The YOUTH'S COMPANION
combined with
American
December
1931

Merrie Merrie Christmas

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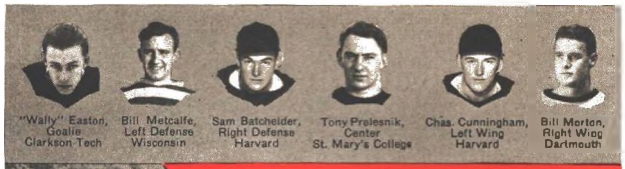

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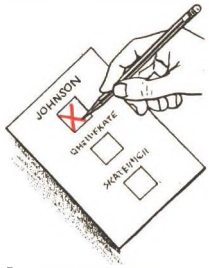

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The YOUTH'S COMPANION combined with American Boy — Founded 1827

Detroit Michigan

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The boy looked up with dimmed eyes. "I—I killed Steven," he choked.

Even-Steven

By Emma-Lindsay Squier

Illustrated by H. Weston Taylor

WARMING California sunshine, tang of December in the air, a dusty mountain road leading away from Sacramento—an old man plodding steadily, with sturdy defiance for age and the tiredness he was feeling.

He had been walking thus since early morning. The stamp of the "Old Prospector" was on him; his abundant hair was grizzled, and a dilapidated black felt hat was pushed far back from his forehead. In his eyes, crinkly and blue, was that incurable look of the adventurer who always expects something just around the curve in the road. His clothes were frayed and shabby; his dusty boots were patched in so many places that it was hard to tell where the original leather had started. His steady plodding tread was accompanied by the jingle of pans and the clatter of a dangling short-handled pick and a miner's shovel hung above them.

He had long ago left the highway for a narrow, dusty road. Below the slope of the hill he could catch a glimpse now and then of a wide, brawling stream. He had panned for gold in it many times. But the country, though familiar, had a strangely alien feel. It was like meeting an old friend after a lapse of many years, to find that something intimate and glamorous has escaped.

The warmth of the day was gradually giving way to a wintry chill that presaged the coming of night. The old prospector stopped, shivering a little, and adjusted the knapsack on his back.

"Shanty," he said aloud after the manner of one who has lived much alone, "it's jest a plain fool ye are! With Christmas only a few days off, and goose an' trimmin's at the Poor Farm, ye had to break yer parole like, and become a fugitive! Shame be to ye, Shanty, as can't be a pauper in the proper spirit, but must be takin' to the road again!"

He sighed, and turned over a vagrant piece of quartz with the toe of his boot, scanning it with the look of one who sees in every wayside rock a potential gold mine. Then his eye caught the angle of a roof, down at the foot of the hill on the other side of the stream, almost hidden by the rusty yellowing of sycamores and cottonwood trees. The sight of it lifted his spirits suddenly.

"'Tis a shack, sure as ye're born! 'Twill have plenty o' rats infestin' it, but belike they won't mind sharin' it with ye fer one night—or mayhap two. . . ."

He turned off the narrow road and pushed his way down through a mass of clustering bracken. The tumbling stream that barred his way for the moment was riotous, swollen by the autumn rains. There were sharp-pointed bowlders strewn across it, and he stepped warily, while the water churned close to his feet.

The cabin stood in a clearing once ample size, but now encroached on by a younger generation of cottonwood trees assuming squatters' rights. He went around to the front. The windows were dusty, and the holes in them had been stuffed with rags. The door sagged on its hinges.

But as a twig snapped under his foot, there came from within the sound of something moving. And then Shanty stood still, looking into the twin barrels of a gun poked through a broken pane of glass.

"Stand where you are!" The voice was muffled, but shrill with a frightened defiance. "I'll shoot—"

The old man felt an instant of unpleasant tingling

along his spine. Then he chuckled, and scratched his head under the battered brim of the hat.

"Seems as if manners ain't changed after all, even if times has! 'Scuse me, pard—I wasn't after jumpin' yer claim. It's jest a bit chilly that I was, and—"

"Aren't you from the Orphanage?" the unseen voice demanded, a little louder.

Shanty's jaw dropped.

"From the Orphanage! Do I look *that* young?"

There was a moment of silence. Then the gun was drawn inward. A face appeared behind the dusty window pane—a smudged young countenance, with eyes that were like great black holes, and hair that even in the waning light showed brick red.

Shanty drew in his breath sharply. "Saints above—it's only a lad! Come out, son. Are ye lost, or what?"

Again there was a silence. Then a bar dropped, and the door opened cautiously, creaking on rusty hinges. Shanty was staring at a sturdy figure, at a boy who might have been a replica of himself at 16. The youth's square face was pinched and thin above his blue overalls. He clutched his gun with a grip that made knuckles show whitely. But as he stared into the kindly, twinkling-eyed face, some of the strain went out of his own, and a little quiver came into his lips.

"I—I guess you're all right, Mister. Sorry I pointed the gun at you." Then a grin suddenly illumined the face. "It's not really loaded," he admitted.

Shanty grinned back.

"'Twas not such a monster of a fright ye gave me. . . . I've looked into gun barrels before—as *was* loaded! But what are ye doin' here, lad, miles away from anywhere?"

The boy's shadowed brown eyes took on a defiant gleam. His mouth set firmly.

"I ran away—from the Orphanage!"

Shanty burst out laughing.

"Saints upon us! Two of us as has the same idee! I'm a truant meself, lad, and they're callin' me bad names this minute, I've no doubt! Well . . . could ye be givin' me the loan o' yer roof the night? Sure the climate's changed since I was out this way last, and me bones are feelin' the chill."

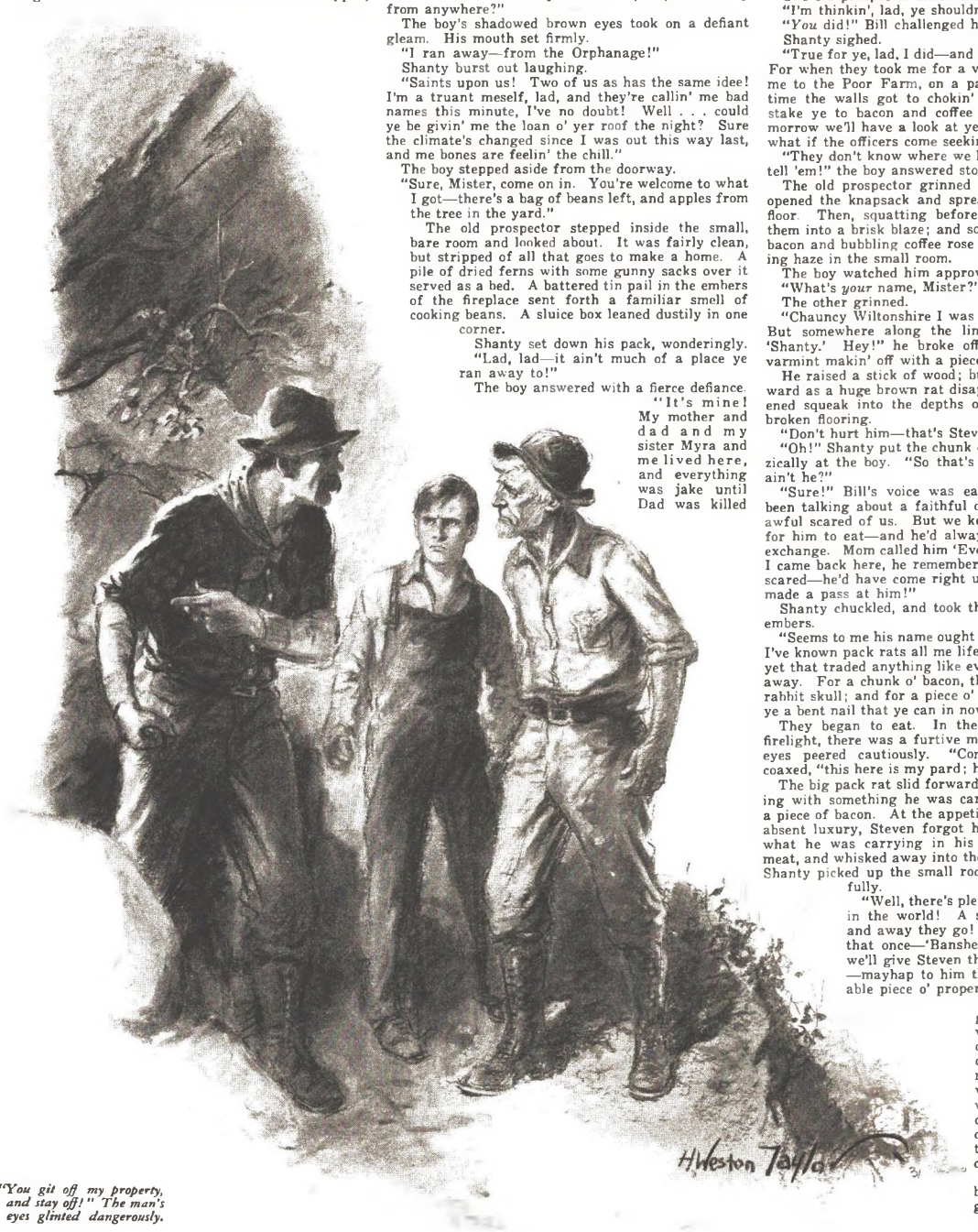
The boy stepped aside from the doorway.

"Sure, Mister, come on in. You're welcome to what I got—there's a bag of beans left, and apples from the tree in the yard."

The old prospector stepped inside the small, bare room and looked about. It was fairly clean, but stripped of all that goes to make a home. A pile of dried ferns with some gunny sacks over it served as a bed. A battered tin pail in the embers of the fireplace sent forth a familiar smell of cooking beans. A sluice box leaned dustily in one corner.

Shanty set down his pack, wonderingly. "Lad, lad—it ain't much of a place ye ran away to!"

The boy answered with a fierce defiance. "It's mine! My mother and dad and my sister Myra and me lived here, and everything was jake until Dad was killed blasting. Then Mom took sick and died in a hospital at Sacramento, and they put Myra and me in the Orphanage. I reckon they meant all right, but we just weren't used to it. Myra cried somethin' terrible—she's just a little thing, not quite ten," he explained with dignity. "I wanted 'em to let us go, but they wouldn't. So Myra and me fixed it up so I could run away. I know the place where Dad found gold, and I'm goin' to work that tunnel and get out enough to take care o' Myra!"



"You git off my property, and stay off!" The man's eyes glinted dangerously.

AN answering light kindled in the crinkled blue eyes of the old wanderer. He looked down smiling into the earnest freckled face of the boy.

"What might yer name be, lad?" he asked gently.

"Bill Radfield."

The old prospector shook his head.

"I'm thinkin', lad, ye shouldn't have run away. . ."

"*You* did!" Bill challenged him.

Shanty sighed.

"True for ye, lad, I did—and I'm worse off than you. For when they took me for a vagrant, the judge sent me to the Poor Farm, on a parole like; but after a time the walls got to chokin' me. Well—I'll grubstake ye to bacon and coffee and the like, and tomorrow we'll have a look at yer feyther's mine. But what if the officers come seekin' ye?"

"They don't know where we lived—and Myra won't tell 'em!" the boy answered stoutly.

The old prospector grinned and got to work. He opened the knapsack and spread its contents on the floor. Then, squatting before the embers, he built them into a brisk blaze; and soon the smell of frying bacon and bubbling coffee rose in a cheerful, appetizing haze in the small room.

The boy watched him approvingly.

"What's *your* name, Mister?"

The other grinned.

"Chauncy Wiltonshire I was born, belave it or not! But somewhere along the line I got to be called 'Shanty.' Hey!" he broke off suddenly, "there's a varmint makin' off with a piece o' bacon!"

He raised a stick of wood; but the boy sprang forward as a huge brown rat disappeared with a frightened squeak into the depths of a large hole in the broken flooring.

"Don't hurt him—that's Steven!"

"Oh!" Shanty put the chunk down, and looked quizzically at the boy. "So that's Steven! A pack rat, ain't he?"

"Sure!" Bill's voice was eager. He might have been talking about a faithful dog. "At first he was awful scared of us. But we kept putting out things for him to eat—and he'd always bring something in exchange. Mom called him 'Even-Steven.' And when I came back here, he remembered me. He isn't a bit scared—he'd have come right up to me if you hadn't made a pass at him!"

Shanty chuckled, and took the coffee pot from the embers.

"Seems to me his name ought to be 'Uneven-Steven.' I've known pack rats all me life, and I never seen one yet that traded anything like even for what they took away. For a chunk o' bacon, they'll bring ye a dried rabbit skull; and for a piece o' salt pork they'll leave ye a bent nail that ye can in nowise use!"

They began to eat. In the shadows beyond the firelight, there was a furtive movement. Two bright eyes peered cautiously. "Come on, Steven," Bill coaxed, "this here is my pard; he won't hurt you!"

The big pack rat slid forward, his right cheek bulging with something he was carrying. Bill extended a piece of bacon. At the appetizing odor of the long-absent luxury, Steven forgot his fear. He released what he was carrying in his mouth, snatched the meat, and whisked away into the darkness of his hole. Shanty picked up the small rock, examining it carefully.

"Well, there's plenty o' traders like him in the world! A stone for meat . . . and away they go! I had a partner like that once—'Banshee' I called him. But we'll give Steven the benefit o' the doubt—mayhap to him that pebble is a vallyable piece o' property!"

It was morning, golden and gracious, with a warmth that denied the coldness of the preceding night. Shanty and Bill were pushing their way through a thicket of tall ferns and underbrush up the hill that rose behind the cabin.

"Gee!" panted the boy, "this sure has grown up since I was

(Cont. on page 32)

Pete Hogan's long supper table roared a welcome: "Hey, Johnny, where you come from?"

:: JOHNNY BREE STIRS UP GRIEF FOR CHRISTMAS ::

Trouble Hunter

By William Heyliger

Illustrated by Thomas Fogarty

"FUNNY, Jim Hague's asking me to come running," Johnny Bree told himself as his train rattled and sang and swayed on through the snow-buried Adirondacks. "Wonder why he thinks I'll be such sweet help in time of trouble."

Johnny, fresh from his first semester at prep school, was going back to Minertown for the Christmas vacation—with Jim Hague's note burning in his pocket. The note was short:

Start for home the minute vacation begins, will you, Johnny? There's trouble brewing at the mines. Perhaps you can help.

Help? Johnny grinned. That was a hot one! If there was a squeeze Jim Hague couldn't handle, where would he fit in? No mine ever had a better engineer in charge than Jim Hague. He was a whale of a good man. Yet here he was asking for help from a mere cub, the cocky young drifter he'd befriended and shipped off to school to get ready to be a mining engineer.

Johnny shook his head. He'd move heaven and earth, with the Big Bill mine thrown in, to help Jim Hague. But what did Jim think he could do?

Frowning, Johnny read the note once more. Trouble? What kind of trouble? He sat staring out of the window while Lake Champlain, frozen hard, slipped past mile after mile. . . . Did Jim Hague mean a strike? A strike would be bad medicine. Gosh—a strike in Minertown, at Christmas time!

For long months Johnny had worked in the coal mines, as mucker, track cleaner, and hoist man. He had lived at one-legged Pete Hogan's boarding house, sharing the food and the quarrels and the friendships at Hogan's long table, sweltering through hot summer nights on one of the many beds jammed together in Hogan's attic. Johnny knew his Minertown.

The crowded boarding houses couldn't keep and feed men who were out of a job. As for the married men who lived in the drab, weather-beaten cottages—

"They'll go cold and hungry," Johnny reflected, "the whole crazy bunch of them. And their kids with them. I hope it isn't a strike!" . . .

Then the train was slowing up at the little station where passengers for Minertown got off, and Johnny was leaping from the bottom step, bag in hand, yelling:

"Hi! Merry Christmas! Got the wire about my train all right, didn't you, Mr. Hague?"

"Jim to you!" smiled the tall, keen-faced man who gripped his hand.

"Right. I'll remember. I think of you as Jim but when I see you, my tongue just naturally gets respectful."

"You don't say! Something new, isn't it?" Jim Hague grinned back. "Here, the car's parked on the other side. You're going to drive. The snow glare gets my eyes."

Johnny slid in behind the wheel.

"Careful of the turns," said Hague. "They're full of ice."

"So's the wind," shivered Johnny. He swung round the station, nosed for a rutted road, and presently was climbing up through the white, buried mountains toward Minertown, six miles away.

"I got your note," he remarked.

Jim Hague grunted. He sat silent for several moments; then he drew a long breath. "Johnny—"

"Go on," said Johnny. "Spill the grief."

"We're getting set for a strike."

"I thought so," nodded Johnny. "I'm a grand little guesser. What's it about?"

"What are all strikes about?" snorted Jim Hague. "Money, of course. The company isn't making anything in these tight times and the men aren't getting nearly so much as they used to, and they're sore."

"But they'll be a lot worse off if they strike," said Johnny. "They haven't saved anything. And they don't belong to any union; they won't get any strike benefits. They'll starve and they'll freeze. They'll—they'll die like flies. And all the little kids—it'll be awful!"

"Do you have to tell me?" Jim Hague demanded, his face suddenly drawn and haggard. "Good lord, Johnny, it's my job to take care of these men. I'd give a leg to save them from all the misery they're bringing down on themselves. I'd—"

HE BROKE OFF to stare at the icy road with unseeing eyes.

Awkwardly, Johnny reached over and patted his knee. "But what does Jim think I can do about all this?" he kept asking himself.

Presently Hague asked, "Remember Tony Batff?"

"Short, dark guy with one finger gone? Runs a power shovel in the Big Bill?"

The engineer nodded. "Tony seems to be doing the agitating. He's got the day shift with him—ore's not coming out. That's bad because steel is picking up a little and we've got some nice orders."

"Maybe the men know about these orders."

"That's probably why they're ready to take a chance on pulling a strike right now," Hague agreed.

"If they could only get it into their heads that the company is having to fight tooth and nail just to keep operating and give them enough work to tide them

Johnny dug, panting—Tony worked like a madman, heaving his shovel in a fury of attack.

over till times pick up! The company isn't making money. It's unpleasantly near going on the rocks. We've passed one dividend and in a day or so we'll be passing another."

"Can't you talk to the men?"

"I've tried it. But they won't listen, and they won't talk. Tony's evidently succeeded in pledging everybody to secrecy—even the men who don't want a strike."

"They ought to know you're their friend!" Johnny said hotly. "They ought to listen to you."

"These are unreasonable times, Johnny. I'm just a boss now—just the big boss, spouting hot air. I've a notion Tony's told the men so. He's a distrustful little cuss, with the knack of leadership. And something special is biting him."

"What?" asked Johnny.

"Wish I knew. I might be able to head off the strike if I could put my finger right on the sore spot. You know what these miners are—just children. They pick up a pet grievance and hang on to it until everything goes haywire."

Johnny topped a rise and slowed the car for the drop. Below him, in the hollow, lay Minertown. In the December sunshine, the dust from the tailings piles was a gray cloud. Faintly, from the distant hollow came the endless clatter of the tailings conveyors and the thunder of ore dumping out of the skips.

It was the hour when the day shift would be hidden underground and the night shift would be sleeping. The camp had a pinched, deserted look. Then, abruptly, there was a man ahead of them on the road. He was pulling something on a sled, something long and bulky and dark—probably a Christmas tree. He glanced back over his shoulder, caught sight of the automobile, and turned into a side road.

"That's Tony," said Jim Hague. "He didn't work yesterday, and he isn't working to-day. Reported to his mine boss that his little girl was sick."

"Suppose he's just out scouting around? Or is she really sick?"

"I don't know. A lot of them won't call the company doctor unless things get desperate. They have their own old-world remedies and old-world superstitions. They believe in witch doctors and voodoos and charms."

SHAKING his head, Johnny sent the car past the post office and the dingy general store, on past Pete Hogan's boarding house, and finally came to a stop in front of the mine office. There he twisted in his seat to look at Jim Hague.

"You've given me the layout," he said. "But—how can I help?"

Jim Hague eyed him reflectively. Then he returned the question Johnny had put to him a few minutes earlier. "Can't you talk to the men?"

"A hot chance I'd have of getting them to listen to me if they won't listen to you."

"I'm not so sure," Hague said slowly. "You dug and sweated for months side by side with these fellows. And, Johnny, they've not forgotten how you stuck to your hoist the day the Big Bill flooded, how you got out the men on 9 slope. They may listen to you."

"I'm afraid you're hanging your hope on a poor peg."

"I've got to hang it somewhere," Hague returned grimly. "Don't think I'm asking you to argue the men around. What I want you to do is to uncover that pet grievance, the thing that's biting them hardest. Then I can go to Tony and talk to the point. I may get somewhere then."

"I SEE," said Johnny. But he was doubtful. Of course, the men might accept him again as one of themselves and talk to him in spite of their pledge of secrecy. But weren't they more likely to regard him warily as a guy who stood in with the big boss? Still—

"Guess there's nothing to do but try it," he said aloud. "Don't bother to tell me that I've got to step easy as soon as I start stirring up this grief. I know it!" He slid out of the car and got his bag out of the back. "Good-by. I'm bunking at Pete Hogan's."

Jim Hague, standing beside the car, surveyed him ruefully. "Guess you're wise. But I'd counted a lot on your staying at the house with us this vacation."

"So had I," sighed Johnny. "I'm an early Christmas martyr. You're throwing me to the lions so I can find out what's biting 'em."

"Get along," snorted Jim Hague, "and stir up your grief. This job was made for you. You've been hunting for trouble ever since you were born."

Pete Hogan received Johnny with joy, and with silent understanding.

Pete Hogan's long supper table roared a welcome: "Hey, Johnny, where you come from?" "Blast me eyes, if it ain't Johnny Bree himself, home for Christmas!" "Yah, Shonny, you come ketch work?"

"Wouldn't mind getting a job," Johnny answered, "but I'll probably just study blue prints and explore things. I'd like to load up with a lot more practical stuff before I go to Tech." He'd have to give them some reason for his hanging around, he reflected, and that was true.

"Once it was good you knew blue prints," said a mucker. "That time Big Bill she flood."

A dozen other men smiled and nodded. But after that a heavy silence fell on the table.

The atmosphere still seemed heavy the next morning as Johnny started for the change house with a group of miners. In the change house itself, the stir and babble of voices was gone; the damp stone building seemed filled with a guarded caution. Men came and went in silence.

Johnny got overalls out of Baldy Scott's office, and the mine boss shot a bit of information from the corner of his mouth. "Tony's working to-day."

"Where?"

"In 8 drift off 12 slope."

Johnny nodded and started down on his wandering way through the Big Bill. He wanted to see his old hoist room, and the cage let him off at 9 level. The stillness and the clutching darkness and the brooding mystery closed around him. The silence ached.

On farther, in the haulageway, there was life. Two muckers, trundling along with a tram load of ore, stopped to shake hands. He knew them both well, Mike O'Day and Steve Polsk.

"How's the world using you, Mike?" he asked.

"It could be better, but it could be worse, too. And I can't see any sinse in getting mad at meself and biting off me nose."

"You are old man," Steve broke in. "Maybe your teeth not sharp for biting no more."

Then, as if suddenly taking alarm, they hurried on. Johnny went on toward the hoist room. He found the new hoist man on 9 slope friendly. He had heard of Johnny Bree.

"How would you like to sit in for a half shift?" he asked presently. "I aim to take off to-morrow morning and get a pine for my little girl's Christmas tree."

"Having a real Christmas up at your house this year?"

"That depends," came the answer.

Johnny had sandwiches in his pocket. He took one out, and ate slowly.

"I've been away since September," he said. "What's been stirring since then?"

"Nothing much." The hoist man gave him a sidelong glance. "Why?"

Johnny shrugged.

"Listen!" The man's voice was lowered. "I'm not talking! I got no hunger to have some mucker bend a crowbar over my head."

Johnny sat still. "Who'd know you and I had a gabfest?"

"This mine has a way of knowing a lot of things."

The grapevine telegraph! Johnny knew it of old—the word about happenings that was passed along with incredible swiftness through dark, foggy slopes and black drifts. Johnny shrugged again, and got up.

"I'll be seeing you," he said casually, and started on.

WINDING, turning, and twisting, he descended to lower levels. He came at last to 12 slope and turned into 8 drift. Tony was forward at the breast. Standing at the controls of his power shovel, he gave Johnny a blank stare. He responded to Johnny's "Hello," but he answered all his remarks in monosyllables.

"You have time for talk," he said finally. "But I have job."

So that was that. Johnny went back up to the mine boss' office. "You don't think they'd start anything right at Christmas, do you?" he asked Baldy Scott.

"Why not?" Baldy's voice rasped. "If Tony's looking for trouble, a black Christmas would be the exact day to put temper in the men."

"BURNING SNOW"

A breath-taking ski story that carries you 80 miles an hour to a white-hot finish.

By Charles Dana Bennett

NEXT MONTH

Johnny left the change house depressed. But the mood passed. There were still five days to Christmas. And to-morrow he'd work a hoist, and perhaps the chance of the day would throw him in Tony Ratff's path. Tony might forget himself and spit something.

But the morning brought disappointment.

"Tony's taken off again," Baldy Scott announced. "The old stuff—a sick kid." He gave a skeptical grunt.

Johnny worked through the morning without picking up a word of information. At noon the regular man came on, and Johnny went up again to a shivering world. He hunted up Jim Hague and reported no progress.

The only news he uncovered the next day was that Tony's little girl was really sick. Two more days passed, and Johnny learned nothing.

