip you to your red hide, and I'm going to turn you loose, just as God made you, in the sun and the rains, with maybe a bottle of brandy to keep you company. So strip them rags off!"

M'Shane was calm now. That was, of course, sentence of death, and yet even the long arm of Australian justice would never be able to learn anything from the discovery of M'Shane's skeleton. The captain glanced quickly about him. The edge of the cliff was barely a dozen feet behind him. On one side of the jutting edge lay the *Susie Ann*, her crew of three Kanakas staring up from her deck. On the other, nearer side was a sandy slope, a drop of perhaps a hundred feet into the creek.

M'Shane feigned to comply—then hurled himself backward.

Lord yelled. M'Shane heard the crack of his automatic; and then he was rolling down the slope, with Lord shouting from the top of the cliff, and aiming again. And then the warm waters of the creek submerged him.

HE rose up from a sludge of mud, decayed water-weeds and sprouting vegetation; he waded waist-deep through it to a little island in the middle of the creek. The sun had either set, or disappeared in the heart of the black rainstorm that had now blotted out all sight of ship and cliff He found ground with only a few inches of water on it, and sat down to think.

He had lost his automatic, his bun-

dle and his food. His situation wasn't a pretty one, but it was prettier than the one Lord had designed for him, for he still had his rain-soaked rags to cover him.

If he could take possession of the schooner by surprise, the situation would be reversed. It would be a one-man job, but the captain had tackled jobs as difficult before. Only, Lord was an old hand at the game, and he had at least three assistants and arms. And M'Shane had seen the snout of a gun beneath the tarpaulin, on the bow of the *Susie Ann*.

Suddenly the sun appeared again, almost on the horizon. M'Shane could see that there was nobody on the cliff. He began working his way along the island, until, at the extreme edge, he got the schooner into perspective.

And then he realized that Lord's situation was, in a way, as bad as his own. Lord was marooned, although a spit of high land connected the cliff with the schooner But all around were the swamps, and the trail by which M'Shane had come was already under water.

There was no hope for Lord's delivering those Kanakas till the next dry season. The only way open to him was retreat by way of the creek toward the sea.

And the creek was already wider than when M'Shane had first seen it. Lord would have to take soundings, and inch his way back, unless he wanted to run into a mud-bank and be stranded high and dry when the Wet ended.

As for M'Shane himself, there was no way out either. He would have to stay on this inlet until the floods submerged it, unless, of course, he chose to tackle the *Susie Ann*.

The captain was surveying the lie of the land when night fell. There being no twilight in that latitude, it dropped like a curtain, with the setting of the sun.

And suddenly the beam of a strong searchlight shot from the bow of the schooner. It must have been filched from some army store, for M'Shane had never seen anything like it before. It caught him full in the face and dropped him, sneezing, as if a bullet had struck him. Blinded, and groping in three feet of ooze and water, the captain heard Lord's voice bawling through a megaphone:

"Salvation Shane, by all that's holy! Ahoy there, shipmate! Are ye coming aboard? I'm ready with a rousing welcome for ye, shipmate!"

And a fusillade whipped the water, and slithered through the ooze.

LEAVING a dripping trail of slime, McShane prowled to and fro on on his island, until the day dawned.

The rain had ceased for nearly an hour, and now he could take his bearings in the light of the redhot sun.

His island had shrunk considerably. He had now a space of about fifty feet on which to promenade, and a width of about half that amount.. The ground beneath his feet was fairly solid, and the water, running off the ridge, left it comparatively dry. But it was not merely water that was flowing down the creek, it was a vast sheet of mud, burying everything beneath it.

M'Shane saw that, within a few days, he would be drowned in this sea of quicksmire, unless he found a way out of his difficulty.

A whine in the air, accompanied by a sharp retort, sent him flat on his face. Lord had fired a shell, for a

morning salutation. And Lord's derisive voice came faintly through his megaphone.

Lord evidently had his range. Whenever M'Shane showed himself, he would loose a volley at him. At intervals, when he took the notion, Lord would lob over another shell. But the shells fell harmlessly into the mud, merely throwing up miniature geysers

McShane revolved desperate schemes all through that day, while he crouched, starving, in a foxhole full of water, excavated by one of Lord's shells. He realized that his only chance was to take Lord by surprise. He couldn't figure out how that was to be done.

Toward afternoon he started to explore the cliff again. swimming toward its base, which had shrunk considerably since the day before. He was lucky to get through without another fusillade; Lord was probably drunk and asleep, but M'Shane knew that his crew would be on the alert.

He pulled himself up and began squirming up the rocks. Reaching a point about forty feet below the summit, he made a careful survey of the land.

He saw at once that there was no escape. The cliff was now entirely surrounded by a sheet of mud, littered with dead branches, through which the new growth was pricking up in vivid green.

But beyond this, about a quarter of a mile away, where the land sloped upward toward the hills, he saw something that made him blink and utter an expletive. He couldn't blink those two mounted figures away. They were Clegg and Bailey, come to collect the blackbirds. And there was no way in which they could traverse those swamps. They, too, were marooned. Everybody was marooned. But he alone was starving and weaponless.