"As a trouble hunter, I'm a bust," he told Jim Hague. "The trouble's there but I can't spot it."

Then the next morning, Pete Hogan signed to him to wait a minute. "Whisht, Johnny," he whispered, "the break comes to-day—they're holding a gathering this avening, and will go one way or the other. Tell Mr. Hague."

Holding a meeting on Christmas Eve! Tony did have the bunch under his thumb. Senseless and incredible as his idea was, he was somehow playing on their emotions and shoving through a holiday strike to put the men in a fighting temper so they'd see things through.

"Looks bad, Johnny," Jim Hague said, gray-faced. "Guess we've lost."

Johnny's chin came up with the old familiar thrust of defiance. "Not yet. I'm going underground again. Maybe I'll step into an earful." . . .

The cage dropped him to depths that knew neither heat nor cold, sunshine nor tempest. On 16 level he met the mine boss.

"Tony working, Baldy?"

"No." Baldy Scott's voice was sour. "None of us may be working after to-morrow."

Johnny tightened his belt and grinned. But the grin faded as soon as he got out of Baldy's sight.

ALL through the long morning on into early afternoon, he wandered persistently, stopping in this drift or that to chat. No use. The moment he tried to give the talk a deft twist, he ran into blank reserve.

Suddenly he was in the black opening of a drift that ran to his left. Mike O'Day and Steve Polsk mucked that drift. Should he go in and give Mike a buzz? Plainly, the Irishman wasn't running with Tony's bunch. But Steve would be there. Would Mike talk before the Pole? Johnny shook his head. Not much. He took a step in the direction of the hoist room.

And then sound came out of the drift. Voices. Voices that were faint and muted in the murk.

"Steve, me lad, sure it's crazy ye are. It's cramps in the head ye've got."

"Crazy!" Steve's voice was vehement. "It's cramps in belly I have—and soon nothing else. Three, four year ago we get $1.20 bonus every day. What now? Thirty-eight cents a day. Who suffer? You, me, Tony, every mine man. Boss Hague, he still have automobile. Me, I have less good meat for my belly."

"Sure, and it's more pots of corned beef and cabbage I could be standing meself. But I'm thinking there may be another side to all this."

"Our side. That is what we want. You come to meeting."

"It's voting agin ye I may be finding meself," Mike cautioned.

"You come, anyway. You hear what Tony say."

Johnny turned and, with his heart hammering, ran back through the haulageway. For a fleeting instant, he was bothered by the thought that he had been eavesdropping. "But I'm not spying on the men!" he told himself savagely. "I'm trying to help them. And now I've something to go on!"

For out of the murk of the drift had come revelation. The bonus was the special grievance. The bonus!

What time was it now? About two? And the meeting was at eight. Six hours left in which to save Minertown from a winter of suffering!

He rang for the cage. Swaying and bobbing, he rode up out of the bowels of the earth to meet the storm that lashed the mountains.

Once out of the change house, he plowed forward with his head down. He crossed the plain, mounted the rise to the main road, and staggered into Mr. Hague's office.

"Got it," he panted. "It's the bonus—the way it's dropped from over a dollar to 38 cents. They've got a hunch they're being sucked in."

"You're sure?" Jim Hague asked.

"Well, not dead sure, but—" and Johnny told of the talk between Mike and Steve.

When he had finished, Jim Hague nodded. "Maybe you've hit it. It's worth taking a chance on anyway. I'm going to try a talk with Tony."

"Want the car?"

"Can you get it through? My eyes won't stand the snow, you know. You'll have to drive."

"I'll get it through," Johnny said grimly.

THE motor was slow to start. He warmed it, nursed it until the plugs were firing evenly. The car rolled down the incline to the Minertown road, swung at the corner into the mountain highway, and went on past the general store and the post office. Another quarter mile and they turned left, and ran toward a cluster of huddled cottages.

"Which one?" Johnny asked.

"Third on the right." The car stopped. "Care to come in with me?"

Johnny slid from behind the wheel, suddenly tense. The test was coming. But just at that moment, the door of the house opened and Tony stood in the doorway frantically running his arms into a heavy mackinaw.

"Boss!" The shovel man came heavily through the snow, his dark face tortured. At any other time he might have viewed the appearance of the mine superintendent with narrow, suspicious eyes, but now he was ridden by a demon of fear. "My little Stella she sick bad. You get doctor?"

Johnny followed Jim Hague into the house, into a bleak, comfortless room. A naked Christmas tree leaned in a corner. Two chairs had been pushed against a wall and piled with blankets; and on the blankets lay a hollow-cheeked child who breathed with an effort and groaned as she breathed.

"Why didn't you call a doctor before?" Jim Hague demanded.

A woman—Tony's wife—came out of the room's shadows. "See! We take care Stella." She drew down a blanket, and pointed to a bag tied with a cord around the thin throat. Her hands shook. "It come from old country, from gypsy woman. It is to make stop for sickness. Always it make stop before, but this time—"

Johnny saw Jim Hague's face soften with the pity of understanding. Then the engineer turned to him.

"Johnny, drive up to the hospital and bring Dr. Eastman back with you. This child's pretty sick. Looks like diphtheria."

Johnny bolted. In 20 minutes he was back—alone.

Tony put out an appealing hand. "The doctor—he not come?"

"The doctor had to go to Andersonville on a hurry call," Johnny said stonily. "He telephoned the hospital an hour ago. Said his car was stuck in a drift. He's going to try to make it back by sleigh."

"No horse can get through these roads to-day!" Jim Hague said sharply.

Johnny knew it. His eyes were on the floor. But his ears caught the tortured breathing of the child.

The woman threw an apron over her head and began to sob.

"There is doctor in Port Jones," Tony pleaded.

The storm spat against the rattling windows. The door shook and a cold draft stirred the blankets.

"That's seven miles from here," Jim Hague said slowly. "Seven miles over the mountains."

Johnny moistened his lips. He was the only one who could drive. Jim's eyes wouldn't stand it. There were drops along the road, ravines, drifts, ice under the snow. If you got the breaks you could get through; if you didn't—

He looked up to find Jim Hague, Tony, and the woman staring at him. Nonchalantly he cocked one eyebrow.

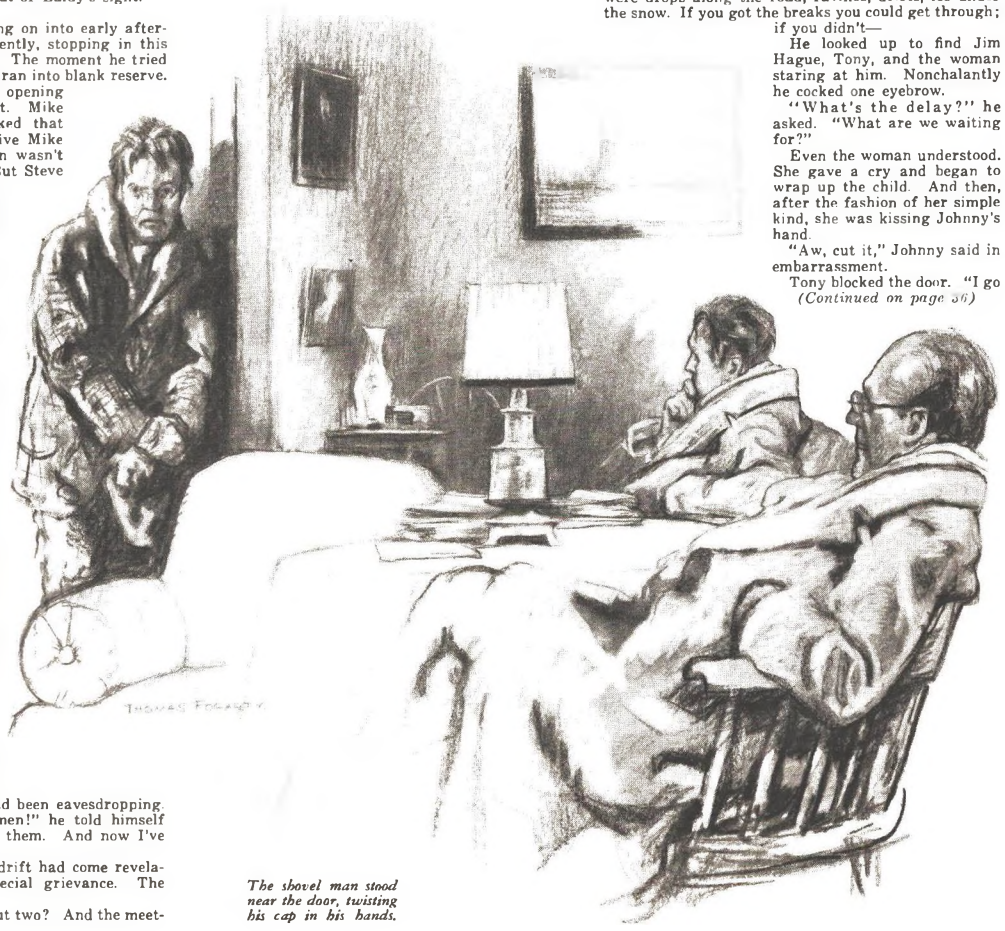
"What's the delay?" he asked. "What are we waiting for?"

Even the woman understood. She gave a cry and began to wrap up the child. And then, after the fashion of her simple kind, she was kissing Johnny's hand.

"Aw, cut it," Johnny said in embarrassment.

Tony blocked the door. "I go

(Continued on page 36)



The shovel man stood near the door, twisting his cap in his hands.

The next instant, four figures had leaped into the opening, the morning sunlight above their swords.

Ghosts of the Scarlet Fleet

By Rear-Admiral E. R. G. R. Evans

Illustrated by Manning deV. Lee

The Preceding Chapters

IN THOSE days of bloodshed and terror when the ruthless pirate Barracuda — or Mistral, if you will—sailed the Caribbean, I was only a boy. Yet I, the orphaned Alistair Alvarez Ross, personal acolyte to His Eminence the Cardinal of Panama, was in the very heart of one of the greatest sea struggles of all the ages.

It's a long story. It began on the day when word came to Panama that Barracuda was making for Porto Bello with his great fleet, and meant to march across to sack Panama. On that day I caught an amazing glimpse of my beloved master arrayed in the costume of a sea fighter—and then he disappeared! With naught left, then, to hold me in Panama, I slipped out of the city and headed straight for Porto Bello to plunge into the trouble there.

How deep I plunged! And how quickly!

I threw myself into the battle between the fleet defending Porto Bello and that wicked fleet of Barracuda's—and in no time I was a prisoner on the ship of Barracuda himself. There, as the days passed, he and his crew of ruffians first cajoled me and then tortured and flogged me in their efforts to get me to tell them secrets I had never known.

But in the end I escaped in the midst of their fight with a great scarlet ship that suddenly appeared. I escaped and was picked up by that scarlet ship, and found that the commander of it and its sister ships was my beloved master, the Cardinal of Panama!

He and his men, the Knighthood of the Sea, had taken a vow to drive from the waters the pirates who were dealing out death and destruction in the Caribbean. The knights had sworn to rid the seas of both Barracuda and La Touche, whose fleet was even larger than Barracuda's.

I gladly became a member of the Knighthood of the Sea, and before long was honored by a secret commission of great importance. The Cardinal had faith in me. Moreover, I had brought him a mysterious message from Barracuda's ship—word that said he was to seek the Isle of Lost Secrets, and that an unknown place called the Pit would lead to the Lost Secret.

It was in recognition of this service that I received my secret commission. It was charged with danger, but I gloried in the grave responsibility the Cardinal had placed upon me. I was to put off in a small boat, and by means of a rough map find the island stronghold of La Touche, then take note of La Touche's strength, and discover, if possible, the whereabouts of the Isle of Lost Secrets. How swiftly moved events after I had received these commands!

I put off in the night. I sailed and sailed. At length I found La Touche's island, landed, and slipped in among his men. I was detected, managed an escape by the skin of my teeth, and hid in a cave. There I was found by a comrade knight, Sergrid, who seemed to serve La Touche but really served the Cardinal.

With Sergrid's aid, I reached an inner room in the pirates' island mansion. It was La Touche's own room, and from my hiding place I saw the little pirate leader enter and take out a map. I felt sure it was the map to the Isle of Lost Secrets!

Sword in hand, I crept up on the little man. But he heard me and whipped out his own sword. We fought! Once I could have killed him, but foolishly I spared his life. The next moment someone seized me from the rear and hurled me up to crash back down against an oaken table. I lay there stunned and limp. I could not stir. Something oppressively heavy seemed to settle down on me.

Chapter Nine

WHEN I recovered my senses, I saw, grinning down at me, and seated on my chest, the foulest object it has ever been my lot to set eyes upon. Great gnarled hands were holding my shoulders down to the floor, and a long and inhuman-looking face possessed of enormous ears, a pendulous and hanging lower lip, a long and fat nose and two piglike eyes, was close to mine.

Near-by, his sword held behind him with both hands, his head cocked to one side, his eyes mocking, stood La Touche. As my mind cleared, I became aware that the grotesque object that had been responsible for my undoing was a dwarf of abnormal strength. His grip tightened upon me and he mouthed words that I could not understand.

"Shake him, Ping!"

As La Touche spoke, my assailant raised me and crashed me back upon the floor. He chattered at me the while, more in the manner of some wild ape than a human being, and try and throw him off as I did, my efforts were vain. The more I struggled, the more La Touche laughed. He had come nearer to me and he was looking down at me as Ping banged me on the floor. At last La Touche touched him lightly with his rapier.

"Cease, Ping," he ordered. "Don't rob the rat of all its senses. I have other plans in store for Master Intruder."

With that, La Touche touched my shoulder with his sword, maliciously, so that it pinked the flesh.

"Pleasant plans, my spy," he whispered. "Payment for your coming hither to seek out my secrets."

He chuckled as Ping's piglike eyes watched him with both fear and respect.

"I have a mind to make you the center of the big occasion," he mused. "Aye, so shall it be. Ping!"

The dwarf waited, his eyes blinking, his nails biting into my shoulders like steel vices.

"Bind him, Ping," he ordered. "And bind him well. Then to the big hall and after that—the Pit!"

The Pit! Was it the same Pit mentioned by The Laugh? The Pit that had made even Sergrid blanch?

Ping chattered horribly. The brute-man was laughing and showing two lines of white teeth that now he shut as he looked down at me. With both his knees he held my shoulders down as he took rope from La Touche. Next, and with scant mercy for the torture he was inflicting, he bound me hand and foot and threw me, with what seemed but little effort, upon the oaken table.

That map was so near to me that I could have noted its details had not La Touche snatched it away, and flung it in the box. Then, slamming the lid of the chest down, he replaced it within the cavity from whence he had taken it.

"That is *my* secret, spy," he said malevolently. "Only you and Ping know *that* secret, and soon it will not matter that you now do know it."

He grinned as he stood upon the stone that had gone back into its place again.

"Now lift him, Ping, and we will take him to the men, and then—the Pit!"

Miserably I condemned myself for having spared La Touche when he had been at my mercy, and I realized that I had failed in the mission upon which I had been sent. Before Ping took me, La Touche's hands gripped my throat and he bent his eyes to mine.

"From whence came you?" he demanded, his mouth one cruel line when he had finished the question.

I made no answer to it and though he sought to choke the life out of me, I refused to answer any of his questions. All my hopes now were upon Sergrid. I was wondering if I dared hope that he would create some diversion that would save me from this vile creature and his viler companions.

"So!"

He drew back and, with an attempt at dignity that seemed ludicrous to me, he pointed to me as he looked at Ping.

"Pick him up, Ping!" he cried. "And then, to the men. These spies of da Garda's, they always are silent!"

I saw that bowed and horrible creature come near to me. As though I were a child he picked me up in those massive hands, and with La Touche marching ahead, carried me out of the room.

La Touche unlocked the door, and walking through a long corridor, proceeded toward the banqueting hall. I could hear the noise that was coming from the end of the corridor. Shouted songs, the clash of steel, the sound of curses, and the crash of tables sounded upon my ears.

Clouds of tobacco smoke billowed toward me, and hard as it was to see what was going on, I yet managed to glimpse faintly the interior of that big room. Here and there lay fallen bodies either dead or drunken. Broken wine bottles may have accounted for the stains of some, but groans suggested that a general fight had been in progress ere the presence of La Touche stilled it.

And then it was that I saw Sergrid. Grimly he was drawing his rapier through a silken cloth, whilst at his feet lay the body of a man. Sergrid turned, and I noticed the sudden stricken look that came to his eyes as he realized the identity of La Touche's prisoner.

My advent had come as a timely truce to many a bitter fight, and at that moment I wondered how it came about that La Touche exerted such sway over these men of his. The songs and the altercations had died to silence.

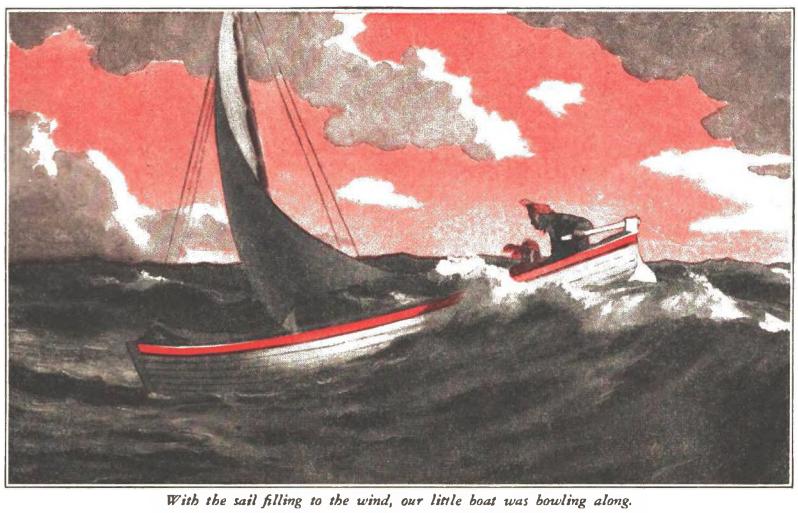
"Behold, yet another present to us from His Eminence the Cardinal," La Touche cried. "A spy, my merry rogues, a spy for the sport of La Touche and his buccaneers."

A roar came as the response. I saw La Touche's men standing upon tables and as I was borne round that hall, goblets of rum and wine were dashed in my face, and I felt the touch of swords. A roaring, cheering throng followed in procession behind us and my senses were reeling beneath the pain of a hundred tiny wounds as I was pinked with rapier and knife by these ribald men.

"To the Pit, to the Pit!"

Through that hall and out into the moonlit gardens beyond it we marched, with Ping singing madly, his great hands holding me as though I had been a featherweight. I wondered where Sergrid was. Could Sergrid aid me or, in the aiding would he uselessly imperil his own life, and in doing so fail in our mutual duty to the Cardinal and our cause?

I was all but unconscious from the buffetings I had received and the pain of my many wounds. How many and how deep they were I did not know, but my clothes felt saturated and I could not help but wonder if already the end were approaching.



With the sail filling to the wind, our little boat was bowling along.

A STRANGE night for such a scene as this, with the crystal moonshine falling through palm fronds and the air heavy with the scent of flowers. Behind me I could see a line of torches, and beneath that light the brilliant costumes of La Touche's buccaneers. The red of satin, the maroon and green of velvet, and the sheen of swords would

have presented a coloury picture to me had conditions been other than they were. I could not, however, from my cramped position, see much. I tried to find Sergrid amid the motley gathering, but I failed to discern him.

Through the palm trees I was borne, and toward a clearing some little way behind the house itself. It was railed off and the line marched through a small gate, and now that clearing was bright with the lights from the torches.

With scant ceremony, Ping cast me to the ground, and as I fell, pounced upon me with a knife to dispatch me, as I thought. I was wrong though, for a moment later, my bonds had been sliced and I was free of them. I could not move for stiffness.

But strength was returning. A kick from La Touche forced me to my feet and I saw what other eyes were gazing at.

There, within the center of that glade, was a large and apparently deep pit, for La Touche's rogues were peering down into it. Above it, attached to a crossbeam supported by posts, was a pulley with a rope through it, and attached to the rope, a hook.

The next instant, as I stood there unsteadily and feeling like to swoon at any moment, a leathern belt was strapped about my waist and a rogue drew the rope toward me and fixed the hook into a ring worked into the belt itself. Then Ping lifted me off my feet and bore me toward the pit.

Grim faces were gazing cruelly at me. I heard laughter, and as I gazed at that ring of enemies, their steel, their torches, their gleaming eyes, Ping forced a couple of great knives into my hands.

I had liked to use them on my enemies, but ere I could do so, Ping had tossed me into the center of the pit so that I swung clear of the ground. And to my amazement I saw that Sergrid held the rope that would lower me into the depths.

"Send him down," cried a voice.

I heard Sergrid laugh gaily.

"Nay," he cried. "Let the sport last as long as it can."

"Sergrid speaks right!"

The last voice was La Touche's, but I was not thinking of him as, aided by the glaring torches above me, I looked below. And what did I see as I hung there, two knives in my hand?

Never as long as life remains shall I forget my first sight of that Pit. A moment ago I wondered why Ping had provided me with these two knives with razor edges. I knew now.

As I looked into the semi-darkness of the depths, I saw gleaming and wicked eyes gazing upwards, sleepy and malevolent eyes, and slimy bodies that troubled the water fitfully. I fought back the cry that sought to escape me, and now I knew the sort of sport I was going to provide for those above.

They were crocodiles that awaited me and my knife — hungry and expectant crocodiles!

Sergrid was paying the rope out; Sergrid was sending me to my doom!

And a memory, crystal-clear, came to me. I seemed to see the battle-swept deck of *The Lacoon*, with The Laugh leaning toward me and saying: "When you come to those others, tell them that the Pit will lead them to the Lost Secret — the Pit, if they dare enter it!"

What irony! There burst from my lips, a wild, insensate laugh that caused amazed silence above as I approached those beasts below.

IRONY! First The Laugh had told me of the Pit. And then the Cardinal had given me orders to learn what I could of the Pit. And now I was to see it at first hand. But I should not live to tell others what I saw.

Yet even as I was being lowered toward those hungry crocodiles that were swirling below me, The Laugh's words again recurred: "The Pit shall lead you to the Lost Secret." How could this hole lead me to aught but death?

I looked around at the walls of rock, but there were no openings in them. So smooth were they that not even a foothold was visible. And what good a foothold, when Sergrid above was paying out the rope that would bring me within reach of the gnashing, hungry mouths below? What a ghoulish idea of sport those demons had! Dangling me on a hook at the end of a line, like so much bait, giving me a pair of knives, and ordering me to kill even while I was being killed!

Sergrid would not be able to save me now. Even as the thought came to me, I heard cries from the pirates ringed about the Pit — cries to Sergrid to lower me more quickly to the beasts so that the fun might begin. The rope lengthened swiftly then, until I was hovering just above the surface. Unconsciously I drew up my legs, and there was a howl of laughter from above.

Sweat was beading my face and my hands were wet as I tightly gripped the knives. Then, out of the surface, a black head uprose and there was a snap of powerful jaws. In that instant I reached down and jabbed one knife into the softness underneath the jaws, and the body fell back, and for a moment the water churned. A yell of acclaim reached me from above.

Then I realized that other hands than Sergrid's were handling the rope, for now I was being let down to the very surface, and I knew the end was at hand. Frantically I set up a swinging in the rope, as a last desperate effort at prolonging my life a few worthless seconds. And as I swung, I looked about me.

One part of the wall seemed darker, more shadowed than the rest, and as my gaze fixed upon it a wild hope rose in my breast. It was a ledge—a ledge invisible to those above because of a bulge in the wall—a wide ledge, and behind it blackness that suggested a cavity.

With a surge of strength and a rush of daring, I let my foot down to the water and pushed on a black body to increase my swing, and send my body in the right direction. I was swinging handsomely from side to side now, and at one end of each swing the rope came against that bulge in the rock and my body swung underneath the bulge and over the ledge. I could have let my feet down and touched it.

But I must time myself just right. I must have my knives ready, and I must cut the rope just as I swung under the bulge in the wall, so that I should drop on that ledge, or near enough so that I could catch it and pull myself out of water before a crocodile dragged me down.

The ravenous animals were snapping at me now as I swung, and I had to knife another. There were roars from the rogues above, who laughed at my wild swinging. Little did they know that I was waiting for just the right swing.

It came. I swung in under the bulge. Summoning all my nerve I slashed at the thin rope. My body broke away. I fell half on the ledge and half in the water. With one frantic pull, I hauled my body clear and turned to see the long cruel mouth of a crocodile a few inches from the rock's edge. With a shudder I drew farther back, and then I closed my eyes and breathed deeply.

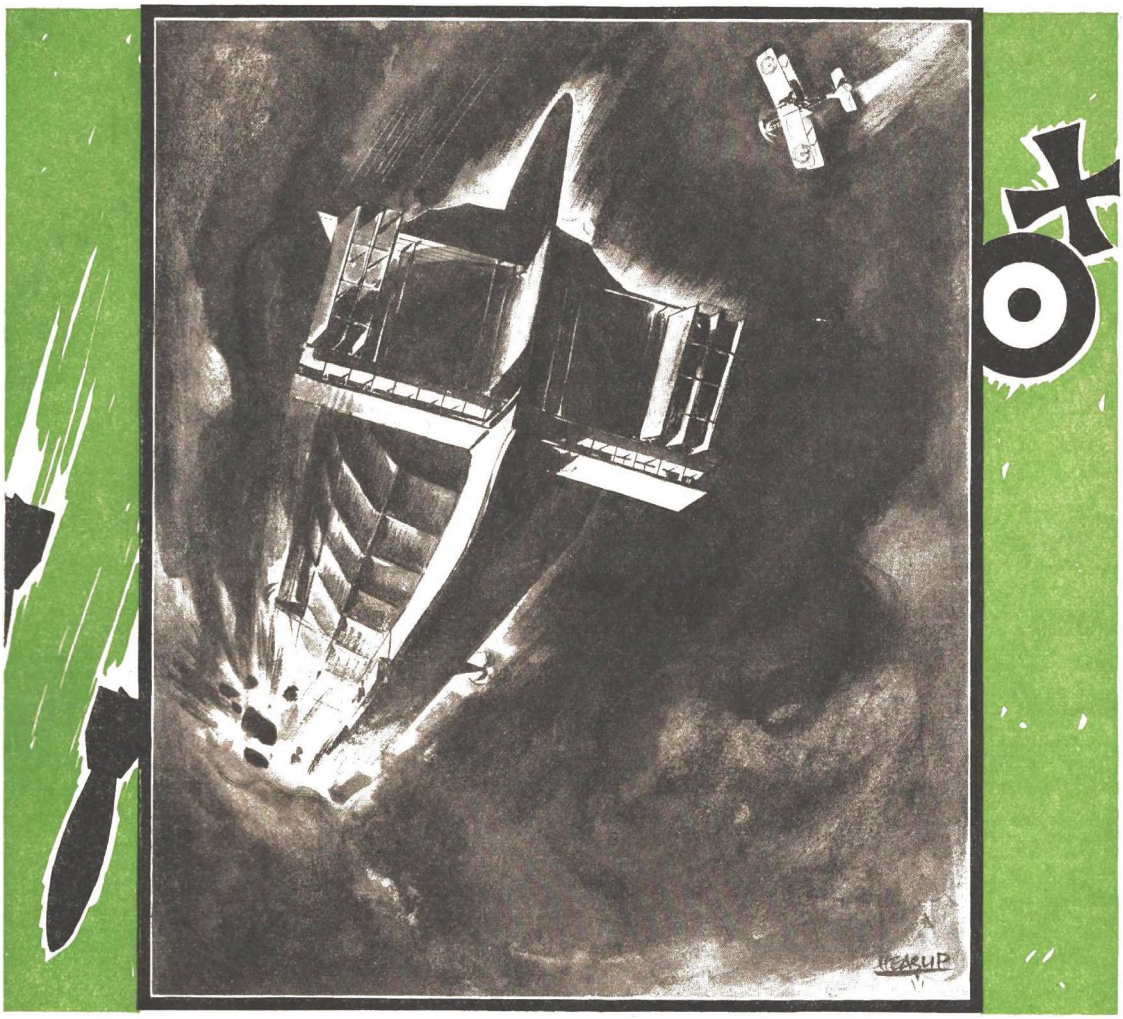
Even with the flood of relief that filled my soul, I wondered how I could get above. Was I to starve on this ledge? What did La Touche's followers think of my disappearance? Perhaps they thought I had cut the rope to end my agony, and that the crocodiles had already devoured me. I could hear their shouts and their exclamations over the sliced rope.

PRESENTLY I gathered courage and opened my eyes. I thought of The Laugh's words. If the Pit led to the Lost Secret, then there must be some passageway from the Pit. With small hope I rolled to my knees and felt of the rock wall. The cavern was deep and dark. Could it — could it possibly lead anywhere?

I staggered up and felt my way into the shadows. Deeper I went, and deeper, until with a glad cry I realized that I was in some sort of tunnel. Mayhap there was a way out! Almost undone with joy I felt my way weakly along, and as I progressed I thought of the stout - hearted Sergrid who had handled the rope that let me down into the Pit. Had he fought to retain possession of the rope, and been knifed for his pains? How I wished that I could tell him I

(Continued on page 39)

Merfil, monarch of his buccaneers—a thing to be feared at sea!



Peril Above the Lightning

By John Cardell

Illustrated by William Heaslip

THE AUTHOR of this story is the same Royal Air Force pilot who wrote of a night bombing raid in a previous issue. John Cardell is not his real name. He prefers to keep it secret. The story that follows is based on experience—rare, unforgettable experience.

—THE EDITORS.

THE wind howled over the tiny Royal Air Force flying field in Marham, in the east of England, driving the rain furiously against the window panes in the buildings. There was a knock at the inside door of the squadron office, and a moment later in walked the flight sergeant.

"Orders for to-night, sir," he said with a salute.

"Well, sergeant," I replied, "it doesn't look as if there'll be any flying to-night. I don't see how the Germans can fly over in this weather."

"Nor I, sir."

"I think you might as well signal a washout and let the men off for half a day."

"Very good, sir."

After the sergeant had gone I called in the adjutant and told him to dismiss all pilots for the day except one. Ordinarily, we would keep at least two pilots on duty throughout the night in case the Germans made a surprise attack. On this particular day, however, there seemed not the slightest chance that a Zeppelin could make its way over the North Sea, for the weather reports showed that an area of low pressure extended well over Germany and France and out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Within an hour the air station was deserted. I spent most of the afternoon in the office attending to the innumerable details that make the squadron commander's life a burden to him. About six o'clock in the evening the rain suddenly stopped and the wind died down. I walked outside and looked around. Low fleecy clouds were drifting rapidly from east to west, only a few hundred feet up. In the big gaps between them was a dome of mournful gray. To the east the sky was blue, with a huge thunder cloud high up, and to the west the clouds seemingly merged with the ground in a heavy mist. I decided again that we had nothing to fear from the Germans that night.

At dinner that evening there were only three of us: Stelle, who had been my observer in France in earlier days and who had since learned to fly; Collins, the adjutant; and myself. Usually we had about fifty officers, for in addition to patrolling on home defense we had also to train a number of young officers in the art of flying by night. The mess therefore looked extremely deserted. During the meal we recalled famous exploits at the front, and discussed the weather.

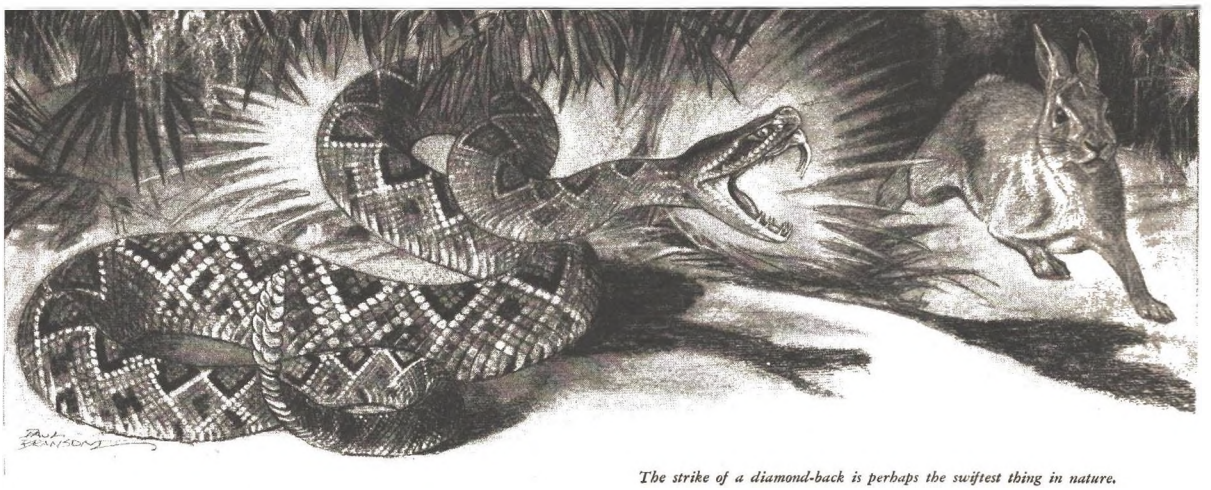
After dinner I again peered out of the window. It was an August evening, and because of the lowering clouds it was already growing dark, although it was but eight o'clock. A fine drizzle was coming down. The white clouds were still scurrying across the flying field, but there were fewer of them. Their speed indicated a high wind aloft, but on the ground scarcely a breath of air disturbed the somnolent earth. Every now and then a flash of lightning lit the eastern sky and a dull, faint rumble of thunder followed. Reassured, I turned back to a comfortable chair with a cup of coffee.

"IT'S a funny day, you know," I said to Stelle. "There's hardly a breath of air on the ground and yet a thousand feet up the wind is blowing merrily."

"Nothing funny in that," growled Stelle. "It often happens." Stelle prided himself on an expert knowledge of meteorology.

"Wait a minute," I went on. "When I came out of the squadron office before dinner, the thunder cloud was in about the same position as it is now. Which argues, my boy, that the air must be pretty still, higher up. Two layers of still air with probably a thirty-mile wind blowing in between. I think that pretty queer. What do you make of it?"

"I should say we're in for a messy storm," responded the taciturn Stelle, *(Continued on page 57)*



The strike of a diamond-back is perhaps the swiftest thing in nature.

The Poison People

By Samuel Scoville, Jr.
Illustrated by Paul Bransom

MY FIRST experience with the Poison People began many years ago when I visited a rattlesnake den in the northwestern part of Connecticut.

To get a guide to the den, I went to an Indian reservation maintained by the state of Connecticut for the last scattered remains of the Indians who harried our forefathers two and a half centuries ago. All the might and power of those Indians has ebbed. The reservation was a little clearing on the side of Kent Mountain.

There lived Jim Pan, the last of the Pequots. He had a son named Tin Pan, who never spoke unless he had something to say, which was not more than twice a year. The two lived all alone in a little cabin on the far side of the reservation. On the outside of Jim's door some wag had once painted a skull and crossbones, on a night when Jim was away from home. When the last of the Pequots had returned, he had vowed that he would nail the scalp of the artist over his painting—but he never did. And after all these years, the skull still shows faintly on the cabin door.

It was standing out clearly on that long-ago May day when I went to get Jim Pan to act as my guide. I knew that Jim owned the secret of a rattlesnake den up on the mountainside.

Such dens aren't uncommon. Rattlesnakes have a curious habit of assembling shortly before the first frost near some rocky ledge full of holes and crevices where they hibernate coiled up together during the winter. In the spring they come out and linger around the den for some weeks before dispersing to their hunting grounds in the lower valleys.

The secret of the Kent Mountain den had been in the Pan family for a number of generations and all the Pans had done a thriving business in rattlesnakes, selling skins and oils and live specimens.

It was still cold enough for the snakes to be lingering around on that May morning when I traveled with an ornithologist friend to Jim's cabin and persuaded him, in consideration of the sum of two dollars to him in hand paid, to show us the den. Tin Pan went along too. When we started out, all four of us were armed with forked sticks, Tin Pan carried a gunny sack, and the Ornithologist an enormous pair of field glasses.

Jim led us up a steep path to a gloomy ledge of rocks overshadowed by dark pines, which he informed us was the den. We separated and began to investigate the possibilities of the place. Suddenly Jim, who was 30 yards to one side of me, thrust one foot up in the air like a ballet dancer and pirouetted with amazing speed. He had been on the point of stepping over a small bush when he had seen on its far side a five-foot rattlesnake in coil, as pretty a death trap as was ever set in the woods.

A RATTLESNAKE is supposed to rattle before he strikes. Sometimes he does—sometimes he doesn't. Which reminds me of Tony, who was working on railroad construction in a snake district in the South. He had been told by his companions of the warning that a rattlesnake is reputed to give before attacking.

One day at the noon hour Tony happened to be seated by himself on a log eating his lunch. All at once he noticed a huge rattler coiled at the other end of the log not six feet away. As it hadn't rattled, Tony went on eating. Suddenly the snake struck and although he missed the lunch eater by a considerable margin, Tony was much incensed by the rattler's unsportsmanlike behavior.

"Hi, there, you son of gun, why you no ringa da gong?" he bellowed, scrambling to his feet and looking for a stick.

The snake in Jim Pan's path was evidently another one of the same kind with no regard for the etiquette of the occasion, for it never made a sound, even when the Indian's foot was almost upon it. By the time I got there, Jim had pinned the great snake's hissing, heart-shaped head down with his forked stick and the bloated body was thrashing through the air in circles, the rattles whirring incessantly.

"Grip him just back of the stick," panted Jim, bearing down with all his weight, "an' put him in the bag."

I paused—a fine, large, full-grown pause, if you ask me.

"You're not scared, are you?" inquired Jim, while Tin Pan, who had hurried up with his gunny sack, regarded me reproachfully.

"Certainly not," I assured him indignantly, "but I don't want to be selfish about this. How about Tin Pan's doing it?"

"No," said Jim firmly, "you're company. Tin can pick up rattlesnakes any day."

"Well, what about my friend here?" I rejoined weakly, pointing to the Ornithologist.

That individual, who had been watching the scene from the far background, spoke up for himself.

"I wouldn't touch that snake," he said violently, "for eleven million dollars!"

Such violence startled the rattlesnake into another paroxysm, and his rattles sounded like an alarm clock. When he stopped to rest, the Ornithologist raised his price to an even billion—in gold.

It was evident that I was the white man's hope. It would never do to let two members of a conquered race see a paleface falter. Remembering the Deerslayer, Daniel Boone, and sundry other brave white men, I set my teeth, gripped the rough, cold, scaly body just back of the crotched stick, and lifted. The great snake's lidless black eyes seemed like peepholes into an inferno, and as he came clear of the ground he coiled his body around my arm so that the rattles sounded right in my ear.

"If you ain't scared," said Jim Pan, watching me critically, "what makes your arm shake so?"

"It's probably a touch of rheumatism," I assured him.

Suddenly, under my grip, the snake's mouth opened, showing on either side of the upper jaw ridges of white gum. From these flashed the movable fangs that are always folded back until ready for use—crooked, hollow, keen, glistening needles. Halfway down on the side of each was a tiny hole, from which the golden venom, the very essence of death, slowly oozed. I began tremulously to unwind my unwelcome armlet, while Tin waited with the open bag.

"Be sure you take your hand away quick after you drop him in," advised Jim Pan.

I assured the last of the Pequots that I would not overlook that detail and thereupon unwound the rattling coils from my arm, lowered the writhing body into Tin's bag, let go the head, and then broke all speed records in removing my hand from the vicinity of that snake.

Such was my first introduction to the King of the Dark Places, the grim timber or banded rattlesnake, the handsomest of all the 13 varieties found within the United States.

MY most recent experience with the Poison People has been down in the Okefinokee Swamp, that old Seminole stronghold which stretches for 600 square miles between Georgia and Florida and is perhaps the wildest bit of virgin territory in eastern America. There I spent a week on a hidden island in the depths of the swamp, with Uncle Billy Spalding, a little gnome of a man with a white mustache and bristling white hair, who lived there all alone.

The first night of my arrival at Secret Island I sat for a long time gossiping with Uncle Billy and listening to the bellowing of the alligators all around us. At last it came time for me to leave Uncle Billy's cabin and go back to my camp.

"Wait a minute an' I'll light a lantern for you," said the old man.

"I don't need a lantern, Uncle Billy," I assured him. "It's only 100 yards to go."

"Son," said Uncle Billy, earnestly, "it ain't far, but if you go without a lantern you're liable never to get there. Do you see that chap on the wall?" And he pointed out to me the skin of a magnificent diamond-back rattler as wide as both my hands, with 21 rattles and a button.

"Well, suh," he continued, "them babies do their huntin' at night. I was goin' along after dark on the path you're goin' to take when I heard a rustlin'. It seemed to come from all around me an' I stood like I was froze an' yelled my head off for Rid Chesser, who was stoppin' with me. He came out with a torch an' there, not a yard in front o' me, was coiled up the snake who owned that skin. Rid hit that snake a clip with his torch an' bruk his back. If I'd moved one inch after that ol'-timer's alarm clock went off, I'd be six feet underground to-night.

"Yes," he went on, "you take a lantern an' when you go through that patch of dwarf palmettos you step kind o' high an' proud."

Needless to say, I carried that lantern and probably stepped higher and prouder and slower than any other man who ever visited Secret Island.

A few days later Uncle Billy was poling me through the swamp in a little sneak-boat and pushed the boat through a fringe of bushes. Suddenly there was a thud behind me as if someone had dropped a piece of heavy fire hose into the boat, and I heard Uncle Billy give a gasp. Then at my back came that sound which no man born of woman may hear unmoved—the fierce, thick hiss of a snake. Glancing over my

shoulder, I saw the head of a monstrous serpent rising from the bottom of the boat not a foot from me. As I stared helplessly at it, the grim mouth slowly opened, showing the white lining that marks the dreaded cottonmouth moccasin.

The snake had been basking in the upper branches of a bush and, startled by our approach, had tried to slip into the water only to land in the bottom of the boat. It was the largest water snake I have ever seen, fully five feet long and as thick as my forearm. It was a dingy brown, with dark blotches showing faintly along its back.

I had no weapon of defense, and my legs were so cramped that I didn't dare try to stand. I knew I should fall out of the boat. Besides, the snake was so close to me that any attempt on my part to move would probably be met by a dart from the curved, movable fangs that I could see faintly showing in the white gum of the upper jaw.

I stayed still, very still, watching the snake over my shoulder. It was so close to me that I could plainly see the pit between the nostril and the eye and the curious oval pupil in the glassy, lidless eyes.

A diamond-back rattler with its higher tension would in a similar situation undoubtedly have bitten me. A moccasin, however, although it will open its mouth and hiss when approached, rarely strikes unless actually threatened.

For what seemed to me a long time I sat motionless. At last the menacing mouth closed, the great heart-shaped head thrust itself over the side of the boat and the monstrous body flowed after it, smooth as oil, and with scarcely a ripple disappeared into the water.

"I don't mind meetin' a bear, although some folks get flustered when a big ol' he one charges, grittin' his teeth an' smashin' down the bresh," Uncle Billy reflected as he poled on, "but a big ol' rattler or a moccasin gets me creepy — they look so kind o' unfriendlylike."

ON another occasion while out with Uncle Billy in the boat, I suddenly saw a monstrous brown shape coiled high up in the branches of a huge gall-berry bush beneath which we were about to pass. I was sitting in the bow with my gun across my knees and the snake would probably drop on my head. Taking quick aim, I fired and the moccasin, nearly cut in two, fell into the water close beside the astonished Uncle Billy, who received it with a yell. For a moment the open, white-lined mouth, with its two fangs dripping with yellow venom, showed above the water and then sank out of sight.

Uncle Billy sighed deeply. "I can't never tell what you're goin' to do next," he said at last as we headed for home.

Later on I became better acquainted with that Prince of the Swamp, the diamond-back rattlesnake, and learned to know what a fearsome fellow he really is. He is very rarely encountered, as he hunts mostly by night. If once met by day, a diamond-back scorns to retreat but fairly hurls himself into position and makes ready to fight to the finish. He is the heaviest of all venomous snakes and I have seen one that was nine feet long. With his brilliant marking, gray-brown bordered with gold with a dark band edged with yellow beneath each eye and a row of velvet-black diamonds along its back, the great viper is a terrible, beautiful creature.

The strike of a diamond-back is perhaps the swiftest thing in nature. At the moment of striking, the snake's mouth gapes open so wide that the curved movable fangs stand straight out. Then the great head, nearly as large as a man's fist, darts through the air like a spear, too fast for the eye to follow. In the middle of each fang is a small hole like that seen in the side of a hypodermic needle and at the moment of striking, the muscles around the poison sacs contract, driving the deadly golden venom deep into the blood of the victim.

While in the swamp, Uncle Billy told me a long series of snake stories including one about the blowing viper whose breath, he said, was as fatal as its bite. I recognized from his description the hog-nose snake, often called the puffing adder, probably the most maligned snake in America. It really should be named the bluffing adder. It is a perfectly harmless reptile, but when met it flattens its head, puffs out its body and hisses and strikes, pretending to be a most dangerous snake indeed.

In spite of its alarming appearance, however, the hognose snake never bites and when once convinced that it cannot frighten an intruder away, turns over and pretends to be dead. In that state its mouth gapes open, its long, forked tongue hangs out limply and it shows absolutely no sign of life—save one. A hognose argues that all respectable snakes die stomach-up. Accordingly, if anyone turns the apparently dead snake over so that its back is upwards, very quietly and gently the hognose will wriggle over until its stomach once more points skyward.

Another story that Uncle Billy told me, which at first I thought was as much of a mistake as the one about the hognose snake, was about a girl who died from the bite of a garter snake.

"No garter snake is poisonous, Uncle Billy," I objected.

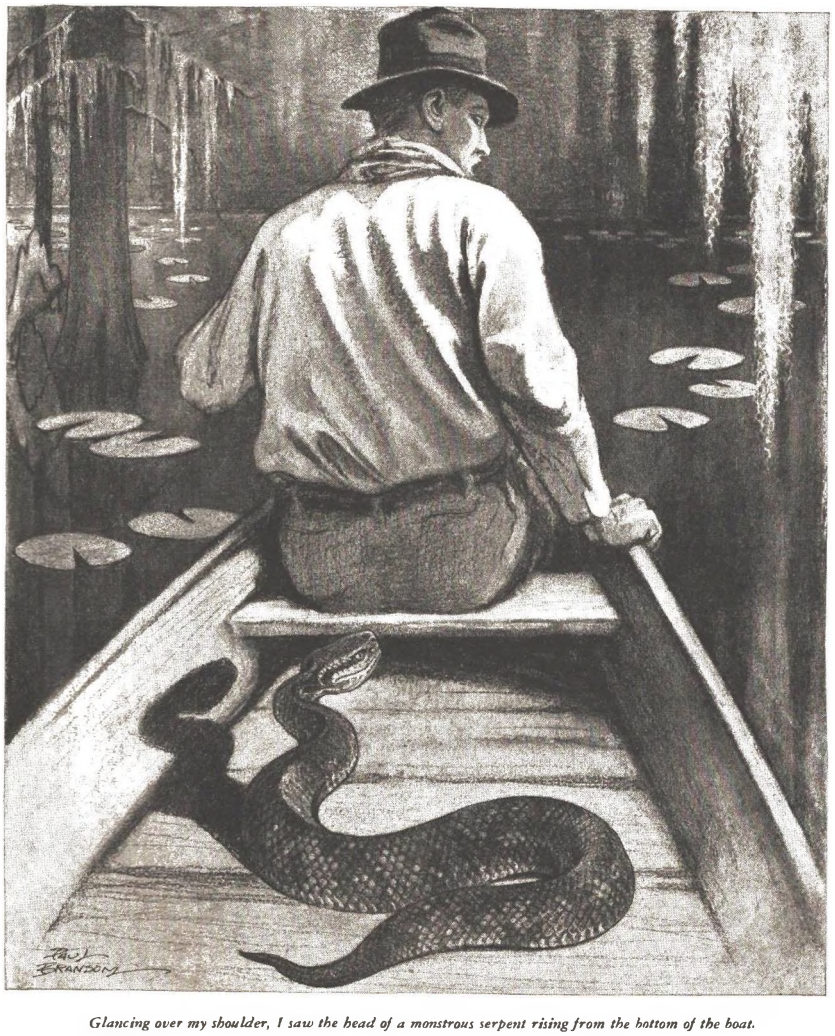
"All I know is that the gal was bit by a garter an' died—an' there've been others," he persisted.

When at last I got him to describe the snake in detail, I recognized it as none other than the coral snake, a dangerous reptile with short, fixed hollow fangs, which belongs to the same sub-family as the cobras. A coral snake because of its small size, beautiful color, and sluggish ways, camouflages its real deadliness. When it does strike, however, it moves with a lashing swiftness no human can escape.

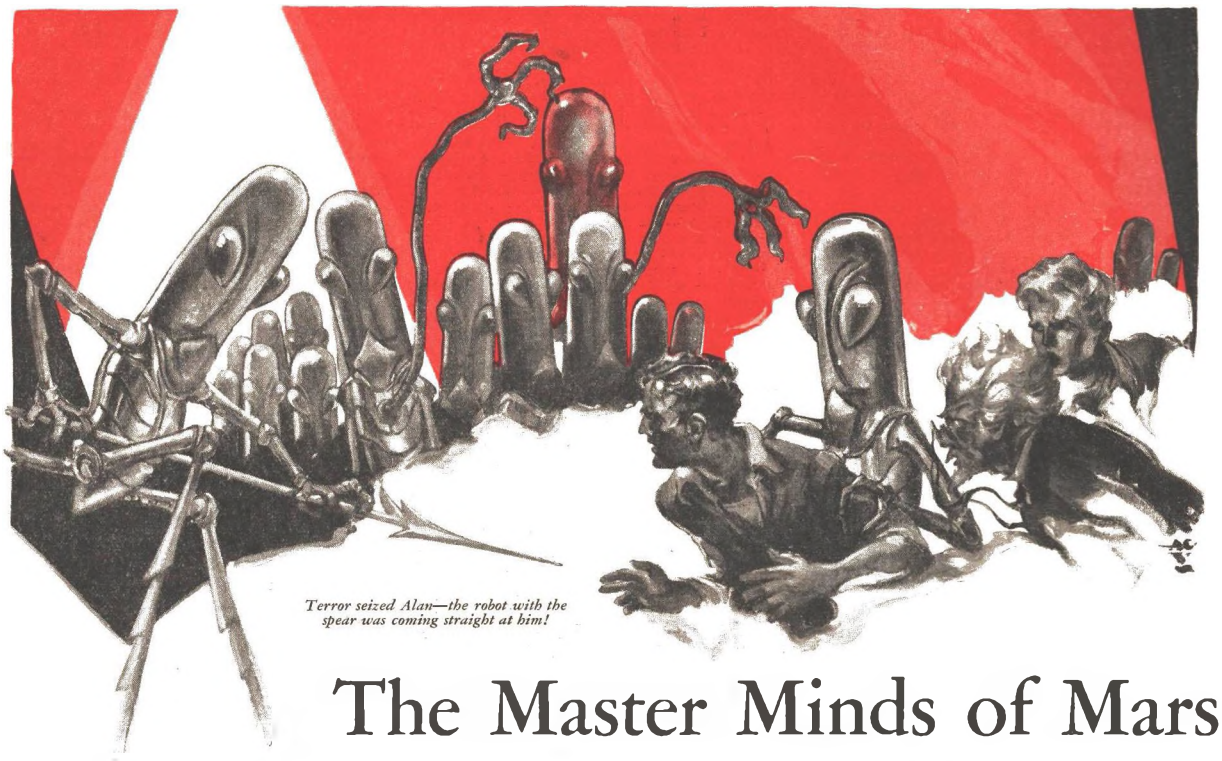
First-aid treatment of a bite by a venomous snake is simple, although somewhat heroic. As soon as possible after the bite, a ligature must be wound as tightly as possible between the bite and the heart. This must be loosened after 15 minutes; otherwise mortification may set in. After ligaturing, the fang marks must be cut through deeply with a knife and the blood sucked out of the wound. The venom of a rattlesnake can be taken into the mouth with impunity if at once spit out; it is dangerous only when introduced into the blood stream.