A ROAR of fury broke from his lips. M'Shane went crazy. He ran to the top of the cliff and shook his fists at Clegg and Bailey; he turned and bellowed defiance at Lord.

"Come on and fight! I'll take ye all on, ye yellow-bellied hunks of Hades! Come on and fight!"

A bullet whistled past his head. On the desk of the *Susie Ann*, M'Shane saw Lord standing, aiming his rifle. M'Shane danced defiance at him.

"Ye bloody blackbird, ye ain't nothing but a cuckoo, an old hen coockoo!" he declaimed. "Yah!" as a slug passed his face on the other side. "Ye empty coconut, ye blind-staggered spavined gelding—and the Lord forgive me for handing him that one," ended M'Shane, ducking from side to side as the bullets passed him.

Lord, having emptied his rifle without effect, rushed to his bow, with the plain intent of firing the gun. But all the shells had been used. He turned upon one of his Kanakas with furious gestures, but M'Shane couldn't hear his words, for a sudden gust and pattering of rain blew them away. The Kanaka ran below for ammunition, and Lord, leaning against his gun, returned M'Shane's stare of defiance.

"Ye'll never hit me, ye old bunkered beachcomber," shouted M'Shane. "I'm waiting for ye to try—I'm waiting."

Although neither of them knew it, there was something almost approaching affection in this wordy war between the two old enemies. It is even possible that Lord had no intention of aiming straight. But this wouldn't

have decreased M'Shane's danger.

Suddenly, like a huge white bird against the thundercloud, something loomed into sight around the far end of the cliff. Something that made M'Shane's heart skip a beat, and then begin to pound.

Atop it loomed another, smaller bird, and behind it came on another. These were the foresail, jib and mainsail of his own schooner, glistening white, as they had been when M'Shane fitted them in Port Mahon.

Jumper had come.

"Look behind ye!" screamed M'Shane.

But Lord had seen and understood. As the Kanaka came stumbling up on deck, carrying a shell under each arm, Lord collided with him with a force that sent him flat to the deck, and the shells rolling into the scuppers.

THE frantic scene aboard the *Susie Ann might not have meant* much to a landsman, except that her occupants were like an ant colony whose hill has been kicked over. To the cynical eyes of M'Shane, watching from his cliff, it conveyed a perfectly clear explanation. Lord was trying to veer around in the channel of the creek, with the purpose of meeting Jumper bow on, where he could bring his gun into play against him.

His crew were running up the sails, while Lord stood making threatening gestures at them. To add to the confusion, the captive Kanakas had broken loose below, and were swarming up. In another moment Lord was in the midst of them, laying them out with a belaying-pin.

The captives, too terrified to unite against him, were plunging overboard. The surface of the creek was dotted with black heads of swimmers. On the deck a half-dozen lay stunned or writhing, while Lord raged to and fro like a demented man.

M'Shane looked back. Clegg and Bailey were still sitting their horses, watching; it was improbable that they had seen anything unusual from that distance. Most likely they had sent a messenger to Lord, and were waiting for his answer.

Out where the creek was broadest, Jumper was bringing the schooner into alignment, so as to train his gun upon the *Susie Ann*. Lord had his sails up, he was at the wheel, and the boat was heeling over in the freshening wind. But M'Shane, watching through the pelting rain, which was rapidly obscuring the sight of his enemy, suddenly uttered a yelp.

The *Susie Ann* was heeling over, but she wasn't moving Lord was stuck in the mud. The *Susie Ann* would never get off that bar until the Wet was over.

Jumper's gun belched, and a shell whined past her. Jumper had fired wide, as a signal for surrender.

And then, with a frightful roar, the storm descended, blowing M'Shane off his feet and halfway down the hill. Nothing was visible any more, and M'Shane could only cower with his hands on his face to protect it from the hail.

Yet his voice rose above the wind: "I've got ye now, Lord. You're beat. Surrender in the name of the Lord Jehovah and the Commonwealth of Australia!"

AS swiftly as it had arisen, the storm blew itself out. The sun burst through the clouds. The pano-

rama unveiled itself again—Lord on his deck, with his crew about him, and M'Shane's schooner, anchored in mid-channel, with her bow-gun trained on the *Susie Ann*.

Taking up the story where it had been discontinued, Jumper fired wide again.

And then another bird came fluttering out of the sky, toward Lord's ship. Larger and larger it grew, until M'Shane could see it was a plane. It hovered immediately above the *Susie Ann*, and began dropping down until it landed on her deck.

"Hell's blazing bilges, it's a helicopter!" shouted M'Shane.

In the bright sunlight, with the dark horizon clouds for background, all distances were foreshortened. M'Shane could distinguish the man in the white uniform of a Commonwealth officer, standing on the deck beside Lord, and, though he couldn't make out his face, he was convinced that he was Locke.

And, realizing that his enemy was about to escape him, M'Shane remained silent and motionless, staring at the incomprehensible dénouement.