After the wound is ligatured, cut, and sucked out, it should be kept covered with a moist antiseptic bandage until it heals.

Probably the worst thing that can be done for a person bitten by a venomous snake is to give him whisky. If the action of his heart becomes impaired, a hypodermic of some heart stimulant may be injected, but never any form of alcohol.



Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the head of a monstrous serpent rising from the bottom of the boat.



Terror seized Alan—the robot with the spear was coming straight at him!

The Master Minds of Mars

By Carl H. Claudy and Dr. John C. Page

Illustrated by A. C. Valentine

The Preceding Chapters

THEY were explorers extraordinary! — the two young men and the elderly scientist who had landed on Mars.

It was white-haired Dr. Isaac Lutyens, Aberdonian professor of physics and higher mathematics, who had made the trip possible. Alan Kane, the brainy young scientist, and Ted Dolliver, the brawny young adventurer, were the professor's assistants.

The three had made the voyage from the earth to Mars in a little over a month, sailing through space at 20 miles a second in the professor's amazing little steel and aluminum ship, the *Wanderer*.

To the unscientific, it was unbelievable what that ship could do! But to the professor, there was no magic about it. In short everyday words, he had explained the shining spheroid that was a ship.

"I know how gravity to control," he had said to his young assistants. "I turn the lines of force back upon themselves, so that they work in the opposite direction. Thus I make things fall *up*, instead of down. It was a simple discovery—so simple I cannot understand why others have not stumbled on it. But it is of vast importance. Now I am of the solar system master! Will you—knowing that you run great risks—will you go with me to Mars?"

Great risks! The danger of striking an asteroid somewhere up in space, and burning up. The probability of losing their way. The chance that the batteries might give out. The unknown and perhaps horrible dangers on Mars itself—they ran a thousand risks, and all three knew it.

Yet, knowing it, they had started, in that amazingly contrived spheroidal airship. . . . And they had reached Mars. The *Wanderer* had floated to a landing place, and they had climbed down to look around them with fast beating hearts.

They saw a place of fernlike trees, a wooded countryside crossed by great canals. Then they saw, at work in one of these canals, a busy army of queer metal creatures.

Were they men or machines? The three breathless watching explorers wondered. And would they be friendly or unfriendly?

Suddenly, out of the distance, appeared a commander of the machine-like workers—a six-foot being riding in what seemed the cockpit of a sort of mechanical ostrich about forty feet high.

This commander gave his orders. The machines of Mars scrambled up out of their canal—and surrounded the explorers!

Alan found himself seized by the pincerlike claws of the machines, and held motionless. Then with sick horror he saw the commander, who had dismounted, approach him, and thrust a strange beaked face almost into his.

Chapter Three

ALAN strained desperately to reach his automatic. But it was in his left-hand pocket, and his left hand was held by the pincerlike jaws of the mechanical arm; his right was gripped by the half-velvet, half-rubbery fingers on the end of the proboscis that came from the chest of the Martian beast.

His thoughts raced. A thousand details crowded before his eyes in a fraction of a second: the great beak approaching his face—horny, open, cadaverous; the teeth of the pincerlike clamp tightly holding his left hand; the strange eyelike structures in the central domes of the two machines that pinioned his companions; the professor's horrified face; Ted's mouth, set and savage and—could Ted help? Ted was held only about the waist; his hands were free—

"Hold hard, Alan!" yelled Ted. "I'll be with you in a moment—"

His great shoulders set. His strong hands fastened to the jaws of the terrible engine that gripped him. Despairingly Alan knew that even if Ted broke that confining pressure, he couldn't prevail against the forces arrayed against them. If Ted waited, he might yet save himself and the professor—

"No, no!" Alan screamed. "Wait—I'm done for. Wait! Save yourself! Save the professor—"

"Got guts, haven't you?" Ted grunted.

In that moment of hideous fear Alan felt his courage flow back at Ted's praise. He listened to the professor crying out in German, French and Spanish, in an effort to communicate with these impossible creatures. And in spite of himself, Alan smiled.

The moment passed, and there was no attack. The strange Martian bug paid no attention to the professor's flow of words. The hand on one of his short arms fingered Alan's arm, then prodded gently at his head.

Alan jerked his head away—that thing might put out an eye! His heart raced with excitement and fear. If the creature attacked him, helpless as he was, would Ted think to shoot in time? The hand felt his clothing, dived into a pocket and brought forth a handkerchief, dropped it, examined his shoes and tugged at his trousers. All the while the two protruding eyes bored into Alan's.

In other circumstances Alan might have smiled at the ridiculous figure. The Martian stood upright on two thin, horny legs, innocent of clothing. The short body, Alan saw with a gulp, was jointed like the belly of a beetle. A long and narrow head joined the body with no indication of a neck. Bulbous eyes, at least two inches across, sticking out on either side of his head, gazed impersonally at every new object his fingers brought forth. The antenna obtruded from his chest. Two thin, weak-looking arms hung at the queer being's side.

The general effect was grotesque and unreal. Yet the expression of the face, if horny features could be said to have an expression, was as impersonally benignant as that of a happy horse.

Three kinds of beings surrounded the earth men. The ostrich-like running machines with legs 40 feet high. The machine-like digging bugs. And the beetle-like Martian. And obviously the latter was the brains of the assembly. He, alone, showed curiosity.

FIVE long minutes passed during the examination. The creature was thorough and methodical. Certainly he was intelligent. There was purpose in every movement. After he had finished his examination he proceeded to something incomprehensible. A croaking that might have been words came from the beak-like mouth. Immediately one of the machines standing motionless galloped off in a waddle of six jointed mechanical legs, to return in a minute with what appeared to Alan to be a tape measure!

The creature raised his mechanical-looking arms, each of which was supplied with three of the rubbery projections such as terminated the antenna. With the help of the machine, the Martian proceeded to measure Alan's head from front to back, and then around forehead and neck. The Martian then measured the professor.

"You can't measure me, you insect!" Ted raised his gun.

"Use your head, Ted!" Alan begged. "If you resist, he'll make that machine hold your hands. He doesn't know firearms!"

"I don't like him!" responded Ted. "I hate bugs—"

But he submitted to the measuring process, mean-

while holding the gun in his hands. The strange creature paid no attention to it.

The measuring finished, the Martian uttered a word. It sounded like *iklackic*. The long trellislike strut of one of the machines wavered down, the Martian stepped upon it, and was swung to the cockpit of his huge machine-ostrich. Here he uttered a few more syllables in the unknown tongue, then was gone, with a sputter of dirt spurned by mechanical feet. In a minute he was beyond the horizon!

Alan was free for a moment, but before he noticed it one of the bugs had seized him.

"I ought to have shot him!" grumbled Ted. "Where do we go from here?"

As the thing in authority disappeared, the three machines that held them brought other pincer-equipped arms into action, picked them up and set each down on a small platform next the dome that formed the center of each machine. They started forward in a queer waddling gallop of six metal legs, each man on the platform of a separate machine.

"Stop it, stop it!" cried the professor. "If we lose the *Wanderer*—"

If we lose the Wanderer! It was their only method of getting back, and if it were destroyed, they were on Mars for life. Even if it weren't destroyed, these creatures might take them so far they could never find their way back to it. That, Alan thought, would be the ultimate horror.

Discretion flew to the winds. The terror of these few minutes might be nothing to what was to come. With a sudden jerk Alan freed a hand from the jaws that held him and leaped from the little platform. He would race to the sphere, and in it follow his companions over the surface of Mars. Whatever happened they must not lose their only connection with earth.

SWIFT as light the machine whirled in its tracks, sunlight flashing on its four whiplike mechanical arms. They caught him before he had run 20 feet. He fought viciously for an instant, but how can flesh fight against metal? Four serrated metal jaws held Alan's arms and legs, and carried him through the air 10 feet above ground to slam him back upon the platform. The jaws bit cruelly into his flesh. Involuntarily he cried out in agony.

To Ted that cry was a plea for help. He thrust his gun against one of the glasslike eyes in the little dome of the machine that held him, and pulled the trigger!

Glass—if it was glass—flew in all directions. The machine stopped instantly to sink slowly to the ground, its six jointed legs spraddling helplessly. The jaws about Ted's wrist relaxed. The machines carrying Alan and the professor whirled about at the shot and stopped before their stricken companion.

Alan lay on his side, held as securely as if he'd been in handcuffs and leg irons. The inflexible metal hands hurt him horribly. He tried to stifle his groan, but Ted heard it. With a cry of rage Ted leaped at Alan's machine, swung himself up to the platform, and tore desperately at the metal jaws that held Alan. His shoulders strained, his great arms swelled. Slowly but surely he pulled the jaws apart. Alan got one arm free. He searched wildly for the automatic. Why didn't Ted shoot this living engine that tormented him, why didn't—

But the freedom lasted only a moment. The metal jaws broke from Ted's hands with a snap, opened, and caught Ted around the throat. Ted gasped, but the pincers choked off the gasp. Even his iron strength couldn't get purchase to tear them loose. A short struggle and he sank down on Alan, helpless.

Alan thought, "This is the end!" The pincers would squeeze the life from Ted, after which, doubtless, they would tear him limb from limb—

But the Martians in the machines—how could living beings be inside those domes?—evidently were not vengeful. With relief Alan felt the metal which clamped his arms and legs relax. Ted groaned—he couldn't groan if he were being choked to death! The great metal arms lifted both and stood them on their feet, still holding tightly.

"Some squeeze!" gasped Ted, feebly trying to loosen the teeth which held his neck.

"Some man!" cried Alan. "Owe you one for that—"

"Are you both alive?" cried the professor anxiously from his platform. "I am held. I cannot come—see, see! He shot it und it *bleed!*"

From the bullet hole in the "eye" of the helpless mechanism dripped a thick blue-gray liquid, suggesting blood the more horribly that it was not red.

"I knew he lived in there," gurgled Ted. "Now I'll shoot this baby and we'll get back to the sphere. I've had enough of Mars to last me some time, thank you—"

BUT before he could aim the weapon, a lightning swift mechanism-arm swept him off his feet, two other pincer jaws held him fast and plumped him down beside Alan. The two machines, one bearing both boys, one the professor, set off as before.

"Something about this machine thinks!" cried Alan. "But only a tiny dwarf could live in this thing—" he pounded emphatically against the dome—it was perhaps 12 inches round and 24 high. Then he cried out in pain as the pincers about his free hand squeezed deeply into his flesh.

The god in the machine did not like its dome pounded!

"Better kill this one, too!" begged Ted, imperturbable as ever. "Then we'll kill the doc's and get back—"

"No!" called the professor. "No! We come not to kill. How can we learn if we destroy that which may teach us?"

"But the sphere—the sphere! If we lose the sphere—" cried Alan, aghast at mercy under such circumstances. Brawn, not brain, was wanted here—

"I can the sphere find!" answered the professor. "Do not fire again. Instead, observe the mechanism of this—this living machine!"

"He's the doctor!" agreed Ted, thrusting his gun into his pocket with one free hand. "Boy—this thing pinches!" He regarded narrowly the serrated jaws which held him. "Did you ever see such a machine! Those ropes, cords, chains, whatever they are, work like muscles—"

Apparently the motive power of the mechanism was in a dozen or more round containers below the platform. From these circular boxes, each perhaps a foot in diameter and four inches thick, came rope-like members attached to the six legs and the four "hands." The "legs" were jointed metal, polished like steel and moved by the "muscles." Watching them extending and retreating out of and into their housing, Alan grew sick at his stomach. The outward ends of those "muscles" might be hemp or rubber or wire, or all three, but the inner portion which wound into the boxes had the texture of thick black flesh.

A dome too small for intelligent beings, which bled when shot; "muscles" half metal, half flesh; machines which obeyed words of command and showed intelligence—what was the answer to such a puzzle? Could a mechanism be alive?

"Nonsense!" cried Alan aloud, to keep up his courage. Cautiously he changed his position, leaning against the dome. "If those glass things are eyes, then—"

He put his free hand against one of the glass eyes. A metal arm grasped his hand and pulled it away. Alan cried out in pain at the squeeze.

"Better behave," grinned Ted. "Lucky it doesn't know what I did or—"

"How do you know it doesn't?"

"Because I'm still alive!" answered Ted, simply. "Those derricks it uses for arms could tear you to pieces like a scrap of paper—"

Conversation was difficult. The two machines galloped over the country 30 feet apart. Whatever their purpose, passenger carrying was evidently not one. The jolting was severe and the words they could cry to each other were fragmentary and disjointed.

"Think Doc's—all wrong!" Ted muttered in Alan's ear. "Kill this brute and the one that's got him, get back to the sphere and—let's see 'em catch us then!"

Alan felt uncomfortably that Ted was right. Brawn here was better than brains! He did not want to disobey the professor, but he wished Ted would—and was ashamed of the thought. Strength and a pistol had saved his reason, if not his life. He could not have stood that terrible torture much longer. His arms and legs were numb; why his bones were not crushed he did not understand.

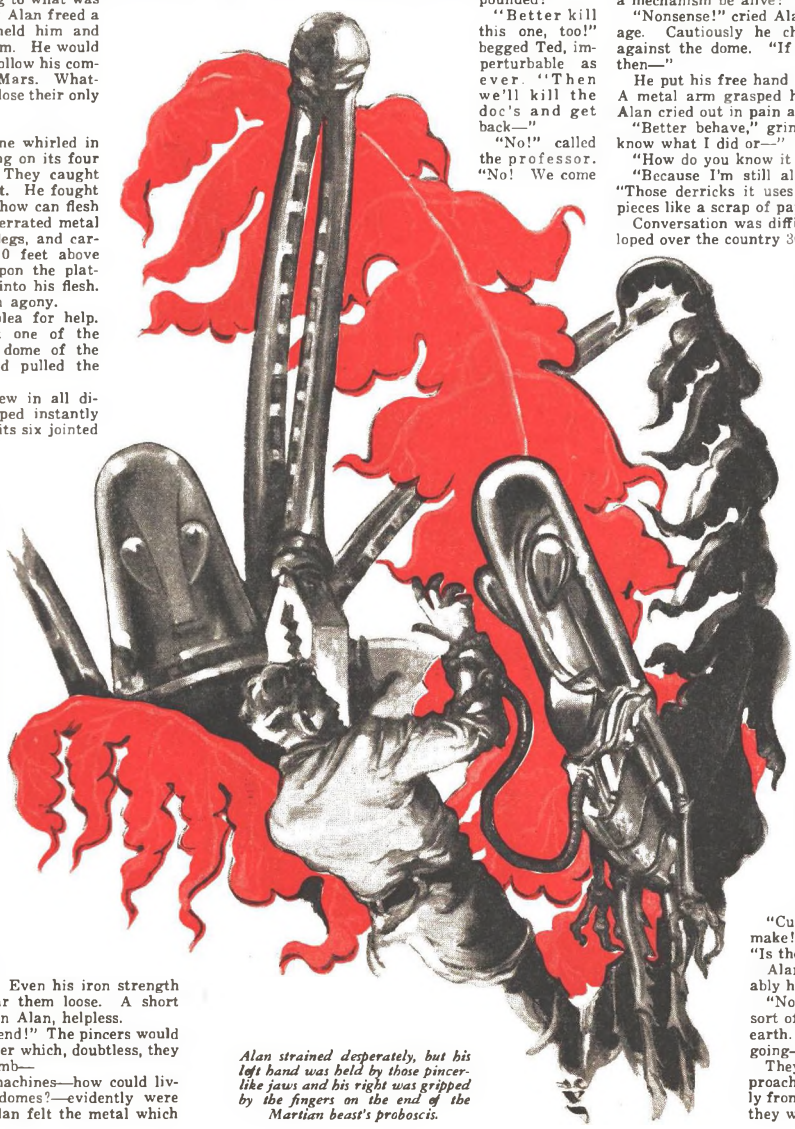
KEEN rare air, jerky motion, a fearful curiosity made recovery quick. With less chaotic thoughts came wonder at the queer machine-animals, or animal-machines, which carried them, the unknown power which moved them, the beetle-like creature in the huge mechanical bird which had commanded, measured, and fled—

"Curious how little noise they make!" The words jolted from Ted. "Is there a road, can you see?"

Alan looked—he was more favorably held for observation than Ted.

"No. Just country. Except for a sort of red grass it looks much like earth. Wonder where we are going—"

They had not long to wait. Approaching a cliff, rising precipitately from the rolling plane over which they were borne, Alan expected the



Alan strained desperately, but his left hand was held by those pincer-like jaws and his right was gripped by the fingers on the end of the Martian beast's proboscis.

machine to turn aside. They hurtled towards it at a speed Alan estimated at about thirty miles an hour. He saw a black spot which grew in size, became a hole, enlarged—a tunnel!

The machine scrambled through an opening in the rock 20 feet wide and high. Transition from brilliant sunlight to semi-darkness blinded them for a few seconds; then they saw that the underground passage down which the machines ambled, more slowly now, was illuminated by a peculiar blue glow from certain parts of the rocky ceiling.

"Seems to go downwards," Ted noted. And "see-eee-eeemms to-o-o g-o-o down-n-n-wards-s" echoed in ghostly reverberations from wall and ceiling, from side passage and curve.

The passage obviously led to lower levels. It seemed a longer journey than it was—Alan learned later that it was less than a mile. They passed many rooms on either hand, in which mechanisms flashed, their curiously unreal silence lending a touch of the macabre to their motions. In one room, the man-machines were lugging out some huge glass cylinders. In another they seemed to be storing away more of these great jars. The boys saw no sign of understandable life until—

"Jumping Joseph! Look at that!" gasped Alan. Ted grunted in amazement; from behind they heard the professor's choked cry of wonder.

The passage spread into a great domed chamber 300 feet across and 100 high. Blue illumination made every detail plain. But neither size of room nor quality of light had brought the wonder to their lips; it was the gathering in the center.

Upon a platform perhaps four feet high, looking like a Chinese throne, sat a Martian just like the commander of the machine-ostrich—just like him except in size. Alan estimated his height as eight feet. Around him were a dozen others, smaller.

"Behold the Lord High King Bug!" chuckled Ted. "Now we're in for it."

The words chilled Alan. "Say, Ted!" he said, quietly. "If we—we—well, if we don't get through, thanks for what you did. That was swell—"

"Brawn, my boy!" Ted's grin took the sting from the words. "We'll get through—"

THE machines slithered to a stop just outside the circle. Alan felt the grips on hands and feet tighten, and he was lifted and laid gently on a floor apparently hewn from solid rock. It felt cool through his clothing. Ted was swung down beside him, the professor came running up and they stood shoulder to shoulder, a part of the circle of strange beetlelike men.

One stepped forward — it might have been the rider of the machine-ostrich, but it might too have been any other — and evidently spoke about them. The words reminded Alan oddly of the clanking of machinery; the language seemed largely made up of the sounds of k and c. The speech was short. Then the figure on the throne spoke, its rising inflection obviously asking a question. The first speaker answered. The figure on the platform cried a raucous command, and a rather awkward but swift moving something —machine or Martian—padded across the room on three swift feet which sounded metallic on the stone floor.

It had a general resemblance to the creatures around them, but was oddly different.

"It's not alive—it's a machine!" gasped Ted. "Same dome, same glass eyes—"

Alan looked at the thing in horror. Ted was right. It was an imitation of the living creatures, except that it had no proboscis and proceeded on three legs instead of two. But its legs and arms moved by means of "muscles" like those on the bug-machines, and its body was of a different texture.

Yet it proceeded in a businesslike manner—seemed to know just what it was about. And Alan discovered, as it stopped in front of him, what its business was. One of its hands held a metal tape measure, and—the expression in its protruding eyes utterly blank—it commenced to measure his head!

"They must want to give us crowns or something," suggested Ted. "The first hatter didn't measure us right!"

They submitted with as good a grace as possible to the proceeding. But it was harder not to protest by resistance when the "King Bug," as Ted insisted on calling the central figure, obtruded his antenna and proceeded to repeat the investigatory process to which the machine-ostrich rider had subjected them. He—it?—was much more thorough. He dived into each pocket, examined each piece of clothing, felt gingerly of hair and caps, and would have poked tentative velvetlike "fingers" into their eyes had they not jerked their heads around.

The examination lasted perhaps ten minutes, during which the dozen or so Martians chattered in low tones, with clucking, clanking, clicking words. It seemed to Alan that he heard often that metallic sound, *iklackic!*

Then came danger, sudden and terrible.

The eight-foot chief up on the throne droned a clanking command. From the side appeared another machine-man like the one who had just measured their heads. But his short arms gripped a long spear with a glittering point, and he held it at the charge, its shaft parallel to the floor.

TERROR seized Alan as the figure placed itself directly opposite him. Cold sweat stood out on his forehead, and his hand moved lightning fast for his automatic. But even faster moved the hands of the first robot, and his arms were again gripped and held motionless. Then strength left him, for the robot with the spear had launched into a run, and the spear was coming straight at his breast!

That was an age-long moment for young Alan Kane. He had a dim impression of the blank faces of the Martians, the choking gasp from Ted, the horror in the deep-set eyes of the professor. He found himself unable to shout, to move a muscle, even to breathe. The spear point was only a yard away—

Crash!

That was Ted's automatic. With inspired speed and accuracy, the "brawn" of the professor's team had acted. And his bullet had sped straight at the head of the machine. With a metallic clatter the figure fell to the floor, its spear jangling beside it. The other robot still held Alan, and he saw that no Martian paid the slightest attention to the fallen machine-man.

Danger was not over. For the Martian who had first spoken seized the spear, and awkwardly was poking it in his direction. Alan found his voice.

"Ted! Can you—"

But again the automatic roared, and the Martian sank to the floor, crying thinly. A thick blue-gray fluid flowed from the huge rent in his chest—sickening, ghastly.

Then Alan tore himself loose from the robot which held him, Ted shoved the professor against Alan and the three stood back to back, at bay.

"I shoot, now!" cried the professor weakly. "I come in peace und they make war! We kill many before—before—"

"Hold your fire, Doc!" commanded Ted. "They still don't know what's happened! They never saw firearms! Wait—wait—"

It was good advice. Obviously the Martians were puzzled.

It seemed grimly odd that they were not instantly killed. The very indifference of the strange beings to the damage that had been done one of their machines, to the killing of one of their number—he was very dead, indeed, was inhumanly horrible. Not a look or a glance was given the figures on the floor. . . .

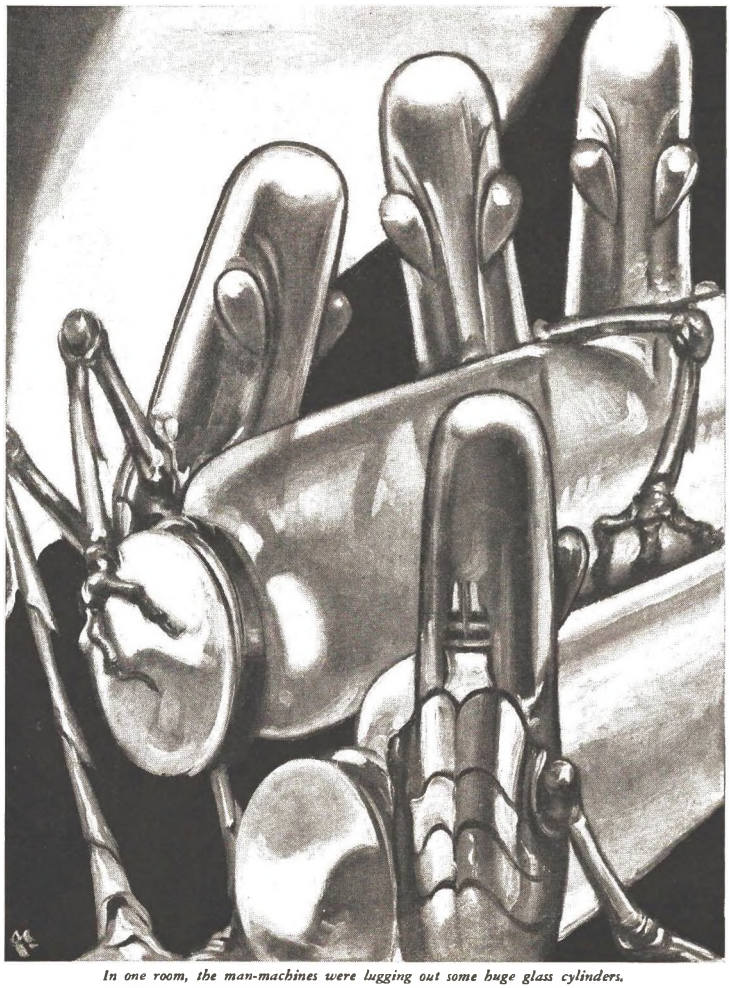
A great booming bell-sound filled the air. As if it were a signal, the Martians ceased their clicking to each other and walked — waddled more nearly expressed it — away from the tense group, waiting, pistols ready, for attack. The greater one turned and flung a few syllables into the air; three more robots approached and beckoned!

"Huh! The machines are more polite than the bugs!" grunted Ted, forgetting the manhandling the machines had given them. "Now we are invited to — well, your guess is as good as mine."

"We go — it is better we go!" advised the professor.

The robots fell into line with them — one ahead, two behind — and the queer procession walked across the great hall in the bright blue light to one of many openings, vaulted and round, that gave from it. Through a short passageway they were led into a big chamber. The leading robot stood aside to let them enter. Something clanged with a jar as the professor, bringing up the rear, passed the portal. Turning as one, they saw a grating had fallen behind them.

They were caged!

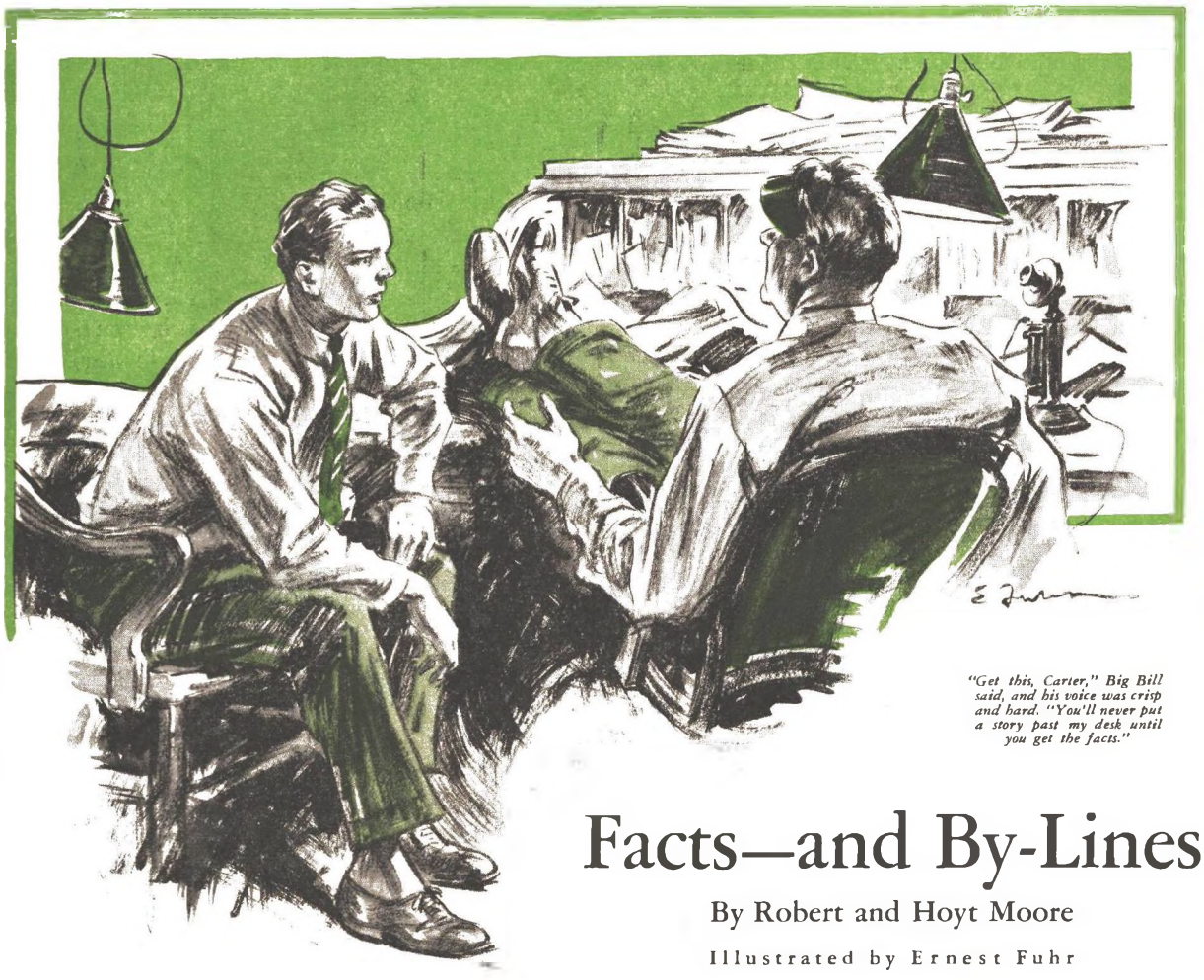


In one room, the man-machines were lugging out some huge glass cylinders.

Chapter Four

THE prison chamber, 30 feet wide, was round. In the center squatted a tablelike structure of metal polished to rubbed copper sheen but paler in color. Half a dozen smaller platforms with ends carved and raised, suggestive of couches, lined the wall. A number of small

(Continued on page 47)



"Get this, Carter," Big Bill said, and his voice was crisp and hard. "You'll never put a story past my desk until you get the facts."

Facts—and By-Lines

By Robert and Hoyt Moore

Illustrated by Ernest Fuhr

THE flatbed press in the basement began to throb. A boy hurried through the city room with a bundle of damp, sticky copies of the *News* under his arm. Phil Carter hailed him.

"Gimme one, Joe," he said, and the grimy youth flung one on his desk and hurried on toward the Boss's office, which opened off the city room.

Phil flipped open the paper, eager to see his story. It was the biggest one he had worked on in his six months as a reporter on the *News*. Short-handed because influenza had sent three men to hospitals, Big Jim Verity had put young Carter on a murder story, and Phil had done his best on the job. Now, remembering the fate of many other yarns, he wanted to see what Verity had done to it.

First page stuff, he had expected, and he was not disappointed. A flaring streamer ran across the page, with a two-column blackface opening paragraph on the outside columns. But as Phil's hasty glance ran through the paragraph a groan escaped him.

"Cooked again!" he muttered. "What does Big Jim have against me? He's cut the gizzard out of my story, just as he always does. I get the story and he writes it." In sudden disgust he threw the paper into a wastebasket. Pat Norris, plump advertising solicitor, leafing through the issue at a near-by desk, looked at him sardonically.

"'Smatter, Phil?" he called. "Big Jim sink you again?"

"Sunk without a trace." Phil's voice was bitter. "Didn't use a line of what I wrote. I got the facts and he wrote the story."

"Well, that's the way the big papers do, Phil," Norris said. "You're a leg man; Big Jim's the rewrite man. He was raised on a metropolitan sheet, you know. It's all in the game."

"But I want to write my own stuff," Phil said angrily. "I don't want to be a blooming errand boy for Big Jim Verity. Know what I'm going to do?"

"No." Norris looked curiously at Phil.

"I'm going through that door and ask Big Jim what he means by cutting my stuff to pieces!"

"Better leave the door open as you go in," Norris advised grimly. "You'll be in a hurry when you come out."

Phil set his thin lips.

"Well, he can't do anything but fire me. And I'd as soon be fired as go on this way."

And without a backward look he strode toward Verity's office. He was conscious of tightened nerves, and his heart fluttered, but he was ruled by a fierce desire to settle the issue with Verity.

BIG Jim Verity, owner and managing editor of the *News*, bore his name with justice. He was big. His body was tall, and there was fat on his tall frame. Even his head was large, with a great mane of iron-gray hair. He was seated at a large, untidy desk, and a green shaded light spilled a brilliant pool over its battered surface. A green eyeshade cast a shadow over his heavy face as he looked up.

"Hello, Carter," he growled. "Thought you'd be gone by this time. Edition's almost out."

"Yes, Mr. Verity," answered Phil, trying to control the quiver in his voice. "Usually am. But there's something I want to talk about." He paused uncertainly, and Big Jim waved a great hand toward a chair.

"Sit down, Carter," he said, and the youth almost started at the sudden friendliness in his tone. A queer man, this Big Jim Verity. Rough, hard, almost disagreeable at times, now he seemed to welcome the boy. Phil planted his long frame in an armchair.

"Chief—" Phil had to get the words out before his voice broke—"I want to know why you always cut my stuff to pieces!"

Big Jim laughed softly, and the laugh seemed to iron hard lines out of the heavy face. It was a friendly face, thought Phil suddenly. He'd never noticed that before.

One huge hand pushed back the green eyeshade as Big Jim turned toward the young reporter. The gray eyes, often cold and brittle, carried a wealth of friendliness, and the silent laugh became a smile that crept over the huge face.

"Kid," and Big Jim seemed to choose his words with care, "I've been waiting for you to ask me that. I was afraid you'd never come. . . . How long have you been noticing I was cutting your stuff?"

"Ever since I've been here," blurted Phil. "I don't think I've ever had a story printed the way I wrote it."

"Guess you're right," Big Jim assented. "And now you're wanting to know why?"

"Yes."

"Well, this may resolve itself into a school of instruction, Carter. Are you game enough to listen while I tell you something about news, and how to write—even if it proves unpleasant?"

"That's why I came here." Blue eyes met gray unflinchingly.

The huge hand again went up, and down came the eyeshade. Big Jim lifted his feet to the desk, leaned back, and began to talk.

"Carter," he said, and again his voice was crisp and hard, "I spent 20 years on a Chicago newspaper. Started as a reporter, worked on the rewrite desk, wound up as city editor. That's all I knew—getting and writing news. And I learned a lot about it, too. But I decided to take things easy.

"I bought this paper five years ago. It was dead from the neck up, but I put life into it. There are plenty of things I'd like to do to make it better, but I can't do everything at once. Now, all that I've been

through, and all I've done here, has not changed my idea of the proper way to write a news story. I can tell you in three words. Know what they are?"

Then before Phil could answer, Big Jim shot out the answer in hard, brittle tones:

"Get the facts!"

Phil stared.

"Don't I get the facts, Chief?"

"No." Big Jim's voice was still hard. "You get some of them, but you don't get enough. Instead of writing *the* story, you write *about* the story. You don't get into it. It's a picture of a story and not the real thing. Take this murder story of yours to-night. I went out on that myself after you came in. Didn't know that, did you?"

"No," Phil grunted in surprise.

"Fact. While you were writing I left my desk and went out on that yarn. I had a hunch you wouldn't get all the facts. I didn't get all of them either, but I got more than you did. You didn't find the two eye-witnesses, and you let the police bluff you out of interviewing the killer in jail. I found one of the witnesses and got a peach of a story out of him. I went straight to the mayor for an order to see the killer. He is a sullen swine and didn't talk much, but I got something out of him, as well as a word picture of him. And I got a statement from the cops and another from the prosecutor. With these points I built a story that stands up. Have you read it?"

"No," Phil confessed uneasily. "I saw you had rewritten the story and came straight here."

BIG JIM laughed, and again the friendly light came into the gray eyes.

"Well—I want you to read that story to-night and tell me to-morrow what you really think of it. It isn't the best story I ever did, nor the worst. But it's a newspaper yarn, with details followed up.

"And get this, Carter. You'll never put a story past my desk until you get the facts. The more facts you have the better story you will be able to write. And when you go to the trouble of getting all the facts you'll find yourself getting into the story. When you get into a story and feel the human drama that you are trying to tell you'll begin to write as you've never written before. Then you'll not have your stuff cut to pieces. Instead, you'll get by-lines on it."

Phil's spirit drooped under the blast of Verity's words; he was conscious that his face was fiery. Big Jim's keen eyes swept over the bowed head, and he rose. A great hand dropped on the boy's shoulder.

"You can do it, kid," he said, and the big voice was again softened with the sudden friendliness. "You can write. I know that. You've just had the wrong slant. And perhaps I'm unjust. I'm accustomed to bigger papers, with plenty of men to do everything. Guess I forget sometimes and get a grouch.

"Then, too, I'm afraid I'm in for a siege of flu. Don't feel right — but I mustn't get sick now, with three others off. You and I and Norris are all the force we have." There was a sober note in the hard voice, and Phil noticed that the big face was flushed and the eyes bloodshot. He rose to go. He was embarrassed, now.

"Thanks a lot, Chief," he muttered. "Guess I had this coming all right—and it gives me a new slant. And you'd better hurry home and take a big shot of quinine."

"Right," assented Big Jim, a sudden weariness in his big frame. "I must stay on this job until the others come back. Good night." He snapped out the light and slipped into his overcoat.

"Good night," Phil answered soberly, turning toward the city room. Looking back, he saw Big Jim lumbering through the street door, a sag in the wide shoulders he had never seen before.

Pat Norris looked up as Phil came past his desk. He rose as the young reporter passed his desk and seized him, turning him around carefully.

"What's wrong?" Phil asked in surprise.

"Looking for the wounds," Norris grinned. "Where'd he bite you?"

"Inside, feller, inside," Phil answered grimly. "You can't see 'em, but they're there, just the same. He bit right into the soul."

PAT chuckled. "Well, that's not as bad as I feared," he said. "I expected to see you come out on your ear. You're all right."

"No." Phil still spoke soberly. "Did anybody ever bite your soul?"

"Don't think so," Pat answered casually. "Matter of fact, I hardly ever bring it down here, anyhow. I leave it in a safe place, where Big Jim can't get his hands on it."

"He got 'em on mine to-night," Phil said. "May be good for me, but it hurt like sixty at the time. He told me my trouble, and he's right about it. I don't get the facts."

"Don't get the facts? How do you write your stuff, then, if you don't get the facts?"

"I don't write a story—that's just the trouble. I write a nice little essay about the story, Big Jim says."

"Funny, but a great man like me never noticed it."

"You wouldn't," Phil said. "To you a newspaper is a business proposition. You'll buy a paper some day and get rich, but all you'll care for is the advertising. You can sell that, but you don't know a newspaper story from a can opener. You think a story is just a big headline, with a lot of words underneath. But it's a whole lot more than that."

Pat surveyed him keenly.

"What are you going to do about it?"

Phil replied slowly, deliberately.

"I'm going to get 'em after this," he said. "I'm going to cover Big Jim up with facts. The next time I shoot a big story it's going to pass his desk without a change."

Pat glanced at the clock. One o'clock, and he knew the press was due to end its run. Even then he caught a slowing up in the hurried beat of the machine, and the vibration in the floor became less.

"Time to go home," he yawned. "Wish I never had to get up in the morning. This business of helping the news staff and keeping on at my regular job is getting monotonous."

"It may be worse," Phil observed. "Big Jim looked like a sick man to-night, and I'll bet he's coming down with flu."

"Well, if he does, you'll get promoted." Pat yawned again. "But I'm going home. Coming along?"

"No. I'm staying a while. Something I want to do. Go ahead. I'll close up."

"Okay. See you to-morrow." And Pat lounged out.

The sound from the pressroom had died away. The final was out, and Phil heard the truck roar away with its great pile of freshly printed papers. He glanced through the window and saw the truck speeding down a deserted street toward the highway, headlights picking its way. Phil knew the truck was starting on a hundred-mile drive, and it always gave him a thrill to think of the people who would open the paper in the fifty towns on the great highway.

He picked up a copy of the edition and settled down to read Big Jim's story. The boss had been right—he had made a better story than Phil had turned in. Short, gripping sentences, terse paragraphs, a vivid pen picture of the sullen killer as he paced his cell in the city prison, a graphic story of the shooting as an eye-witness saw it. No opinions of the writer, but all cold, hard facts — yes, Big Jim knew his stuff. With eyes rudely opened, Phil realized that he had not yet qualified in Big Jim's hard school. Ruthless the man was in his criticism, and ruthless in his news writing, but his story stood up.

And resolution hardened in Phil as he sat there in the quiet, deserted room. He'd show Big Jim. He'd get into the next story with such force that the boss would *have* to pass it along to the composing room.

Big Jim did not come down the next afternoon. Phil had a call from him, and noticed that the hard voice was deepened by a cold.

"The engineer said it must have been a spreading rail—" The man's eyes were set in a pale mask of horror.

"You'll have to take the desk to-night, Carter," Big Jim said. "I can't come down now. May make it later. Do your best."

"Don't worry," Carter answered with greater assurance than he felt. "We'll get along."

And with more fear than pride he went to the city editor's desk, turned on the telegraph printers. The machines began to click out the words reassuringly.

PAT NORRIS came in with a sweeping bow.

"Chief," he said humbly, "I salute you and what are your wishes and desires this night?"

"Get the news," growled Phil in his deepest voice, with a sudden laugh. Pat's foolery, his eternal disrespect for Big Jim, added a touch of burlesque that made things lighter to-night when responsibility rode heavily on his youthful shoulders.

"Been pulling the Cross for 12 years without an accident. Now this—" and the flat thin voice trailed off.

"Any big stories you have on your mind to-night, Chief?"

"No." Sudden soberness came to Phil. "I'm hoping for a quiet night."

"But this would be a fine time to show Big Jim up," Pat grinned. "How'd you like me to go and commit a nice, juicy murder?"

"Lay off, feller," Phil answered, turning to the telegraph printer. "You're the reporting staff to-day. Get out and make the round of police headquarters, hospitals and so on. I'll cover the city hall and the court house. You'd better see McAdams about that new school, too. Get a lot of nice, inside-page news, and I'll fill the front page with some quiet wire stuff. We'll be conservative to-night."

"Okay, Chief—on the way. Watch for me in an hour with some of the most genteel news you ever saw."

For the next hour Phil kept busy writing heads for and editing the wire news, and saw he was going to be able to make up a fair first page. A bank failure at Midvale, out in the state, was strong enough to justify a streamer head, and Pat came in with a handful of small stories. The cheerful clatter of the four linotypes at the back testified to the fact the paper was under way.

"You're getting your wish for a quiet night," observed Pat as he came over to drop a bundle of copy on the desk.

Phil ran a rapid eye over the copy and pushed it on the spike.

"Hope it keeps up," he answered.

Then the telephone rang—sharply, imperatively—and Phil felt a sudden tingling to his nerves. It might be only routine, some business call—or it might be a real story. He put the receiver to his ear.

"News office," he said. And then Pat saw him stiffen to sudden, tense attention.

"Thanks," he said slowly, after a minute. "I'll cover it."

Replacing the receiver, he leaned back in his chair, pushed a hand through his hair. His face was set.

"Bet's off, Pat," he said. "We don't get our wish."

"What's up?"

"The Southern Cross, northbound, was wrecked five minutes ago at McConnell Bottom. Lot of people killed!"

Pat whistled softly. "And Big Jim off, his star cub sitting at his desk and his valued advertising solicitor sitting in for the reporter! What a break!"

Phil rose abruptly.

"You're promoted, Pat," he said crisply, his voice cool. "Take the desk. Call Williams in from the proof desk and tell him he's a reporter until relieved. Tell Joe he's going to operate the office flivver for the rest of the night. I'm going to need him a lot before this job is done. I'm on my way to the Bottom to start this story." A sudden thought struck him. "Don't let Big Jim hear of it. He'd get up and probably kill himself."

"Not that he-man," Pat grunted. "This would cure him. It's the breath of life to him."

"Just the same, we'll handle it without him," Phil said shortly, as he slipped into his overcoat and pushed plenty of copy paper into a pocket. With a sudden thought he went to his desk and picked up his portable typewriter. He might have to write the story away from the office.

"I'm taking your car," he said to Pat. "You won't need it any more, for you'll be riding desk the rest of the night. Tell 'em in the back room to tear out the front page and keep it open for this story, with a big runover to page three. I can tell more about it when I get there. It may not be as big as the report indicated, but I'm afraid it's a whopper."

TYPEWRITER swinging at his side, Phil hurried out and climbed into the coupé that stood at the curb. Pointing south, he sped toward the highway that ran parallel to the Tennessee Northern Railway. He had 10 miles to go, and with his foot heavy on the throttle the light coupé bored steadily through the night. But fast as Phil was traveling, a wailing siren behind him told him of faster travelers. First an ambulance, then a police car rocketed by. Phil's foot went down to the toeboards and the little coupé kept in sight of the winking tail-light of the police car. Another siren sounded, but Phil held the road. Another ambulance was behind, he knew, but with a burst of speed he kept in front.

Then, breasting a slight incline, he came to the long curve that led to the Obion river bottom and caught his first glimpse of the wreck. He gasped, for in the glare of leaping flames the scene stood out in stark relief. The wrecked engine lay at one side of the tracks, on its side. Plumes of steam hissed upward in the still air. Heavy Pullmans were heaped about like so many playthings. Only two coaches still clung to the rails, and these were tilted at grotesque angles. Little figures could be seen moving along the highway near the tracks. Smoking torches testified to the fact that rescue squads were already at work.

With the ambulance at his bumper and the police car barely keeping its distance in front, Phil roared down the incline and around the curve toward the wreck. Before he reached the spot, the police car turned from the highway and a squad of bluecoats tumbled out to take charge of traffic. A flashlight gleamed briefly in Phil's face and a bluecoat growled to his companion:

"Reporter, Ed."

"Okay. Let him through." So Phil turned from the pavement and drove down into an open space near the scene of the wreck.

"Point your car toward the train and leave the lights on, buddy," a policeman ordered Phil, and he complied before starting toward the wrecked cars.

Four ambulance crews, with orderlies, internes and doctors, were already at work; as Phil neared one of the cars, he saw a limp form being transferred to a waiting stretcher. A young interne whipped a sheet over the motionless figure and two orderlies started away with their burden. A short distance away Phil saw a row of white sheeted figures and realized with sudden horror that his first information had been correct. From the overturned cars, some of them crackling with flames, he could hear the sharp thud of chopping axes, and now and then a cry of pain or despair.

The young reporter glanced about. A man with a bandaged head came along, carrying a torch.

"Were you on the train?" Phil asked.

"Yes." The man paused, and Phil saw that he wore a flagman's uniform. The man's eyes were flaring, set in a pale mask of horror.

"Know how it happened?"

"No. I heard the engineer said it must have been a spreading rail—"

"Where is he?"

"Over in that farmhouse." The flagman pointed to a house on the other side of the highway. "Dying. All smashed to pieces."

Dying. . . . Over there in that quiet farmhouse a man lay dying, and Phil knew with sudden gripping weakness that it was his job to talk to that man before the flame of life flickered out. Big Jim wanted facts. Newspapers were built on facts, and these had to be obtained wherever they existed. With determined feet he started toward the little farmhouse.

THERE was no answer to his knock. Resolutely, he pushed open the door and stepped inside. The hallway was dimly lit, and a brighter light came from a room at the right. Phil stepped into this room.

In one corner, limp on a bed, Phil saw the stricken engineer. An orderly stood at the window looking toward the wreck. He turned as Phil came in and the reporter whispered his introduction. The man motioned toward the bed.

"He was conscious a few min-

(Continued on page 49)

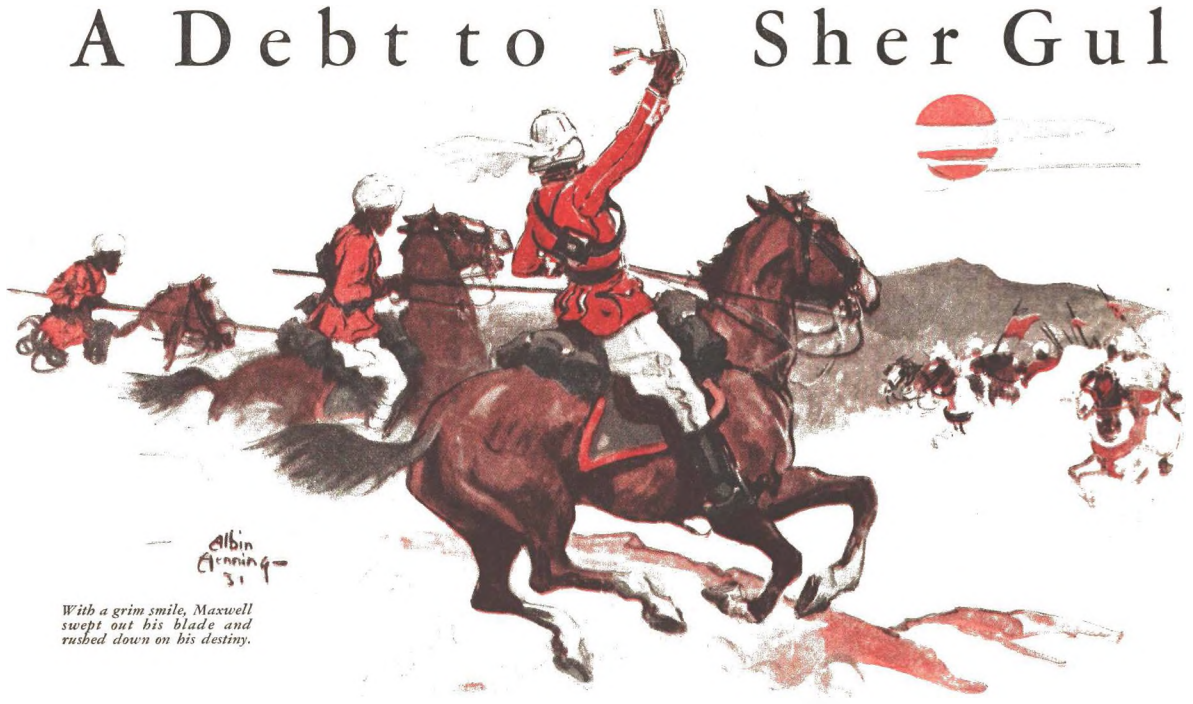
"LONG SHOT"

The chuckling story of a basketball crisis, a slight error in spelling, and an unwilling hero,

By
Franklin M. Reck

IN JANUARY

A Debt to Sher Gul



With a grim smile, Maxwell swept out his blade and rushed down on his destiny.