Jumper, understanding what was occurring, fired no shot. Even the sails of M'Shane's schooner ceased to flutter. A deathly stillness had succeeded the former confusion.

Lord stepped into the helicopter, but, before he did so, he turned to wave derisively toward M'Shane. Locke stepped in before him. Lord leaned out to hit one of his Kanaka crew in the face as he tried to follow suit, and sent him spinning. And slowly the helicopter rose into the air, circled above the cliff, and winged its way north-westward.

Open-mouthed, M'Shane watched its flight until it had vanished in the distance.

"A judgment," he pronounced. "A judgment on me for the use of swearing and profane language. A judgment for my sin of pride in not offering Locke a drink when he came aboard me at Port Mahon. O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast humbled me—and I petition Thee with contriteness of heart that I may meet that bloody bilge-barrel of iniquity again!"

"YE see, melad," M'Shane explained to Jumper, "ye're not to blame. Ye did what was expected of ye. But Lord must have got word to Clegg that he was stuck in the mud and needed aid, and Clegg got that helicopter from Port Mahon to take him off. Of course Lord would have put his blackbirds ashore first, but maybe the helicopter came too quick, and then you and me had him rattled. That blackfaced babirusa's got copra in his head instead of brains.

"I dunno if Locke suspected just who Lord is, or what his job here was. They're a new, dumb lot at Port Mahon. And maybe they didn't want to guess too hard, since Clegg seems to own just about everything up there.

"But don't you worry, Jumper. We've done our job, and all we got to do now is to find them blackbirds, and that'll be up to you, to make 'em know we're friends. We'll git a bonus for this, and then all we'll have to do will be to lay up and take things easy—you comprenny melad?"

"Plenty booze, plenty *lubra?*" asked Jumper hopefully.

"Plenty salvation," roared M'Shane. "I'm going to drill the word of God into your thick head as I never drilled it yet."

Long Pig

(Continued from page 51)

arms, and his lips were on hers. "You won't marry him?"

"Never, never! I'll never marry anyone but you. But he's going out to—to Bongi, and I can't tell him now. Maybe—maybe he'll be shipwrecked, or—or eaten by those cannibals. While there's life there's hope, darling."

"And when will you marry me? Listen, darling, I get a month's vacation on September first. Will you elope with me then? We can be married quietly, and notify your family by wire."

"I—I couldn't elope in September, Jim. Not until the last part, anyway. You see, all the diplomatic receptions, and the Siamese Ambassador has promised me one of his kittens, and—Oh, Jim, make it October."

"Listen, darling, will you meet me in Ponci's ice-cream parlor tomorrow afternoon at five, so we can talk it over?"

"There she is! Who's that fellow?"

It was Winthrop Bryson, accompanied by Tillotson Saunders, looking very slim, elegant, and diplomatic in his white evening clothes. Recognition was instantaneous.

"So it's you! Stealing about my grounds in the dark, instead of coming to the door like a man, if you had anything to say to me!" Winthrop Bryson thundered.

"Well, I've got this to say to you," shouted Jim. "I'm going to marry Emily. She loves me, and you can't force her into a hateful marriage!"

"Rather a strong statement," drawled Tillotson Saunders, in his best diplomatic manner.

"You keep away from my daughter, or I'll break you!" shouted Winthrop Bryson.

"You will? You think you can? Well, you're not so hot with the Moguls," said Jim. "You try to break me, and I'll crack that Krak of yours—split him wide open. Emily, darling, tell them what you've just told me."

But Emily had disappeared, and only a line of sobs traced her movements in the darkness. Tillotson Saunders, with a whispered word, took Winthrop Bryson by the arm and led him away.

SHE wasn't at the ice-cream parlor. Jim had been afraid she wouldn't turn up. Although he loved Emily madly, he recognized that she possessed all the weakness of her sex. She loved him, too, but she was easily swayed. What seemed to be the culmination of the affair was the announcement of her engagement to Tillotson Saunders, which appeared in the press the second day after Jim's futile visit.

Under a two-column photograph of Emily was the news that the daughter of Winthrop Bryson had plighted her troth to the young diplomat, Tillotson Saunders, who was on a mission to the South Seas. The marriage was to be celebrated immediately on his return.

"Too bad, Jim," said the head of his section, who knew all about the affair. It wasn't so much sympathy for Jim

as hatred for Winthrop Bryson that prompted him.

"If I could get that Krak, I'd feel better about it," said Jim moodily.

"Not a chance of it. Saunders will go after Bilbo hammer and tongs, for the sake of his prospective father-in-law. America will disown her treaty with Bilbo, and put him back where he belongs—all on account of that stuffed shirt in the Islands Government Section. No, Jim, we'll have to make the best of it, and try to get after Bryson in some other way."

Days ran into weeks. A desperate letter that Jim wrote to Emily was returned to him unopened. There didn't seem to be any hope at all.

Then came shattering news from Bongi. Tillotson Saunders had been taken prisoner by Bilbo, who threatened his immediate death if action were taken against him. Krak, the paramount chief, enraged at American duplicity, as he termed it, had declined to interfere. What was to be done?