By Allan Swinton

Illustrated by Albin Henning

THERE was bitter unrest on the Afghan border, and young Hugh Maxwell was riding into the thick of it. He was thundering through the mountains at top speed, making for the mouth of Jangore Gut, riding at the head of his ressala, his native troop of undauntables.

The rushing thud of the horses' hoofs was music in Maxwell's ears. He came of the Cornish Maxwells, men who had made a record in His Majesty's forces in India as leaders of great daring and unerring wisdom.

Hugh Maxwell's own record was barely begun. But he hoped with this unexpected thrust into Afghanistan to check the fast increasing probability of a jihad, a merciless religious war, and so win recognition for himself. His father would be proud! he thought—and urged his willing horse to even greater effort.

The ressala thundered after. But at that furious pace, the ruggedness of the ground made it impossible to keep the troop together. It was every man by his own line, through the brown and naked mountains on a three-hour gallop pell-mell for the mouth of Jangore Gut, in the forlorn hope that they might be in time to intercept the trouble-making ghazi as that infidel-slaying leader rode north.

The horses slithered down shaly slopes, wound clattering among the bowlders of dry watercourses, and galloped headlong wherever there was open ground. Sparks flew from shod hoofs and the progress of the troop was marked by billows of dust, through which lance points and scabbards glittered in the pitiless sun.

When at last the riders swept round the final bend, five in a compact knot were far in the lead: Maxwell himself, his trumpeter, his native lieutenant, Jemadar Amar Khan, and two of the sowars or cavalrymen. Trumpeter, jemadar, and sowars came to a plunging stop by Maxwell, as he pulled up where the Gut broke abruptly into Kalkah Valley, stretching brown, gray, and olive green, empty and still, to purple-misted distance. It was a vast and aching, barren plain, hemmed in by rugged slopes, which as they heightened grew more steep, to end in jagged crags, brown and grim against the turquoise.

The horses stood with heaving flanks and steamed, heads low, foam dripping from their nuzzles, and the smeared and sweat-streaked dust made grotesque masks for their riders' faces. Maxwell wiped grit from his eyes and stared intently down the valley, which quivered shimmering in the brazen glare.

The threat of a religious war on the border had resulted in Maxwell's being pushed forward to an old fort twenty miles in the mountains. There he had heard a rumor that the Garuli mullah, the ghazi who was the admitted source of all the trouble, was riding from Kohan to Garuli. Maxwell had at once realized that he had a golden chance to intercept and capture the fiery trouble maker of Islam if the rugged Jangore Gut could be traversed fast enough. Ten minutes after the thought had been born, he and his fifty sowars had thundered out of their fort and into Jangore Gut.

Now he turned to Amar Khan. "What do you think, Jemadar? Is it possible we can be in time?"

"That I know not, sahib. But I can swear Timur himself never passed through this Gut faster."

IF he had, he could ride, Maxwell assured himself with a tense little grin. Well, no more to be done but collect his command, post them strategically, and wait and see. He signaled the others; then dismounted and looked to his sweat-drenched horse, which snorted and nuzzled him with undiminished spirit.

The four who had kept pace with him did likewise, growling to each other in their beards. They were tall, hook-nosed, hawk-eyed men, awkward afoot but graceful in the saddle, their lances swaying slim and venomous above them and their spurs clinking among the rocks.

High in the immaculate blue above, two kites wheeled, wailing forlornly. The air was parching in Maxwell's nostrils, and odorous of sun-baked earth and the aromatic pollen of the sage-green thorn.

Suddenly he saw the head of every horse jerk up. With ears pricked, the animals stared down the valley. A half mile away there loped into view some twenty horsemen, Kurram Valley mountaineers in flowing white, and at their head was a man on a gray horse, wearing the green robes of a prophet of Islam!

Maxwell spat out an exclamation. Was this to be the end of his high hopes? He had recognized a rare opportunity, had seen his chance to prove himself worthy of the name of Maxwell, and without the loss of a moment had led his men to the point of attack. Was he now to lose all merely because most of his men could not ride so hard and fast as he and these four invincibles? There was no sign of the rest of his command. And the opportunity was fleeting. Ten minutes more would see it gone forever.

"No!" roared Maxwell, suddenly on fire, for he came of men accustomed to dare much in great efforts. "Mount!" he yelled to his four followers, and swung into the saddle. "Jemadar, we must hold them till the rest come up. Gallop!"

Wheeling his horse, Maxwell spurred headlong down the stony slope. They must intercept the green-robed ghazi and his band. They were five weary men against twenty fresh ones, fierce Afghan swordsmen, tempered to war and loving it. But young Maxwell gave no thought to odds. He set his eyes on the man in green and rode for him, his party in a compact line close behind him, Amar Khan feeling for his sword and the rest unslinging lances.

THE enemy, at first sight of the well-known uniform, had broken into a gallop, in an effort to flee by. Now, realizing that they were rashly attacked by a mere five, they wheeled with threatening bass shouts, and charged. The sun glittered evilly on the long Khyber knives they drew.

Hoofs rattled among the stones, and dust rolled up in choking billows. Sweat poured down Maxwell's face and the dust and reek of his lathered horse stung his nostrils. As he reached for his sword he glanced back at the others, his lean, young face twisted in a grim smile. All four of them grinned back. Then he swept out his blade, jammed in his spurs, and rushed down on his destiny.

A mighty wave of fierce, bearded faces, flickering steel, wild names, and rolling equine eyes surged to meet him. Hoarse voices were yelling the age-old war cry: "Allah! Allah!"

Maxwell rode straight for the green-robed mullah, and as the two parties crashed together with yells and the shatter of engaging blades, he drove his horse into the mullah's gray, flung his arms round the man, and rolled with him from the saddle down among struggling horses, stones, thorn, and frantic hoofs. The fellow fought like a tiger. But Maxwell was strong with youth and purpose; he had the mullah in the full embrace of both his arms and he hung on like death itself.

A horse stood on Maxwell's leg, causing excruciating pain; a shod hoof pounded down viciously, barely missing his neck. Blood from the animal's wounded rider fell, sticky and warm, upon his face. Then a maddened horse kicked the mullah's head and the body went limp in Maxwell's arms. He heaved him under the projecting side of a bowlder, snatched up a long Afghan knife, and lunged up at a man who had just cut down the trumpeter.

As the man pitched sideways from the saddle, the noise of battle suddenly soared up on a mighty chorus. The fight redoubled, paused, then swept over and away from Maxwell, like an ebbing tide. For there were a hundred horses where before there had been twenty-

five, and the fifteen or so surviving enemy were driven headlong up the valley by his triumphant sowars, who had arrived in the very nick of time.

Maxwell stood, a lithe, disheveled, truculent figure, gasping but triumphant, in a welter of battle debris. Around him sprawled three dead enemy, one with a lance through him; the trumpeter lay limp and still; and Amar Khan was swaying and choking on his knees, with blood pouring from his neck. Maxwell's mouth tightened as his swift glance took in the fate of his men, but he did not permit himself to pause in his purpose. Without delay, he leaped to the body of the green-robed mullah, who lay quite still in the lee of the bowlder. As he rolled him over, the voice of his native commander, Ressaldar Ghulam Hyder, said:

"I thought it best to rally the ressala before rounding the last bend, sahib."

"You did well, Ressaldar. See, we have accomplished what we hoped to do!"

"Is that indeed he? A stripling, without years on his head!"

In truth, the green-robed man was very young, a lanky Pathan youth with a fluff of jetty beard on a saddle-colored face. His eyes opened and he moved and sat up, his long hooked nose and piercing eyes giving him a strange resemblance to a fledgling bird of prey. His gaze flickered to and fro like lightning; then it focused on the form of Maxwell, and hate and fear were born in it. A choked, menacing sound came from the man's throat.

"Steady, friend," Maxwell said quietly, in Pushtu. "You will not be hurt now. We seek only justice. You go to Peshawar for proper trial."

To his surprise, the fellow answered snarlingly in fair English with the stilted accent in which all Indians speak it: "I go to Peshawar. But you and yours go screaming through all India to the sea when they who will follow me come through this pass!"

TWILIGHT found them not halfway home, close to an ancient blockhouse which in the days of Akbar held the key to Jangore Gut. It was a compact, massive stronghold, built of great stones into the living rock, and Maxwell was profoundly grateful for its presence. He knew that before he could reach his own fort the hills around would swarm with fanatics, bent on the rescue of their prophet, and like a good soldier he laid his plans to hold secure what he had won.

He sent six men on foot by different routes to report to his colonel that he would defend himself at Jangore Gut till they came in force to escort him and his precious prisoner to safety. He had his men fill the gateless entrance in the ancient wall with bowlders, after they had distributed the horses through the empty chambers, and he posted the strongest guards. He also sent watchers on foot up the Gut to warn him of the attack that would surely come.

When all was done, dog-weary but well content, he ate—while the moon got up and the lancers squatted round smoking thornwood fires and supped frugally on their iron rations.

His meal over, Maxwell made the round of his guards and stood for some ten minutes contemplating the terrific stretch of mountains, awful and silent in the silver light; then he went below to a chamber, rolled in his saddle blanket, and stretched himself on the stone floor with a sense of luxury no spring bed and scented linen could have given. Above him, through the shattered roof, stars bejeweled the purple velvet of the sky.

He was ravished with a sense of exultation and of work well done. The days had begun of which all his life he had dreamed; and, greater than anything else, his father would be proud of him. His last thoughts as he fell asleep were of the drowsy old Cornish manor that was home. He could almost smell the roses and the lavender, could almost hear the bees droning and the rooks cawing and his brothers calling. His memories of these dear, familiar sights and sounds and odors filtered through the *yip yip* of distant jackals in the aching hills, the clack of weary hoofs, and the long snuffles of the restless chargers.

He awakened violently to the sounds of shots, the clatter and snort of startled horses, and the deep shouts of his men. Rolling out of his blankets and to his feet in one convulsive movement, he grabbed a pistol and dashed into the stone court, eerie and echoing with the bass of sleepy sowars handling naked swords that flickered in the moonlight, and questing like eager hounds for the source of trouble.

Ghulam Hyder, somber and huge, with eye whites gleaming and his blade like a scepter in the crook of his arm, came stalking toward Maxwell from the shadows, shepherding two men of the guard and another.

"Sahib, the sentries caught this man right under our walls."

The prisoner protested in a cracked, indignant voice: "Huzoor, I came openly and unafraid, seeking audience with you. These beardless whelps of sowars see foes in every shadow."

"And who are you to criticize the finest cavalry in India?"

"Not the finest, heaven born. Did they ever beat the Murmir Horse at *anything?*"

The Murmir Horse! Maxwell caught his breath. This man spoke of his father's troop!

"Who are you?" he demanded. "What do you know of the Murmir Horse?"

SOMEONE now brought a lantern, and the prisoner stood revealed in its light—an ancient Pathan, shriveled and bent, his eagle nose jutting, and his one good eye glittering from a mass of snowy beard, hair, and eyebrows.

"You are Maxwell sahib, son of the great Maxwell sahib of the Murmir Horse."

"What is that to you?"

"That is for thine ears alone, huzoor. Let us go within."

Ghulam Hyder protested urgently, "My lord, go not alone into a room with any shock-headed hillman!"

"He is old. Search him, though," Maxwell said.

They searched and found the old man quite unarmed.

"Bring him in," Maxwell ordered. "Leave the light and go!"

The old man moved with a painful limp.

As the sound of the ressaldar's reluctantly retreating footsteps died away, Maxwell said, "Now what, old man?"

"Huzoor, I am Ressaldar Major Sher Gul Mohammed of the Murmir Horse."

Maxwell stared, startled and perplexed, into the one black eye, uncannily piercing under the silver hair. His father had been colonel of the Murmir Horse. And this man had served under him!

"This medal will speak for me, huzoor. I won it at Maiwand, the day I lost mine eye." The man held out a bronze cross and a bit of faded maroon ribbon. On the cross was engraved: *Ressaldar Major Sher Gul Mohammed. The Murmir Horse. For Valor.* The Victoria Cross,

(Continued on page 53)

Yellow-Beard sat rigid, glaring into the eyes which too late he had realized were blue.

The YOUTH'S COMPANION combined with American Boy Founded 1827

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Friendly Talks With the Editor

Christmas

WE DOUBT if the Three Wise Men, bearing gifts to the manger, foresaw the results of that example upon generations not to be born for nineteen hundred years. We doubt if they comprehended that Christmas would become a day whose object is the receiving and giving of gifts, and only casually a celebration of the birth in the manger. We believe in the giving of gifts. We believe even that a day should be set aside upon which people may be made happy by giving presents to those they love; but we do harbor a feeling that the matter has been overdone, and that the day is in danger of losing that fine simplicity which endeared it to our forefathers. There used to be a splendid symbolism; there used to be a wealth of simple rites and observances which we are forgetting or burying under a burden of Christmas shopping. In short, we should delight to see a day when Christmas comes to have more meaning and less financial burden.

Thomas Edison

EVERY schoolboy in America—in the civilized world, for that matter—for the last quarter century has been hearing the tale of Thomas Edison: the tale of the penniless newsboy who made himself one of the world's great figures. We hope they never stop hearing this tale, and we don't think they will. If we were in the prophesying business, we'd risk our reputation on a prophecy that the boys of 2031 will be told about Tom Edison just as they're told to-day about Ben Franklin and Abe Lincoln and Kit Carson.

What Made Him Great?

THIS Tom Edison was a great man—there's no argument on that. Part of his greatness lay in the fact that he knuckled down and beat the handicaps with which he started. Another part lay in the amazing list of inventions he gave the world—the phonograph, the four-way telegraph, the electric light, the motion picture are the most notable among the more than 1,000 patents he was granted. But we think that, above these things, it was this that made him great: the way he went at problems. There was no "it can't be done" in the Edison vocabulary. To him, everything could be done. All you had to do, he believed, was give a question intelligent thought, then keep plugging until you worked out the answer.

He Plugged!

THE incredible tale of Tom Edison is a tale of those two things, the right kind of thought and tireless plugging. His invention of the electric light wasn't just a stroke of inventive genius. It was years of plugging—plugging 20 hours a day, plugging until every fault had been found and the problem solved. He tried thousands of filaments for his incandescent light before he found one that would stand up—literally thousands. He tried platinum wire, and molded clay, and human hair. The great English scientist Preece had said he was barking up the wrong tree. Edison merely smiled—he *knew* he wasn't!—and kept plugging. Finally, in 1879, he developed the filament he needed—so simple a thing as white cotton thread, rolled in a special clay! . . . The tale of Tom Edison is as romantic a tale as ever was told. But the thing that makes it a great tale is that homespun virtue—the virtue of thinking a problem through, then plugging everlastingly until the thinking is proved true. Every fellow can't have Edison's inventive genius, but there isn't anybody who can't have the everyday, run-of-the-mine quality that made him successful.

Experiment

TRY this experiment: Read through Cristel Hastings' poem, "Heritage," on this page, in the ordinary way. Then go back and read it aloud. And you'll find that you'll enjoy it twice as much. It's an experiment that we tried—we frequently do when we're reading poetry, because we've found that hearing poetry as well as seeing it often adds a lot to its beauty. That's natural. Poetry is a form of music, and you appreciate music—the swing and rhythm and rhyme of it—with your ear as well as your gray matter. Try it!

No Waste

LAST SUMMER we were talking to a fellow who had just completed his first year of college. We knew he was paying a good deal of his way through college by his summer work, and we asked him what he was doing this year to swell his bank account. He smiled ruefully. "Couldn't get a job," he said. "In my town they're giving all the available jobs to married men, and I can't kick on that. But I'm taking a couple of courses at the local college. They'll give me advanced credit when I go back in the fall, so that I can get in two other courses that I particularly want." We liked that. His summer wasn't wasted, even though he couldn't do what he had first planned.

Advantages

DON'T PITY the farm boy! He can do everything from pay his way through college to help improve the old homestead, through the 4-H Club work open to every fellow in an agricultural community. The Department of Agriculture is behind these clubs, and the fellows in them do everything from raising radishes to developing whole herds of pure-bred cattle. "Club work," one boy reports to the Department, "has enabled me to build up a pure-bred Holstein herd, valued at more than $4,000, besides calves sold this year at $1,085." Think of that when you start figuring on a city's advantages!

Welcome

ONE YOUNG man we know is welcome in our office any time he wants to come around. There are two reasons. The first is that, when he comes to make a call, he always has a *good* reason—he hasn't come just to kill time. The other is that we know he'll leave when his business is finished. No unnecessary hanging around. He gives the impression that he realizes we have things to do with our time, and that he has things to do with his—he knows that time is valuable. And we're always glad to see him.

Sir Thomas Lipton

WITH the death of Sir Thomas Lipton the world of sport has lost one of its most colorful characters—certainly the best-known and most-loved good loser. More than usually successful in business, the 81-year-old British yachtsman failed each of five times he sailed a *Shamrock* across the Atlantic to compete for the America's Cup. We like to think of his splendid sportsmanship. Five times he failed. Each time, representing England, he built one boat which raced the pick of four or five American yachts. Maybe the challenger was handicapped by the lack of preliminary competition such as the Americans had. And the English yachts, having first to sail across the ocean, were further handicapped. But what did this matter to Sir Thomas? All the more glory in winning, he felt. We can't help being sorry he lost in the race of life before he won in the race of ships. But regardless of the outcome of any race between two yachts, Sir Thomas earned the respect, admiration, and love of every American. And that is a first-class tribute.

WOODCUT BY CLYDE NORDQUIST

HERITAGE

By Cristel Hastings

I cannot keep from going to the wharves—
Always my feet turn where the tall ships lie,
Straining and slowly pulling at their lines,
Their funnels like huge chimneys in the sky.

My ears keep listening for sounds that come
From somewhere down along the misty pier
Where whistles call, and bells, and hawsers creak—
Somehow, the city cries I never hear.

'Tis strange that I, a landsman, city-bred,
Should pass by gardens sweet with trailing vine
And eagerly go meeting salted winds
Whose tar and seaweed-tang are like a wine.

Ever my eyes are turning toward the piers
Where I may see the tall shape of a spar,
And watch the bulging hulls that come and go,
Their courses shaped, perhaps, to waiting star.

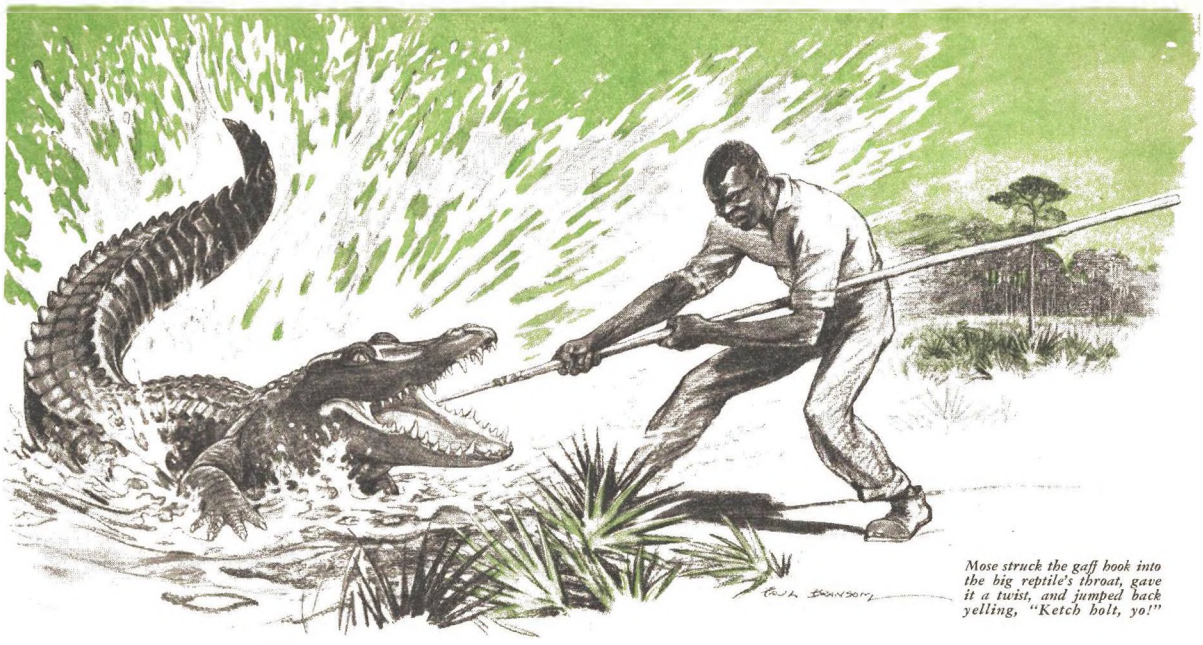
I cannot keep from going to the wharves—
What matter fireside and candle-glow
While there are lights that twinkle on the bay
And mark the restless path a ship must go?

The Turtle

A SEA turtle must feel rather safe. He weighs several hundred pounds. With one nip of his beak he can cut a sizable fish in two. If he's attacked, he can draw in his head and present nothing but a hard shell to his enemy. Yet the sea turtle, shell and all, can be conquered. The giant octopus, lurking in some dark undersea cavern, can handle the turtle easily. He merely waits until Mr. Turtle swims by his lair, then lashes out a long arm equipped with vacuum cups, pulls in Mr. Turtle, folds him tenderly in an eight-arm embrace, has a good meal, and throws away the shell. Occasionally you'll meet some chap who thinks he's a hard-shelled specimen, husky enough to take what he wants. Don't worry about him. Sooner or later he'll meet his octopus.

And the Octopus

EVEN the giant octopus doesn't always have his own way. Occasionally he's unwary enough to fasten his vacuum cups on an electric ray. The ray is an innocent-looking fish, but the minute he finds himself in the embrace of an octopus he shoots out a charge of electricity. Horribly shocked, the octopus throws his eight arms to all points of the compass, and with frantic squeaks begs the ray to depart in peace. If you run up against a man who thinks he's an eight-arm buckaroo, tell him about the ray. You may save him from a shock.



Mose struck the gaff hook into the big reptile's throat, gave it a twist, and jumped back yelling, "Ketch holt, yo!"

Gaffing an Alligator

By C. A. Stephens

Illustrated by Paul Bransom

"THAT'S a fine orange," said Bliss, watching me devour what was probably my tenth big, juicy Florida orange that morning.

"Fine but splashy," I told him.

"Then you've had enough," he grinned. "When you begin to get critical, you've had plenty. Let's go alligator hunting."

"All right," I agreed, and we started out to hunt up our landlord and get suggestions.

Bliss and I were on our first trip to Florida and we wanted to see and do everything.

Our landlord grinned at first when we told him we wanted to get a big alligator, but when he found we were in earnest he advised us to engage the services of a professional alligator hunter.

"You won't get a 'gator if you go out alone," he said. "You need someone who's good at calling 'gators and at gaffing them. I'll see if I can get Mose for you. He's about the best there is round here."

Late that evening, the landlord sent a boy up to our room to tell us that Mose was waiting to see us. We went down to find a tall, broad-shouldered negro of decided dignity.

"Mose," demanded Bliss, "can you really take us where we can shoot a 'gator?"

"I doan shoot 'gators. I gaffs um."

"Well, you get the alligator, do you? That's the main point."

"Sho'ly."

"We want to get a big one," Bliss said.

"Tree, four foot?"

"Oh, bigger! Much bigger."

"Eight foot?"

"Bigger than that."

"'Leben foot? Notin' bigger, boss."

"Well, eleven feet long then. And how much are we to pay you for the day?"

"Tirty dollars, boss."

"Thirty dollars—for one day!"

"Yas, boss, if I calls yer a 'leben-foot 'gator."

"That's an awful price."

"Genlemun as wants big 'gators mus' 'spec' ter pay big-'gator prices."

There was no budging Mose from that stand, and we finally promised him his price.

"But the agreement is that you guarantee us an alligator eleven feet long," Bliss pointed out. "No eleven-foot 'gator, no thirty dollars. No money at all!"

"Sho'ly, boss. Dat's business."

A START was arranged for the following morning; and sunrise saw us afloat on the sluggish river in Mose's canoe. Bliss took along his carbine, but Mose's hunting outfit consisted only of a knife and a strong live oak pole about fifteen feet long that had a very large steel gaff firmly fixed at one end.

After four or five miles of paddling we landed on the west shore and followed Mose through piny barrens for an hour or more. He set a stiff pace and we had to hustle to keep him in sight. We began to get tired.

"Wish the alligator would come part way to meet us," Bliss groaned.

Just then Mose stopped at the nearly dry bed of a small creek.

"Dis heah's de place!" he exclaimed exultantly. "Knowed I'd fin' her agin. Now look heah, genlemun, what you tink o' dat?"

He pointed to a huge imprint in the dry sand.