The blow brought Winthrop Bryson and Jim into contact once again. Whatever happened, Saunders must not be allowed to die. They asked the navy.

"The fellow's a fool to have let himself get taken," snorted the navy. "Why didn't he get Krak and Bilbo together, like he was told to?"

The explanation came in a later dispatch from the commissioner: "I have now ascertained that both Bilbo and Krak have been secret cannibals for years. Krak has admitted that fact to me, and alleges that the impossibility of obtaining meat on Bongi is at the bottom of this lamentable condition. I gather that Krak and Bilbo were planning a feast of reconciliation, and that Mr. Saunders was to be the *pièce de résistance*. Please cable instructions immediately."

Next day another dispatch arrived: "I have now ascertained that Saunders is to be sacrificed on the night of the next new moon. Diplomacy useless. Military intervention would merely precipitate the disaster. What shall I do?"

THE news had leaked out that an American diplomat was being held by cannibals. Jim Willis was the only person who failed to share the popular indignation. He could hardly wait for the next new moon. Officialdom was completely at a loss. The commissioner, instructed to buy Saunders back from Krak and Bilbo, now happily allied, cabled that nothing could move them. Threats, gifts, were equally futile. They hadn't tasted fresh white meat for years, and were resolved to proceed with their plan of a "long pig" barbecue.

A note from Emily brought Jim hurrying out to Golden Glow one evening. He found her in tears. "It's so terrible, about poor Tillotson," she wept. "You've got influence, Jim; you will do something to try to save him, won't you?"

"Yes, my boy," boomed Winthrop Bryson, who had been listening in the hall, and now came striding into the room. "In the face of this calamity, the past must be forgotten. You and I must cooperate, and think up some plan for saving the poor fellow."

"I don't know that I'm as enthusiastic as you are," Jim admitted. "You see, Emily—"

"A very natural and human feeling, but we must close our ranks in the face of this threat to the Civil

Service. Let bygones be bygones, Willis."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Jim. "If we succeed in rescuing Saunders, Emily must be left to make her unfettered choice between us when he returns."

"Eh? Why—why, they're engaged. To break the engagement would—er—subject me to ridicule. Besides, my daughter is a woman of her word."

"I merely ask that she be given the unfettered choice," said Jim.

"Dad, accept Mr. Willis's terms, for poor Tillotson's sake," pleaded Emily.

"Very well—very well, I agree," responded Winthrop Bryson. And Jim's heart went down into his boots. He guessed that Saunders's captivity, and the awful fate awaiting him, had stirred a new, romantic interest in Emily's bosom.

No hope, no hope! He had been hoisted with his own petard.

"But have you any plan?" asked Winthrop Bryson.

THE plan had been Bill Cannon's. It didn't seem to be a very good plan, but the Department of Mandated Islands liked it, and the Islands Government Section were almost enthusiastic. Fortunately there were still three weeks before the new moon, and a fast ship could reach Bongi well within that time. As to the nature of the plan—well, the commissioner cabled:

"Have seen both Krak and Bilbo, and they agree that roast pork tastes better than roast white man. Have kindled their enthusiasm with descriptions of the largest and fattest porker in America, but are sceptical. If porker arrives before the full moon, Saunders will be released, otherwise must suffer his fate. Stop.

"Have tried to impress on them the vengeance that must fall upon them in the event of carrying out their sinister plans, but without success, since no punitive expedition has ever been sent against Bongi. I did succeed in interviewing Mr. Saunders, who is being confined in the same pit that Mr. Burroughs formerly occupied. He is looking extremely fit, and is confident that his government will save him."

And by this time Mr. P had been located in the Mississippi Delta. He had been torn from his human family, from the weeping girls and the twice-mortgaged farmer. He was being freighted north, acclaimed by enthusiastic crowds, who were kept in ignorance of his destination. For, after all, it would hardly do—Winthrop Bryson had been insistent upon his destination being kept strictly secret.

Bill Cannon knew, of course, for it had been his idea, and the story would have been a juicy one, but Bill recognized the responsibilities of his profession. The secret was quite safe.

If Jim secretly hoped that the ship would be wrecked on the voyage, he admitted the unworthiness of his sentiments. When Saunders returned the test would come, and he would abide by the result loyally. Meanwhile, at the request of Winthrop Bryson, who now called him "my dear fellow," he abstained from any attempts to see Emily.

The vessel wasn't shipwrecked. Her location was cabled every day to both the rival departments. And it was soon evident that she would outrace that slowly waning moon.

She reached Bongi with three days

to spare. The commissioner cabled that he had succeeded in seeing Saunders again, who looked extremely fit, but complained of his cramped accommodations. He had also aroused considerable anticipation in the breasts of Krak and Bilbo.

Really, things were going so well that he believed the dispute could be settled amicably at the feast.

Next day another dispatch: "Have got the porker off along the trail on a wheeled sled with a dozen porters. Have high hopes of success."

And, the day after: "Saunders released. Both chiefs delighted with substitution. Love feast tonight, and I think all will be well."

From the *Washington Post:* "Manila, Sept. 14. Mr. Tillotson Saunders, who has been on a mission for the Government to Gongi, sailed from here for home today."

FOR all the affectation of gaiety, it was a tense little party that awaited Tillotson Saunders for dinner at Golden Glow. Winthrop Bryson puffed nervously at his cigar. His wife, aglitter with jewels, sat with eyes strained upon the door, and ears eager for the sound of an approaching motor-car. Emily sat primly on a straight chair, and Jim was watching her from across the room.

It was the first time they had met since the encounter by the rhododendron clump, and they had hardly spoken to each other. Jim knew it was likely to be their last meeting. He had made his own conditions, and he must abide by them. Emily loved him, but, forced to decide between her rival suitors, she would take the line of least resistance.

The sound of an approaching car was heard. It stopped outside the door. The engine was wheezing. Jim had never heard an engine wheeze like that before.

Footsteps upon the stairs. Mrs. Bryson seemed to be suffering from pokerback.

"Mr. Tillotson Saunders!" announced the butler. And Tillotson Saunders came into the room. That wheezing had been his. He came in—no, rolled in, his little legs supporting a balloon-like body. There were rolls of fat under his chin, and fatty pouches beneath his eyes.

"Welcome, my dear fellow! How well you're look—"

Even Winthrop Bryson, diplomat though he was, was nonplussed at the sight. The words died on his lips. His face set flintily. At last he realized that he had been made ridiculous, and that was something that he would never tolerate.

Emily uttered a faint cry, and tottered across the room to Jim, who put his arms about her.

"Dinner is sairved, madame," observed the butler-gardener-chauffeur.

Rats Never Learn

(Continued from page 75)

understand. Erich has been in England. He has been in London. He knows the Edgware Road, and the Marble Arch. He is a little disturbed in mind now, but he will get over it, and realize that I am his friend."

Dorothy laughed scornfully. "He is going to put you to work," she said. "All those little hard things he brought in his plane, that are shot from guns—he is going to make the people pick them up and put them in bags. Then they are going to cross the water and carry them to the Germans who live over there."

She swept her arm in the direction of the mainland.

"And you are going to head our people, because you can speak their language. We shall all be killed by the people across the water, and, if they do not kill us, he will kill us when he is through with us.

"I heard him telling Fatima. I do not know how he is going to cross the water, but he has a great deal of magic, and can do almost anything he wants to. Now, are you going to kill him? I have sharpened the pig-knife for you."

"He is my friend," groaned Catesby. "I cannot do that. And I must tell him there is no way across the water—"

An uproar from his hut broke in upon his speech. The roars of Erich, the shrieks of Fatima. Dorothy turned and ran back through the darkness.

It was dawn when a figure came slinking into the hut, and Catesby recognized Fatima. In the dim light, he could see bloody welts about her shoulders, and her face was bruised and bleeding.

"He has thrown me out," she wailed. "He said I am an old woman, and he has no need of me any more."

She crouched before him, and clasped her arms about his knees. Catesby bent forward and stroked her hands—the sign of forgiveness.

FOR three days the natives had labored, picking up the cartridges that were strewn in the sand, and among the stones of the beach. Nearly all the cases had been burst open, and the cartridges ruined by the lake water, but here and there a case was found containing unspoiled ammunition, so that, at the end of the third day, several large palm-fibre bags had been collected.

Erich's spirits were rising swiftly. His leg was almost well now. It would be a long march through the jungle, but the boys would carry everything, and there should be ammunition enough to enable the settlers to carry out their project of rising against the English.

When a boy made a discovery of good ammunition, he rewarded him with a drink. Failure to register meant several cuts from the pigskin whip which Erich had fashioned. He plied this indiscriminately upon the backs and shoulders of all, but especially on Catesby's.

The first time Catesby felt the lash descend on him, he looked up like a beaten dog; his lip trembled, and he couldn't contain his sobs. Erich roared with laughter. The Englishman's devotion struck him as supremely grotesque. His grief appealed to the brutal element in the Superman.

Three dozen boys had been routed out from the jungle, and among these an idea was spreading. They knew that by his magic the white king would enable them to cross the water afoot, but they meant to go very charily until they had seen him do it. And the idea was spreading that this was to be a test between the power of the new king and that of the old.

By the end of the third day Erich had sufficient ammunition for his needs. He was tired of the island; he wanted to get on with his mission.

"Tomorrow at dawn we start," he told Catesby. "Tell your boys, if any of them deserts, he'll be flogged to death."

Catesby opened his mouth, then closed it again. He was torn between the desire to rid himself of Erich and the wish to save his life, because he was his friend.

"You can have your woman back," Erich added. "I'm taking the little one with me instead. She's a child, but she'll grow up quickly."

He leered at Dorothy, who had come into the room. Only then did Catesby grow implacable. His child—who should be worth enough silver to take him back to England, when Abdul Hassan arrived.

"Get out!" snarled Erich. "You come here," he said to Dorothy.

ALL night the equinoctial gale had lashed the surface of Nyanza, piling up dense masses of *sudd* in the strait, driving the fish for refuge in the deeper water there. The crocodiles

came swarming from all parts of the lake to enjoy their feast. But warm-blooded creatures were tastier morsels —when they could get them.