"Dat's de mark ob her flipper," he continued. "An' she's a-goin' up de crick dis mawnin' fo' sartin. Now, genlemun, you foller on arter me, and min' now you must be handy an' do jest as I tells yer, or I doan be 'sponsible fo' yer, nor any laigs as gits bruk."

For a quarter mile or more we followed the bed of the creek, which showed a well-marked trail of big flipper prints, and came then to a kind of sink hole of muddy water, five or six feet across, into which Mose peered sharply for some moments.

"Might be in dar," he muttered doubtfully.

But we found that the trail went on past this wallow. In fact, we went past three others before we came to a hole, very roily indeed, beyond which no trail could be found. Mose got fairly taut with excitement. He motioned to us to stand quietly while he carefully inspected the sink hole.

"She's dar!" he at last said huskily, with his eyes rolling. "She's dar, sho'ly!"

He took a step backward and with peremptory earnestness, stationed Bliss and me at a point three or four yards from the sink hole, saying, "Now, genlemun, yo' must watch out on me and 'bey my awders. When I says, 'Ketch holt o' this gaff pole,' yo must ketch. When I says, 'Pull!' yo must pull. When I says, 'Push!' yo must push right smart. An' yo mustn't mind mud and water flyin'."

He proceeded to lay the pole on the ground with the gaff projecting out over the pool; then getting on his hands and knees, he bowed over till his mouth was nearly touching the black water and began to call.

"*Oonk! Oonk! Oonk! Oonk!*" he intoned.

The weird sounds sent shivers down my back there by the lonely sink hole.

"*Oonk! Ooonk! Oooonk! Ooonk!*"

It was a strange incantation. Mose kept it up for some minutes, occasionally rolling his eyes round to make sure we were still in our places.

"If I were an alligator, I'd run," muttered Bliss.

SUDDENLY there came a silent swelling and bulging upward of the mud and water. Mose sprang to his feet and seized his gaff pole.

The next instant, there rose up out of the hole an object something like the head of a black horse, with mud streaming down from it.

Before Bliss and I had time to realize that this was actually the head of the alligator, Mose had struck the gaff hook into the big reptile's throat, given it a twist, and jumped back yelling, "Ketch holt, yo!"

We caught hold!—and what followed for the next ten or fifteen minutes remains in my mind as a confused blur of violent jerks, yanks, surgings, mad plungings, and circlings round the pool, all in a drenching shower bath of mud and water!

Mose would yell, "Push! push!" Then, "Pull! pull! genlemun, pull yo bes'!"

He engineered the business. Bliss and I could scarcely see what went on for mud and water.

As we struggled, I had visions of myself being pulled headfirst into that black, unfathomable sink hole. I tried to remember whether I had ever heard of hunters being devoured on the spot by alligators. Or would the 'gator tow me off to her lair? I wanted to let go of that pole. But I held on and struggled—endlessly, it seemed.

Eventually, however, we tired out the alligator; and the gaff having been thrust nearly through its throat, we put forth all our strength and hauled the reptile out upon firm land. There Bliss ended the affair by firing two bullets through the 'gator's brain.

The reptile measured eleven feet and five inches in length.

"Tirty dollar wuth o' 'gator, genlemun," Mose reminded us.

"It's a fine 'gator," I said reflectively, wiping mud off the back of my neck.

"Fine but splashy," Bliss told me, wringing water out of his clothes.

"Then you've had enough," I grinned. "When you begin to get critical, you've had plenty."

"My own theory," Bliss admitted, "and it's true. I've had plenty!"

So had I. We took home the alligator's skin and had some handsome traveling bags made from it. But we never went alligator hunting again.

Enroll Today

in the

FISHER BODY CRAFTSMAN'S GUILD

$75,000 IN AWARDS

Four University Scholarships ... 116 Trips to Detroit 1120 Gold Awards

Every boy in the United States and Canada, between twelve and nineteen years of age inclusive, is eligible. Begin today by enrolling with any General Motors car dealer

Every boy who enrolls *now* in the second Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild competition will have the advantage of an earlier start in the construction of his model coach. Remember, the Guild competition for 1932 offers even greater opportunities for boys throughout the United States and Canada.

The conditions of the second Guild competition are the same as those of last year's. All boys in the United States and Canada between 12 and 19 years of age inclusive are invited to take part. There is no entry fee or enrollment charge of any kind. Every boy who enters the competition will construct a miniature model Napoleonic coach, from detailed plans and instructions furnished free by the Guild. The judges, both State, District and International, will be men of the highest standing in the knowledge of fine craftsmanship. At their head, as Honorary President of the Guild, is Daniel Carter Beard, beloved National Boy Scout Commissioner, and John A. Stiles, Dominion Commissioner for Scouting, as Honorary President of the Canadian Section.

The awards for the second Guild competition should be an inspiration to every ambitious boy. Remember, there are four $5,000 university scholarships, 116 trips to Detroit and 1120 gold awards awaiting the winners. Why not join the Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild at once—today—and get an early start toward success?

Enroll NOW with Any General Motors Car Dealer

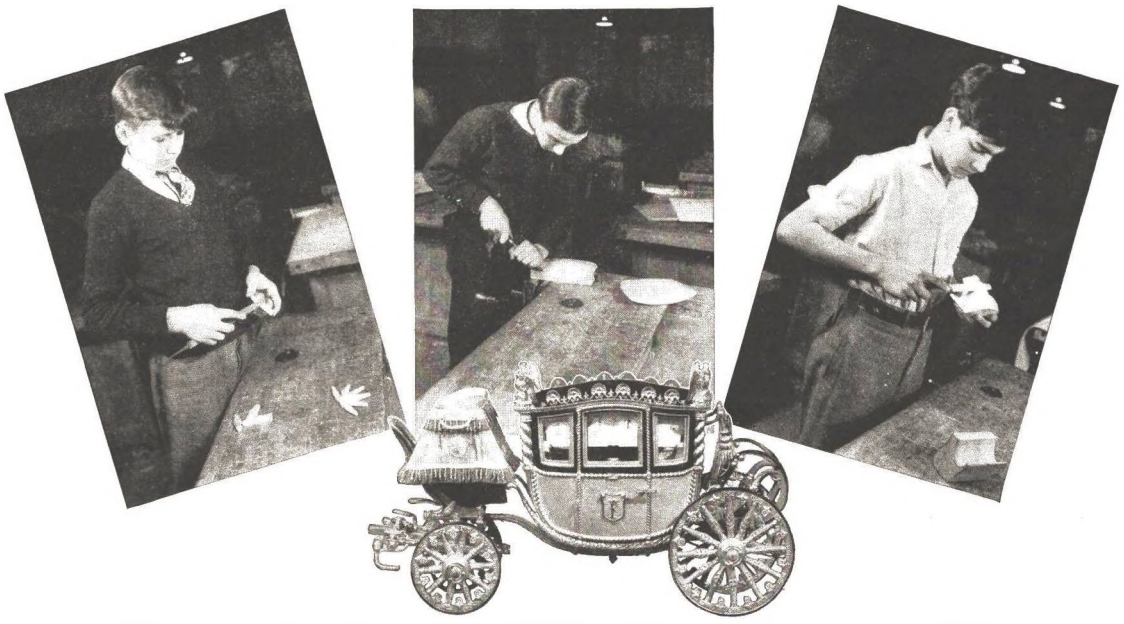
It is very easy to join the Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild. Just go to any dealer in General Motors cars and say you want to enroll.

Dealers in Cadillac-La Salle, Buick, Oldsmobile, Oakland-Pontiac and Chevrolet are all General Motors car dealers. There is one in your community.

As soon as your enrollment is registered, you will receive from Guild headquarters your membership card and official Guild button, and a complete manual containing scale drawings of the model coach, instructions for building it, pictures of the coach in full color, and all other information pertaining to the Guild.

If you entered the first Guild competition, try again! (Memberships must be renewed.) If you missed the first chance, by all means get in this time. Enroll NOW and get an early start!

FISHER BODY CRAFTSMAN'S GUILD



Pictured above is the miniature model Napoleonic Coach, together with photos of three of last year's Guild members working on their models

INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

Four University Scholarships of four years each

Two of these Scholarships go to Juniors (12 to 15 years inclusive) and two go to Seniors (16 to 19 years inclusive).

Ten Awards for Seniors and Ten Awards for Juniors in Every State and Canadian Guild District as follows:

1st State or District Award . . Trip to Detroit and $100 in gold
2nd State or District Award . . $100 in gold

1st State or District Woodcraft . $25 in gold
2nd State or District Woodcraft . $15 in gold

1st State or District Metalcraft . . $25 in gold
2nd State or District Metalcraft . $15 in gold

1st State or District Trimcraft . . $25 in gold
2nd State or District Trimcraft . $15 in gold

1st State or District Paintcraft . . $25 in gold
2nd State or District Paintcraft . $15 in gold

Every Guild member who submits a completed coach on or before midnight, July 1, 1932, will receive the Guild Certificate of Craftsmanship.

Here's the Red Flash

It's a Simple Soaring Glider That Means Death to All Gliding Records

By Merrill Hamburg

WHEN Red Gardner designed the Red Flash, he took man-carrying gliders as his patterns.

"Real gliders fly well," he reasoned, "and models of them ought to. They're not like airplanes—the problem of balance caused by the heavy motor is absent here, though it makes all the difference in the world in model airplanes."

So Red—Detroit model expert known to hundreds of national contest entrants—designed his little balsa glider along strictly professional lines. He completed the ship, and decorated it to his taste—death's head and all! Then he took it out for a trial flight—

And it soared for two minutes, first time up! It climbed almost a thousand feet, traveled more than a quarter of a mile.

It's easy to build and to fly. The beginner can do it as well as the expert—and the fellow new at model planes will find it one of the best jobs in the world to start on.

These materials are all you'll need: 2 pieces balsa, 3/32x1¾x18" for wings; 2 balsa blocks ⅝x1¼x12" for fuselage; 1 piece balsa 1/16x1¾x18" for stabilizer and rudder; 1 balsa block ½x½x1¾ for wing block; 1 piece bamboo 1/16x1/16x7" for skid; airplane cement. If you want an exact duplication of the Red Flash you'll need also crimson aniline dye and some black India ink.

First, the fuselage. The drawing shows two views of the fuselage, top and side, drawn on a series of squares. On a sheet of light cardboard draw similar squares, making sure that each one is exactly ¼". Now make a dot at each point on these lines where the curve of the fuselage crosses them. Next, connect these dots—the best way to insure a regular curve is never to draw a line connecting less than three dots. Do not draw the skid down in the side view. Next, cut out along these curves, and you'll have full size templates of the top and side sections of the finished fuselage.

Now cement the two 12" blocks together. Use only a few drops in the center of one 1¼ x 12" face of each block. The blocks must be taken apart after the outside is shaped, and too much cement would make this difficult.

Now trace the side outline of the fuselage on each side of the cemented block, making sure that the template is placed in a corresponding position on each side. Carve the bottom of the piece to this outline without attempting to round the edges. Notice how the fuselage sweeps up almost to a point at the rear. With your other template trace the top view of the fuselage and shape the block to the curve.

The oval marked AA shows the exact size and shape of the fuselage through the section under the wing marked AA. Cut out a cardboard template to fit around one side of this oval and shape the fuselage to fit it at AA. This can be done best by working down the four corners and then shaping the rest to fit the template. The entire fuselage is rounded to an oval. Locate and cut out the flat surfaces on top of the fuselage for the wing block and stabilizer. A pattern for the wing block shape may be made by folding a sheet of paper as shown in the drawing—directly below the AA section—and cutting out the dimensions given on the wing block drawing.

You're now ready to carve out the inside of the fuselage. Separate the two blocks and with a small gauge cut out the inside of the fuselage, leaving a wall 3/32" thick. Be careful not to pierce the wall! Smooth the inside with sandpaper, and check the thickness of the wall with outside calipers. When the inside has been carefully smoothed to the correct thickness cement the two halves together again and set the whole thing aside to dry.

Now start on the tail surfaces. Lay out on a piece of 1/16x1⅜x10" balsa the outline of the stabilizer. By folding a piece of paper at the center as recommended for the wing block, halves may be cut out with exactly the same shape. When opened out flat this paper can be used as the template. The stabilizer should be sanded to form a section similar to the one shown in the drawing. The center should be left thick to stiffen the stabilizer, but the ends may be tapered almost to a knife edge.

Lay out the rudder and shape it as you did the stabilizer. Notice that the bottom is cut out to fit around the stabilizer and along the end of the fuselage. The rudder is cemented to the fuselage over the stabilizer with the edge having the greatest curve to the rear. It is tapered to a thin edge at the upper end.

Now finish the fuselage. First, sand the entire piece to a smooth surface with the edges of the halves fitting snugly together. In order to get the correct shape at the extreme rear, sand down the oval cross section until it is almost flat. Using the folded paper method, you can cut a template of the cockpit opening from light cardboard. After tracing around this template, cut the opening with a razor blade or sharp knife. Sand the edges.

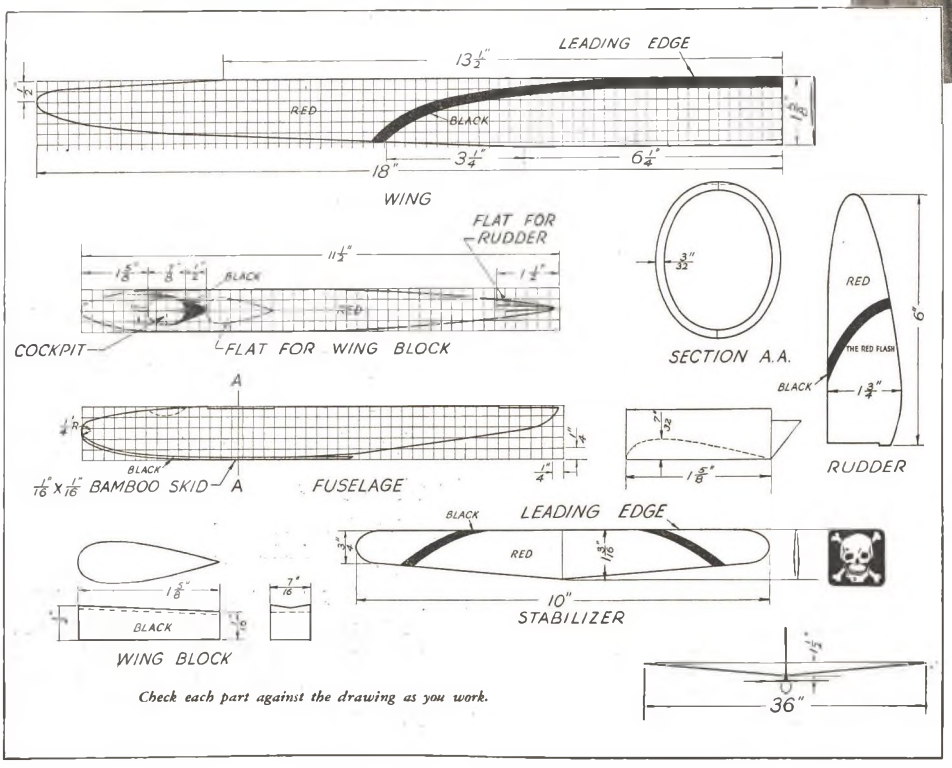
The drawing shows a bamboo skid bent to the shape of the fuselage and cemented in place. Although this isn't necessary, it will protect the soft balsa fuselage in landing, and adds to the realistic appearance of the finished model. Split a piece of bamboo 1/16" square and 7" long and bend it over an alcohol lamp or candle flame to fit the curve of your fuselage. An electric soldering iron can also be used. Bamboo becomes very pliable when heated and can be bent to any shape. Care must be taken, however, not to overheat the piece or it will char.

"Red" Gardner, designer.

THE Red Flash's 36" wing is formed by cementing two halves together at the center. If you wish the exact shape used by Gardner on his model, lay out a template by the ¼" square method used in obtaining the fuselage curves. Almost any graceful curve will serve. Notice that Gardner's wing had a straight leading edge that extended out toward the tip for 13½" and a straight trailing edge for 6¼" from the center.

If you make a wing template, you can use it to lay out both wings by turning it over for the second. Be sure that you plan both a right and left wing. If you decide to shape your own curve without a template, lay the right and left wings together, making sure that edges are flush, and cut both halves at the same time. This will insure having them exactly alike.

(Continued on page 51)



Check each part against the drawing as you work.

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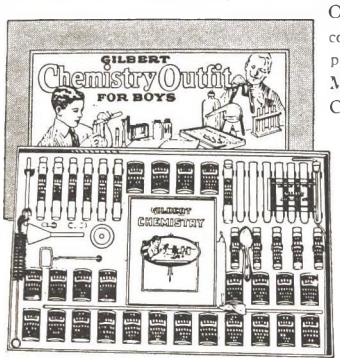

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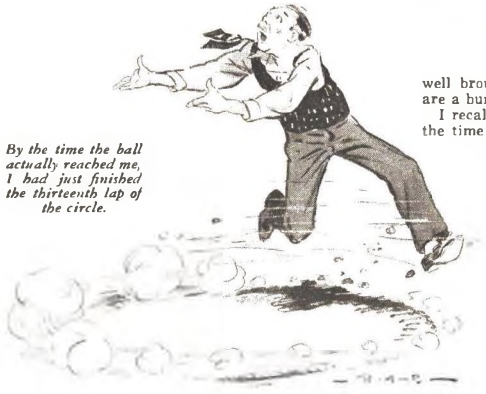
Damaged in Transit

By Paul Hosmer

Illustrated by R. M. Brinkerhoff



By the time the ball actually reached me, I had just finished the thirteenth lap of the circle.

WHEN I was younger and in my prime I used to play football—I put in four years at it. I wasn't one of the Four Horsemen, you understand—I wasn't even one of the horses—but nevertheless I stayed on the team four years. There is even to-day a vicious rumor going around to the effect that they had to set the college on fire to get me off the team. I need not say that this is base slander. They didn't set fire to the college. They blew it up.

Where I made my big mistake, though, was when I began to think that I was a 1931-style football player. I got that way about a week ago, but it's all over now. I came home from work the other night to find J. P. Jackson, a neighbor of mine who says he used to play football, though I now have reason to doubt it, watching a group of youngsters out in a vacant lot near my house preparing for a game. While I was standing on the side lines with J. P., the idea dawned on me that I ought to get in there and show the boys how we used to play the game when I was in college. It was unquestionably a good idea, the only trouble with it being that it came 20 years too late. In the excitement of the moment I overlooked the fact that I'm 45 years old—that is, I was 45 when this brawl started. To-day I'm just exactly 108.

I suggested to Jackson that we ought to get into the game and show the boys how football should be played, and after thinking the matter over for a time, he decided that if I was game to try it he was, too. The upshot of it was that both of us let our ambition run away with our better judgment and we put our proposition up to the captains of the teams. My two boys were playing on one side—both of them are out for high school football this year—and Jackson's oldest son was also in on it. It appeared to be just an impromptu scrimmage, and some of the boys were a little doubtful about letting a couple of old-time war horses like Jackson and me into the thing.

But to my surprise the Jackson boy, backed up by my two sons, insisted we be allowed to play. The only strange feature was that they also insisted on playing against us. This suited me all right. Those two roosters of mine have been getting altogether too chesty lately, since Fred, the younger one, hung a lucky haymaker on my eye during one of our boxing matches, causing me some embarrassment about the neighborhood for a day or two. So it was settled that we play.

AS I look back on this alleged game I can see that my playing was not truly a brilliant success. I have played better football in my day. It seems to me there were incidents during the ruckus in which I failed to show to my best advantage; in fact, there were times when I had half a notion to quit the game and leave the boys flat. If I'm not mistaken, I recall dimly a remark or two from some of my team mates which led me to believe that any time I wanted to quit would be all right with them, provided I didn't put it off too long.

The truth is that most of the game is only haze through which I recall vaguely some of the violent and outrageous treatment to which I was subjected by these so-called young gentlemen. The community in which I live has always been considered quite a select neighborhood, but I'm inclined to think it is a lot rougher than I realized. Certainly some of these boys—and my two sons are among them—are not the well brought-up people I thought they were. They are a bunch of thugs, that's what they are.

I recall the kick-off quite plainly, as I was fresh at the time and in full possession of my faculties. As far as I am concerned, the last three quarters of the game were a total loss. I was there in body, but my spirit was amongst the angels. Just the other day I went up to the dentist to have some repairs made on a lower bicuspid which had become slightly out of plumb during the game, and I had such a vacant stare in my eyes that the dentist refused to give me gas on the grounds that he couldn't tell when I was unconscious.

I lined up for the kick-off at fullback with the regular formation and began the squabble in a very cagy manner except for one small error on my part, which could just as well as not have been overlooked by my two sons in view of the fact that I hadn't played for 20 years and was somewhat out of practice. The small mistake I speak of occurred when I misjudged the speed and distance of the ball and dropped the catch.

I don't know just why I should have dropped the ball; I was directly under it, my stance was perfect and everything seemed propitious for a good long run down the field with all the younger generation hanging on to me and wondering how I did it. I can clearly recall having caught numbers of footballs in the old days, but for some reason or other this particular ball behaved queerly. They tell me that nobody has done anything to the 1931 football, such as making it larger like the balloon golf ball, but I'm very sure this particular football was different from any *I'd* ever seen before. It appeared to twist in the air as it descended, which bothered my vision to a certain extent and caused me to start running in a circle as I followed its erratic course.

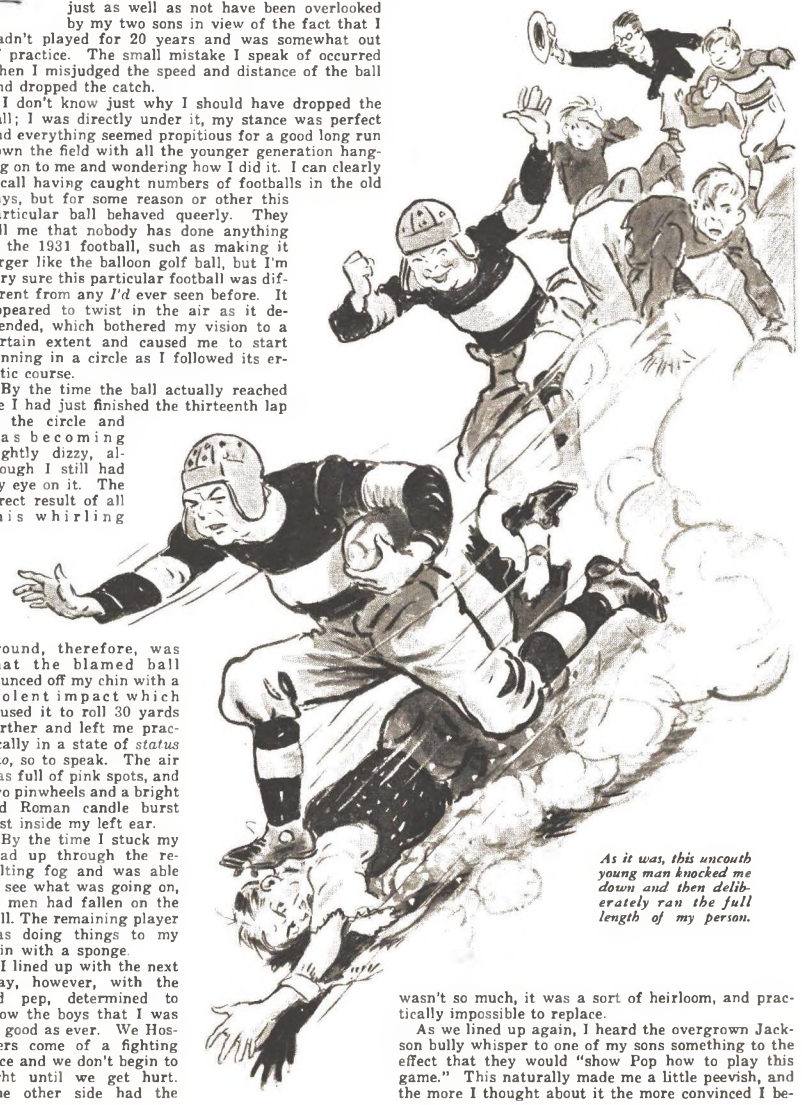
By the time the ball actually reached me I had just finished the thirteenth lap of the circle and was becoming slightly dizzy, although I still had my eye on it. The direct result of all this whirling around, therefore, was that the blamed ball bounced off my chin with a violent impact which caused it to roll 30 yards farther and left me practically in a state of *status quo*, so to speak. The air was full of pink spots, and two pinwheels and a bright red Roman candle burst just inside my left ear.

By the time I stuck my head up through the resulting fog and was able to see what was going on, 20 men had fallen on the ball. The remaining player was doing things to my chin with a sponge.

I lined up with the next play, however, with the old pep, determined to show the boys that I was as good as ever. We Hosmers come of a fighting race and we don't begin to fight until we get hurt. The other side had the ball, and the Jackson boy, an overgrown youth whom I afterward discovered weighed 187 pounds without his shoes or his frat pin, was the first one to hit me.

As I recall this particular charge of the Light Brigade, there were 11 men on that team and each of them hit me twice. The 187-pound Nestle's Food baby was merely the first to reach me and get in the first punch; he was also, I seem to recall, the twelfth. I don't ever remember meeting a person I disliked so much at first acquaintance. In the first place he was too big and uncouth. Parents should be severely censured for allowing a lad of that age to weigh 187 pounds. If any care at all had been taken of this youngster's diet, he would have been an ordinary person at his age and I would no doubt have stopped him in his tracks.