Young ducks, for instance, swimming on the surface, or even newborn hippopotamus calves. Tastiest of all were native girls who came down to the lake for water. The monstrous jaws would clamp down on them, and drag them under the surface till they were drowned; then the bodies would be thrust into some rock cavity until they were in prime condition for the saurian palate.

All through the night Catesby shivered, listening to the storm, and thinking of the morrow. The wind died down before the dawn, and the sun rose red in the sloud-piled east.

Catesby rose. Already the natives were gathering from their huts. They began filling their palm-fibre bags with the cartridges. When filled, a bag constituted a formidable burden. In addition there were the sleeping blankets and supplies of food.

Erich came reeling out of the house, singing a good old German song. He saw the waiting group, and changed it to the Horst Wessel.

"Get busy!" he shouted, swinging his whip. He cracked it about the shoulders of the dilatory. "Get your men in line, English swine!"

Catesby saw Dorothy come out of the house. The girl slipped to Erich's side and stood there, looking up at him inscrutably.

Catesby ran to Erich, screaming, "Let my girl go, Erich! Then I will serve you loyally. I will do everything you wish. But don't take her. I have brought her up for Abdul Hassan—"

The whip flicked about Catesby's shoulders. "Get your men into line!" Erich shouted. "Forward, now! March!"

The long file of black men started along the beach, their burdens balanced on their heads, chanting a doleful song. Catesby headed them, and Erich and Dorothy brought up the rear.

THE isthmus was about a half-mile in width. It was covered with young trees and lush with waving grasses. Here and there were patches of palm scrub. Beyond it was the mainland. On either side of it, arranged in geometrical pattern, as if a farmer had planted them, were the snouts of the crocodiles.

Erich came striding up, shouting, "What's the matter? What are they waiting for?" He raised his whip menacingly, and Catesby cringed.

"They are afraid," said Catesby. "They think the men on the other side are devils. They will not cross unless you lead them."

"Imbeciles! Pigs!" Erich waved to the long line of black men, and strode on.

"Erich! If you leave me my daughter—" quavered Catesby. "Erich, my friend, wait—wait—"

With a furious curse Erich strode on over the *sudd*. At a distance of about fifty feet he stopped. This was marshy ground. There might be quick-mud. Yes, the swamp was already over his ankles.

Too late he realized that he was trapped. He tried to turn, but the clinging masses of half-rotten vegetation caught him about the ankles, about the calves, about the knees. And screams broke from his lips as he re-

alized that what he had thought dry land was only a film above the water.

"Phil, save me!" broke from his lips in a despairing wail.

He was thigh-deep in the clinging mass, which was breaking up under his weight. Beneath him, between the fibres of the vegetation, he could see the water of the lake. His feet had broken through, and were now dangling in it.

He grasped at a young palm, for purchase. The tree toppled over upon its side, imprisoning Erich beneath the roots. He fought in a spray of scummy water, churned up by his struggles.

The lake-swell rocked him gently to and fro as he struggled. The *sudd* was like a cradle on the surface of the lake. He was like a baby tangled in the bed-clothes.

He could see the long file of silent black men, watching him, Catesby and Dorothy, mute spectators at the edge of the sudd. And then he was conscious of a movement in the sudd, all about him. From every side the crocodiles were coming up.

They moved with hardly a rustle of the grasses, huge, scaly monsters from ten to twenty feet in length, their snouts agape. Cowardly beasts, they dared not attack save by surprise, or when their victim was helpless.

Scream after scream broke from the doomed man, as he threshed wildly in the growth. So long as he threshed, the crocodiles remained motionless; when he was forced to rest, they moved imperceptibly closer.

Suddenly the end came. Simultaneously the monsters pounced. There was a furious flurry as they fought over the remnants of their prey, and then the heaving *sudd* was still. It drifted together over the hole that

had been torn in it. Not a crocodile was to be seen, and there was not the slightest indication that a superman had ever passed that way.

HOWLS of delight rose from three hundred throats. The tribal headman prostrated himself at Catesby's feet. He had vindicated his magic, and he was restored to power again. But Catesby stood staring out over the *sudd*, and shaking like a palsied man.

"He was my friend," he mumbled. "He would have become all right again. I had to let him drown—like the rats in the pail, who never learned—"

Far away in the bush sounded the thudding of a drum. This was unusual; only the most important communications were ever relayed by day. It was not the solemn tolling of the years that had announced the pledge between Catesby and Abdul Hassan in former times, but a sort of joyous thudding. Catesby, wise in the lore of the drums, listened.

He turned to Dorothy, who had already assumed a posture of dignity. "He comes for you," he said.

"I know it."

"You are glad, child?"

"I am glad to be Abdul Hassan's bride."

And Catesby's heart grew light again. He must bargain for much silver at the ceremonial meal. He wondered if the old, white-haired governor was still in charge of Pentonville.

Streamlined Tin-Fish

THE captain of the giant new Japanese battleship is standing erect on the bridge of his once proud command. There are streams of tears cursing down his hard, impassive face. Although others are crowding lifeboats in a desperate effort to be saved, he stands motionless, surveying with grim irony the bitter end that is his. For him there is only the slow, suffocating death of the sea. To attempt escape with his men would be loss of face. Besides, even if he managed to avoid a watery grave, he would still not elude the call to his ancestors. His severe code of "honor" demands that he die, for his lack of success has cost Hirohito a proud new warship. If he does not die by the sea, then he must die by hara kari. There is no alternative.

Just before leaving the world of the living, the Jap captain reflects upon the efficiency of the American submarine. They had told him in Tokyo that no American torpedo was big enough to penetrate the extra-thick armor. They had told him also his ship was much too fast for those American submarines ever to catch. But they had been wrong, because his ship was sunk, and he was dying.

It was an American torpedo that sank the Jap battleship, one that weighed almost a ton, and was twenty-four feet long and twenty-one inches in diameter. Nor was it an inexpensive plaything, because it had cost $15,000. It was a streamlined chunk of dynamite that, powered by a four hundred horsepower compressed air engine raced through the water at a

speed of better than fifty knots.

Although torpedoes have reached their most advanced stage of perfection in this war, they are by no means a novelty in the history of naval warfare.

The first torpedoes, which were used in the days of Sir Francis Drake, were simple kegs of powder fastened to enemy ships by daring crews, who from a safe distance detonated the explosives by long wires attached to the kegs. These original torpedoes had much in common with our present day mines.

But it is a far cry to the present-day torpedo, which is the ultimate in cold scientific precision. Its stubby bow, and long, tapering stern and double propellers, carries about six-hundred pounds of TNT. The intricate mechanisms which drive, guide, balance, and detonate the torpedo are set into action by triggers tripped off when the missile is shot from its tube. A direct hit will spell the briny deep for most ships, and new submarines are equipped with as many as ten torpedo tubes. Actually, they carry many more than this number on board. The safety of the crew, therefore, must be insured by many devices. For example, the firing pin is not released for action until the tiny propeller shafts have revolved a calculated number of times.

A new twist has been added to torpedoes. They are sometimes made with magnetic steel, so that when they are fired at a ship, they are attracted to its steel hull, where the propeller vibrations detonate the explosive. The TNT charge usually disables the propeller of the victim vessel, which is then open to point blank attack,

CAN VITAMINS RESTORE NATURAL COLOR TO YOUR GRAY OR STREAKED HAIR?

Here's how you can test the amazing Panates 2-Way Double Action Anti-Gray Hair Vitamin Treatment and Get Satisfactory Results or Get Your Money Back for the Asking.

You've read and heard about the latest miracle of vitamin science—the anti-gray hair vitamins. Now test the original double action anti-gray hair vitamin formula, PANATES, on a trial offer so fair it calls for immediate acceptance.

NOTHING TO FEAR . . .

REMEMBER, PANATES ISN'T A HAIR DYE. You can test PANATES whether you now artificially color your hair or not, because Anti-Gray Hair Vitamins act from underneath. Soon you may notice you need less and less hair coloring. But let me tell you what this amazing discovery is, how it works, and why so many thousands of women and men who once accepted the double vitamin PANATES treatment, this same trial offer, now continue with PANATES because of the changes in hair color they see taking place.

Tests reported by a national magazine on small groups of gray-haired women and men, ranging in ages from 21 to 60, while too recent for conclusive evidence, have shown startling results. These people were given fairly large doses of certain vitamins, and in from 1 to 6 months 88% of them showed first signs of results.

Previously, tests with animals showed that when these animals did not get these vitamins in their daily food, their hair turned white. Then, when they were fed adequate amounts of these vitamins, their hair became natural in color again.

The tests on people showed that age had no bearing on the results. The quickest action was obtained by a man in his fifties. The man's hair started to turn from gray to a natural black in only one short month. The slowest case was a girl in her twenties. It took 6 months for her to get any signs of results.

Panates give not only the anti-gray hair vitamins, but wheat germ oil (Vitamin E) as well. Panates actually is a healthful food supplement. It works by giving your system a source for the hair color vitamins that may be lacking in your daily diet and, if so, should literally feed natural color through the hair roots to check gray spread, to give the hair new lively lustre, and to bring new hope for restoration of normal hair color once again. While too new to guarantee 100% results, we can and do make a very fair money back trial offer. We are certainly making it easy for you to test PANATES Treatment yourself to see what PANATES' two vitamins may do for you in your fight for the happiness of lovely looking natural hair color beauty.

PANATES SAFE! No Mess, No Fuss

PANATES is absolutely harmless. It is a natural way to seek natural hair color. It is concentrated food elements, vitamins. PANATES action is simply by supplying to the system a source for certain healthful vitamins which may be lacking in your own daily diet. You can test PANATES in the confidence these vitamins are taken by countless thousands the nation over.

SEND NO MONEY . . . TEST AT OUR RISK

Send coupon for either the $1.79 (30-day) or $4.79 (90-day) Panates Anti-Gray Hair and Wheat Germ Oil (E) Vitamins. You need send no money, but pay postman on arrival on the positive guarantee results must please you or money back. Send remittance with your order and we pay postage. Or, you are invited to check the coupon for a free booklet which tells much about Anti-Gray Hair Vitamins. Whatever you send for, do it now. Don't let another day pass without taking steps to see what Panates Anti-Gray Hair Vitamins with Wheat Germ Oil supplement, the two-way double action treatment, may do for you. Mail the coupon, today.

FREE BOOKLET "Vitamins and Gray Hair"

The amazing story of Anti-Gray Hair Vitamin research and discoveries has been compiled in a very interesting and valuable booklet. If your hair is gray, graying, streaked, or off-color and lifeless looking, send for this wonderful booklet. It is yours free. Mail coupon today.

Remember, this day may be the happiest day in your life. Now it is quite possible a lack of anti-gray hair vitamins in your diet may be causing your gray hair . . . it is quite possible that simply by improving your diet and by taking small, harmless concentrated food vitamins each day, you may not only check the gray spread but actually change much of the gray, old looking, streaked off-color hair back to lovely original color . . . natural color. You take no chances. Our money back guarantee is your protection. Now, today, mail the coupon. Who knows . . . perhaps gloriously soon your hair will show first signs of being restored to its original youthful color! But it's up to you. Act . . . mail the trial coupon today.

PANATE COMPANY, Dept. A256
310 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

MAIL THIS SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY COUPON TODAY!

PANATE COMPANY, Dept. A-256
310 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Send PANATES (2-way) Anti-Gray Hair Vitamins plus the Wheat Germ Oil (Vitamin E) as checked in square opposite. I will pay postman, plus postage, on arrival on your money back guarantee. (If you send money with your order, PANATES pays all postage charges.)

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(Print plainly)

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HOW YOU TEST AT OUR RISK
Read Our Guarantee Please

Now you can test amazing PANATES yourself on our iron-clad guarantee. If you are not satisfied with results from the first treatment, you send for your money back on return of the empty package. Don't wait. This is your chance to try PANATES, the Anti-Gray Hair Vitamin treatment that also gives you Wheat Germ Oil (Vitamin E). Mail this special trial coupon today.

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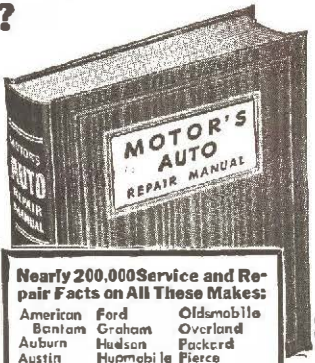

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Why pay $5 or $10 for a barometer when you can predict the weather yourself, at home, 8 to 24 hours in advance, with this accurate, inexpensive Weather House forecaster? It's made like a little Swiss cottage, with a thatched green roof and small green shutters. Inside the house is an old witch and a little boy and girl. When the weather's going to be fine, the little boy and girl come out in front. But when bad weather is on the way the old witch makes an appearance. There is an easy-to-read thermometer on the front of the cottage that shows you the exact temperature . . . . Here is positively the most amazing introductory advertising offer ever made. But you must act quickly—prices may rise.

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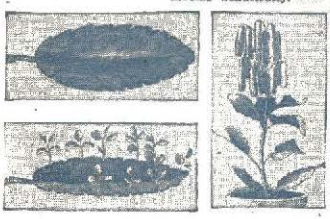
The greatest novelty plant ever discovered! Tradition is—a person owning one of these plants will have much good luck and success. When planted in earth, it grows two feet tall and blooms beautifully.



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"I saw your Weather House at a friend's home and the way they raved about it, I decided to order one for myself." Mrs. L. E., Chicago, Illinois.

"Ever since I got my Weather House I've been able to plan my affairs a day ahead. It's wonderful." Mrs. D. L. B., Shenandoah, Iowa.

SEND NO MONEY

When your Weather House arrives just deposit through your Postman $1.69 (your total cost), plus postage. Then test the Weather House for accuracy. Watch it closely, see how perfectly it predicts the weather in advance, then if you don't agree it's worth many dollars more than the small cost, simply return your Weather House within 10 days and get your money back promptly.

Almost every day of your life is affected in some way by the weather, and it's such a satisfaction to have a reliable indication of what the weather will be. With the "Swiss" Weather House made in the U. S. A. and easy-to-read thermometer you have an investment in comfort and convenience for years to come. The Weather House comes to you complete and ready to use. Ideal for gifts and bridge prizes. It will bring new pleasure to everyone in your family. The price is only $1.69 C. O. D. You must act now to secure this price.

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The Weather Man, Dept. SB
29 East Madison Street,
Chicago, Illinois

10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

Send at once (1) "Swiss" Weather House. On arrival I will pay postman $1.69 plus postage with the understanding that the Weather House is guaranteed to work accurately. Also I can return the Weather House for any reason within 10 days and get my money back.

☐ Send C. O. D. ☐ I enclose $1.69. You Pay Postage.

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