As it was, the tough young man knocked me down and then deliberately ran the full length of my person in making his get-away. I got even with him, though, by grabbing hold of one of his shoestrings as he stepped on my face and so impeded his progress that he made only 26 yards before I brought him down. During this brawl I lost a valuable piece of my right ear. I felt quite badly over this as, while the intrinsic value wasn't so much, it was a sort of heirloom, and practically impossible to replace.



As it was, this uncouth young man knocked me down and then deliberately ran the full length of my person.

As we lined up again, I heard the overgrown Jackson bully whisper to one of my sons something to the effect that they would "show Pop how to play this game." This naturally made me a little peevish, and the more I thought about it the more convinced I be-

came that I would have to take drastic measures with the big boy and teach him that while I might be getting along some in years I still knew something about football and was perfectly able to hold my own with any bunch of high school yearlings. I let the next few plays go by without showing any particular interest while I seized the chance to regain my wind. It was only right to let some of the rest of the team do a little work, and anyway they seemed to get along pretty well without my help.

Finally an undersized boy who should never have been allowed in the game took the ball and started a long run around the end. I saw him start and knew just what I was going to do about it. He seemed to be a sprightly sort of student; in fact, he had that something about him that made it practically impossible to get a good hold on him.

Three or four of the others tried in vain to stop him and it looked like my chance to save the day. I put on speed and made up my mind there would be no kid-glove work in this tackle; I would hit him and hit him hard and perhaps some of these kids would understand what it meant to play football in the old days. I bore down on the runner like a Nebraska cyclone approaching a farmer's barn, and when I got within striking distance I made a dive for his knees.

SOMETHING apparently went wrong with my calculations—I never did find out just exactly what happened. All I remember is that after I had made my dive and was in full flight the student person suddenly moved away from that vicinity and left me hanging by my reputation. Even before I landed I had a feeling I was going to miss the runner, and I confess to a feeling of acute embarrassment when I lit on my abdomen, which is not as tough as it once was, and skidded through six inches of dust, tearing up a furrow that might possibly have been equaled, but never surpassed, by a two-bottom plow. In a baseball game my slide for life might have created a furore, but the act seemed to have no regular place on the program of a football game.

As I arose and counted up my hands and feet to make sure I still had everything I had started with, I was conscious that I seemed to have come through the accident in remarkably good condition, although I noticed that my spinal column seemed to have slipped a couple of points off center, which caused me to walk sideways like a crab.

I noticed, too, that when I tried to talk I whistled like a popcorn wagon and on investigating this curious state of affairs I discovered that my gold tooth was missing. I disliked very much the thought of losing this piece of jewelry as I had just paid $12 for it and I prized it highly. But with a group of players on one side of me telling me how much they valued my services — my two sons among them again—and the referee insisting on getting home in time for dinner, it seemed to be no time to start digging for gold.

When the excitement died down, I learned that the lad I had tried to murder had made a touchdown. He'll probably never know how near he came to being slammed for a whole row of Chinese pagodas.

The next few plays were uneventful as far as I was concerned, owing to the fact that my twisted backbone caused me to become somewhat erratic in my movements and I fluttered about something like a flivver with a broken radius rod, never knowing when I started whether I was going to move ahead, backwards, or sideways.

I recall, too, that once when I tried to shout to a player on my left to "stop that man," the only sound I succeeded in making was a shrill whistle which everyone mistook for the referee's. The whistle stopped a runner who had just straight-armed old J. P. into a jellyfish, and so I prevented a touchdown and felt I deserved some credit for headwork. But the referee insisted on penalizing us for this, although I explained that it was perfectly unintentional on my part.

It was about this time that I became involved in the fracas which practically ruined me and caused me to reconsider my idea of trying to teach these young squirts the finer points of the game. They paid no attention to me, anyway, refusing to take advice from a man who was playing football before they were born. It strikes me that this is a common failing of the younger generation to-day and I have intended for some time to write to the papers about it. I know of no better proof of my contention than the melee I speak of to prove that the present-day children have absolutely no respect for their elders and care for nothing other than their own aims, pleasures, and desires. My blood pressure goes up 14 points whenever I think of the way I was mishandled and mistreated in the battle I am about to describe.

It seems that the 187-pound Jackson phenomenon, of whom I have spoken before, had been hanging up quite a record for himself during the course of the game. He had been acting about as he pleased with our front line, tearing holes in it that a lady could have carried a stepladder through, and he had behaved scandalously with anyone who came in contact with him. It seemed to me there was no necessity for the ruthless ferocity this young hyena displayed whenever he got into action. His own father was playing on our team and if any son of mine ever treated me just half as badly as J. P. Jackson was treated I should be strongly in favor of a law requiring the drowning of all male offspring at birth.

THE massacre I want to tell about started off in a sort of leisurely manner—there was no warning of what was coming in the way of assault, mayhem, and voluntary manslaughter until it was too late to do anything about it. In the first place, after that little squirt called a number of signals, the whole right side of the opposing line got up and walked over to the left side, moved around aimlessly for a moment or two, and finally took up positions seemingly wherever they pleased. There was obviously no system to the play and I wondered at the time what it was all about.

I noticed the overgrown thug walking around back of the line and watched him closely to see if he was planning anything criminal, but there was a guileless look on his face which belied the thoughts that even then must have been forming in his warped mind. While this was going on, our linemen stood up to see what it was all about and, on seeing the formation, they went over to the other side of the line. Suspecting a trick, I decided to stay where I was and was pleased to note that the young bully's father had decided to cast his lot with me. Then, suddenly, while I was all wide open and unprotected, as it were, the ball was snapped and the battle was on. The occurrences of the next few moments are almost too sad to relate.

The natural supposition would be that with the entire team lined up on the left the play would go to the left, and this is no doubt what caused the accident. It was a mistake in deduction on my part. The play was to the right and unfortunately I was directly in its path. So was the father of the champion high school heavyweight of the world.

The slippery little fellow who called the misleading signals took the ball on the pass and tossed it to the weight-lifting champ, who had been loitering in the background all this time trying to look innocent. Throwing the ball around this way wasn't being done when I played football and the play fooled me to the extent that I was misled into thinking the small brawler was going to run with it. The father of the big boy, however, saw what was coming and made a dash for his son.

This move came very near being the last he ever made. Father and son hit in mid-air, you might say, and while father was no lightweight himself, even a lopsided referee with astigmatism and a million-dollar bet on the other team would have had to admit that he rated about fourth in the ensuing riot.

The overgrown scourge struck father exactly, in the words of the popular song, down where the vest begins, and knocked him a distance which was afterwards measured and found to be just 27 feet, squarely into the center of the disturbance then being raised by the balance of the two teams. He sank from view in the middle of a mess of arms and legs, but he knew nothing about it. When the *(Continued on page 45)*

Even before I landed I had a feeling that I was going to miss the runner.

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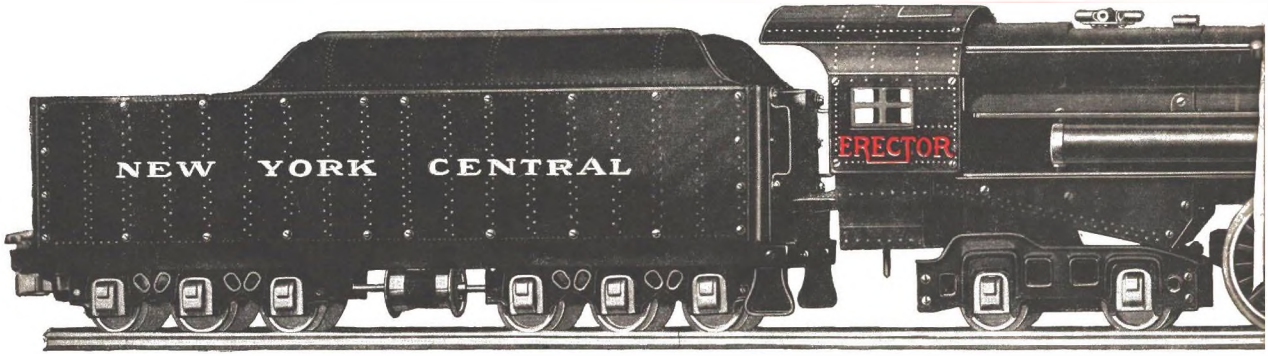

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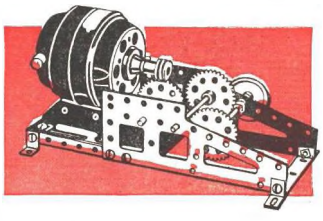

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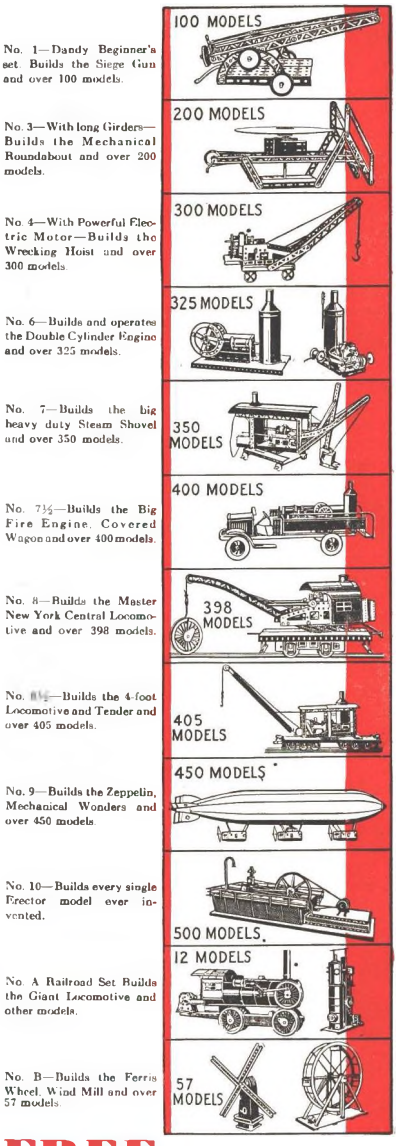

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Even-Steven

(*Continued from page 4*)

up here last! Hi!" He stopped, breathing heavily as they came out on a narrow but plainly marked trail. "Someone's been along here! See that footprint?"

Shanty nodded, sniffing. There was a perceptible odor of tobacco in the fresh mountain air.

"Did ye tell me that yer dad kep' this mine o' his a secret?"

Bill hesitated.

"Well—not a *dead* secret! You see, there was a man who owned it, and he sold his claim to Dad. Mom didn't like him 'cause he used to drink somethin' awful, and once he tried to kill Steven for carryin' off his pipe. After he sold Dad the mine, we couldn't find gold in it anywheres; although there was plenty when he was showin' it to us. . . ."

The old prospector's eyes narrowed.

"Salted!" he said briefly. "Sech tricks ha' fooled the wisest of us!"

"But then, a few weeks later," Bill went on eagerly, "*we* found gold! Chunks of it!"

Shanty started.

"Nuggets, ye mean, lad?" he asked eagerly.

"No, not exactly nuggets. . . . littie pieces of quartz like they had been broke off—and shot just full o' gold! Look, it was right here!" They had reached a ledge, set back under the sheltering brow of the hill. A rudely tunneled entrance made a rectangle of black against the gray-brown walls. Bill stooped down, his face glowing with excitement.

"Right here, it was."

Shanty, squatted down beside him, was examining the ground with attentive care. A pile of broken twigs and sticks was scattered about, a fragment or two of green glass, and a tiny piece of a mirror. He picked up a small white object and held it out to Bill.

"Was this chiny button and these pieces o' glass here when ye found the gold-bearin' quartz?" he asked.

The boy stared at him with wrinkled brows.

"Do you think we paid any attention to rubbish like that?"

The old prospector's blue eyes were squinting down at the cabin and the brawling stream below, at the foot of the hill.

"No, belike not," he said slowly, "but I'm wonderin'; ye say that yer dad found chunks o' quartz *after* he'd bought the mine?"

"Yes! This man came around again, and he wanted to buy it back, but Dad wouldn't sell it. Then one night he got Dad drunk, and when I went t' sleep they were playin' cards and arguin' about the mine."

SUDDENLY, through the low doorway, came the stooping figure of a man. He straightened up, blinking at the two on the ledge, his dark, unpleasant face streaked with grime and sweat. The boy caught his breath abruptly, and touched the old prospector's sleeve.

"That's him! That's the man I told you about!"

Shanty stood up, his eyes strange and hard.

"The top o' the mornin' to ye, Banshee Taylor! Is it saltin' the mine again that ye are, to snare some unwary devil like poor Radfield—and like mesilf when I gave ye all I had for a worthless hole in the ground?"

The man's small, heavy-lidded eyes glinted dangerously.

"You git off my property, and stay off! This here is my claim, and I got the paper to prove it!"

The boy's voice was shrill—more in anger than in fear.

"You're lying! My dad never sold this mine! He knew there was gold in it—he was blastin' here when he was killed!"

Banshee Taylor grunted in derision.

"Much you know about it! He lost it to me at poker, and signed it over t' me, fair an' square. He's dead, ain't he?" A sudden thought struck him. "Say! You and yer kid sister was put in an orphanage! And you, Chauncy—I heard you was took up for vagrancy in Sacramento! The two of you is runaways, livin' in the old cabin! Now you keep yer mouths shut, or I'll make trouble! I ain't forgot, Shanty, that you took a shot at me once."

"And I ain't forgot that the bullet went through yer hat instead o' yer skull! The next time I'll aim better—kape that in mind!"

The man's face was hard and ugly. "There's another thing to remember while we're talkin' about it—Radfield was jest a squatter! He never actually registered his claim to that land down there. Even the shack don't belong to his kids."

DOWN at the cabin once more, the two faced each other, breathing hard. The boy's face was white.

"Shanty, we gotta do something! I'm not goin' to let that man have my dad's mine—"

Shanty's face was grave.

"Yon's a bad un, lad, as would take the pennies off his dead mither's eyes! He has no legal claim to yer feyther's mine, for a gamblin' debt is not recognized in the Californy courts. Sure, I've had six gold mines give t' me—on paper, across the poker table—but divil a cent could I collect on 'em! He's bankin' on our position here—which ain't too good, me lad. But—I've a hunch inside o' me, churnin' around like a butter paddle. Come, lad—show me the place where yer mither used to throw out trash."

Wondering, the boy did so. Still wondering, he got pick and shovel for Shanty. But a day's steady work, grubbing in the unsightly conglomeration of broken bottles, tin cans and rusted cooking utensils, revealed nothing in way of pay dirt.

With pan and sluice box the old prospector worked the swollen stream. The next day and the next they kept at it from early dawn until darkness. Food supplies were dwindling. Only apples were left, and a little coffee.

Of Banshee Taylor they saw nothing. But one night they heard the snapping of a twig outside the shack, and caught the flitting shadow of a face against the window pane. Instantly it was gone.

"'Tis a pity," said Shanty, trying to speak lightly, "that we can't teach Steven to growl and bark when unwelcome visitors is prowlin' about!"

As if he had heard his name spoken, the big brown rat slid out of his hole in the rotten flooring, and came forward cautiously, his bright eyes fixed hopefully upon Bill.

The boy stooped down, holding out a piece of apple. The pack rat dropped what he had been carrying in his mouth, snatched the proffered morsel, and scurried back to his hole.

Shanty picked up the small white object and looked at it curiously. It was a china button, nicked at the edge.

"Now I may be crazy as a loon," he said half to himself, "but this looks like the same chiny button as I seen away up there on the ledge! Bill lad, if only that rat could talk, I'm thinkin' he could tell us somethin' we'd like to know! Was it true, lad, what Banshee said about yer feyther not registerin' his claim?"

The boy shook his head.

"Gee—I don't know! He staked it out, but mebbe he didn't get into town—"

The old prospector sighed.

"And neyther onc of us dares go in—

(*Continued on page 34*)

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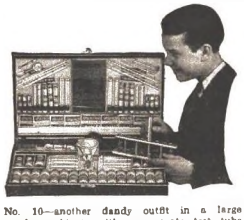

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(*Continued from page 32*)

unless we want to stay put!"

It was the day before Christmas, a dark, dreary day with heavy rain clouds swirling overhead and threatening momentarily to dissolve into a torrential storm. The old prospector's heart was heavy.

"Ye're not gettin' anywheres, Shanty," he muttered, "an ye're draggin' this lad nowheres with ye!"

He went to the door of the little cabin and looked up at the ominous gray sky. The sound of distant voices caught his ear. And then a tingling shock went through him. For from the highway at the top of the hill three men were descending—and Banshee Taylor was in the lead!

For an instant he stood helpless. The end to the brief interlude of freedom had come. Banshee had brought the authorities. It would mean jail this time!

With the thought came fierce, swift revulsion of feeling.

He slammed the door shut, and flung the heavy bar across it. He was panting as he turned around.

"Lad, lad, they're upon us!"

Bill leaped from his packing box seat.

"I ain't going back!" he cried. "Shanty, you aren't either! You and me are pards—we're workin' for a livin'! We can get along if they just let us alone until we find that gold. . . ."

The old prospector's face was white.

"I'm thinkin' they won't listen to any sech talk, lad. . . ."

They were at the window, crouching down together, peering out.

"Kape as quiet as a mouse, an' belike they'll go away—especially if the rain will but come!"

THE sound of thrashing footsteps came nearer . . . the men had paused on the other side of the swiftly racing stream to find the best place for crossing.

Suddenly, from behind the two in the cabin, came a little click. Shanty started nervously.

"It's only Steven . . . he's brought something," whispered Bill.

But Shanty made a queer, strained sound in his throat. For the flicker of firelight had caught the object that the big brown pack rat had dropped on the floor—and it threw off a molten yellow gleam!

"Saints love us," he whispered, trembling, "it looks like—but it can't be . . ."

Bill turned, staring at his friend with startled eyes. For the old prospector was crawling along the floor as if his limbs would not support him. Then he squatted in front of the fireplace, the quartz lump in his hand, and there was sweat running down his seamed face.

"Bill, Billy lad—" his voice was hoarse and shaken—"it's—it's *gold!* As rich and free as ever I saw it in me whole life! Bill—when first I saw that pack rat's nest up on the ledge and heard ye say that yer feyther found gold there, it came into me mind that it was carried there by a trade rat who liked shiny things! And when I glimpsed them pieces o' green glass and the chiny button—I figgered that Steven must o' packed 'em from underneath the trash pile." He paused an instant.

"But, lad—I'm thinkin' the vein's nearer. He's been breakin' off pieces along his runway, belike! Git that pick and dig—right down that hole there, under the floorin' where Steven comes up!"

THERE were voices outside—the men had crossed the stream. Shanty got to his feet. His eyes were blazing.

"I'll hold 'em off, lad! If we can prove we ain't paupers—"

There was a peremptory knock on the barred door. Then a crisp, authoritative voice.

"Open up! We know you're in there, Shanty—"

For a terrified second, Bill hesitated. Then he leaped for the short-handled pick. He swung it above his head, and it came crashing down into the rotten flooring.

"That's it, lad—dig! Straight along Steven's burrow—" He had the double-barreled shotgun in his hands, and was poking it through the broken pane.

"Stand where ye are," he called out sharply. "Banshee, kape yer hands well above yer head; and you, Mister Sheriff, and you, Mister Deputy, take the same positions! I'm in no argyfyin' mood, and Banshee will tell ye whether I can shoot straight. . . ."

The three men outside, startled at the unexpected menace of the steady gun, lifted their arms involuntarily. Banshee Taylor's face had turned a mottled bluish white.

"D-d-on't shoot—" he stammered. "We—we don't mean you no harm, Shanty—"

The voice from within was pricked with sarcasm.

"Ye don't need to be tellin' me, Banshee! Sure, I've had plenty of experience in the past with yer dove-like kindness. . . . (Go on, lad, *dig!*)"

The sheriff frowned. He was a short, gray-eyed man with a deeply tanned face.

"Shanty, you're just making things harder for yourself and the boy. You deliberately became a fugitive. Defying the law with a weapon is another serious offense. And you're crazy if you think you can dig out of the shack. It's hopeless, Shanty. Put that gun down, and let us in!"

The deputy spoke softly, out of the corner of his mouth.

"Mebbe I can sneak around the corner and stick a gun through one o' the side windows!"

The gathering storm was nearer. The clouds were heavy and black. A white swish of lightning was followed by a crackling rattle of thunder.

"I'll not let ye in unless ye agree to give us a chance! (*Dig*, lad! Tear up that board yonder!)"

The sheriff's voice was stern.

"You're spoiling every chance for yourself and the boy. Open that door and surrender peaceably!"

Again came the white gnashing of the lightning's teeth, and the snarling roar of the thunder. The air was murky black. . . .

"Beat it!" rasped out the sheriff to his deputy, and the man slipped like a phantom around the corner of the shack.

The Pillow Pup

By Virginia Gage

The red and white checkered dog
With a pink flannel tongue
Has an extremely retiring disposition;
He never blinks his eyes
Nor barks, nor sniffs,
But only sits
And droops his ears
Among the cushions.

An American Boy Prize Poem

"Open the door, Shanty. You're covered from the other side!"

Suddenly, from within, there came an inarticulate cry. Then the gun barrel wavered, and the sheriff sprang forward and seized it, and dragged it through the broken window pane. Banshee, like a coyote, had turned tail and fled to the edge of the clearing. He came slowly back when he saw the gun safely in the hands of the sheriff.

"Be careful o' that old cuss," he said fearfully. "He shoots awful straight!"

The sheriff flung him a look of disgust.

THE rain came down suddenly, in a vicious, breath-taking deluge. The three men hunched themselves against it.

"Let's get back to the car until this is over!" shouted Banshee Taylor above the smashing fury of the storm.

"Shut up, you!" the sheriff roared at him.

Then the cabin door opened abruptly, with the sound of falling bar and creaking hinges. The old prospector stood there, a strange, wild look in his eyes. His gray hair was disheveled by the driving wind.

"Come in!" he cried out to them, "come in and take shelter! Mister Sheriff, it's trustin' to yer honor that I am. . . ."

They stumbled inside, gasping for breath. Shanty shut the door behind them. The sheriff shook from his hat a shower of rain drops. "I've told you, Shanty, I can't promise anything except the law."

The bent figure straightened. There was an electric quality to his voice that seemed a part of the unleashed storm outside.

"It's justice of the law that I'm askin'! Justice fer an orphaned lad and his wee sister—fer them as has no feyther, and is hounded by a black devil in human form! *You*, Banshee Taylor—" he pointed a shaking hand at the dark, belligerent face — "you tricked William Radfield once by saltin' a worthless mine — and then, when ye thought gold was truly there, ye tricked him into gettin' it back again! But there's a justice above all yer dirty schemin's — and the instrument of it was a humble one! Jest a pack rat it was that fooled ye, Banshee Taylor, with his cache o' shinin' rocks! The vein is not up on the hill—it's here, under our very feet!"

The three men followed his pointing finger with hypnotized eyes. They saw a boy's bowed form, bent over something on the floor beside him—and there was tragedy in his figure.

"What the. . . ." muttered the sheriff, and lit a match. Then he drew his breath in a sharp, gasping sound. In the hollow space uncovered was a pack rat's cache; a litter of rusted nails, bits of glass, a bottle stopper—and a handful of quartz chunks, each one sparkling up into the flickering light.

But that was not all. Along the burrowed passage, ran a broad rusty yellow band—an outcropping vein of purest gold!

The boy looked up with dimmed eyes. "I—I killed Steven!" he choked out. "He gave us all this—and I killed him! The pick went into him as he was runnin' out—"

The limp, inert body of a pack rat lay in his lap. Steven had made his greatest trade.

Suddenly there was a furtive movement in the room. Banshee Taylor was at the open door and in his hands was the double-barreled shotgun covering them.

"Hey! What are you doing?" The sheriff wheeled about and spoke sharply.

In the man's face there was triumph.

"You all stay right where you are! I'll blow the head off of anyone that moves! This claim ain't never been registered . . . but it's going to be—to-day! I'm goin' to take the car!"

THE sheriff's voice was hoarse with rage.

"You—you scoundrel! You'd try to take a strike like this away from a kid an' an old man. . . ."

He moved forward, but the gun halted him. "Stand back — or I'll shoot—"

Then Shanty's voice came, clear as a ringing bell.

"Fooled again, Banshee — the gun ain't loaded!"

The man hesitated, his jaw sagging. In that instant, the sheriff and his deputy whipped out their revolvers.

With an oath Banshee Taylor flung his useless weapon from him and stumbled through the driving fury of the rain towards the stream. A bullet cracked past him. He swerved, and plunged into the water. The turbulent, muddy current caught at him. He leaped for a bowlder, missed his foothold—and crashed face downward on the sharp point. The three men and the boy upon the bank saw him throw out his arms, thrashing wildly. Then the rushing eddy and whirl of the maddened torrent dragged him down, rolling him over and over like a log.

The sheriff and his deputy plunged in and battled with the fierce current. The rain beat at them with frenzied, stinging fury. The inert body avoided them, was swirled away, pushed under, battered against jutting logs and bowlders —but at last they dragged it up on the bank. The sheriff straightened up, shivering in the downpour.

"He's done for," he said briefly. "Skull's smashed in. Well, he had it coming to him. Shanty, I'll stand by you and the kid — we'll register that claim in his name to-day!"

"It's half Shanty's!" cried out the sober-faced boy. "He's goin' to be my adopted father!"

IN Sacramento the next day, freshly clothed, and entertained by the sheriff at the most bountiful dinner either of them had known for many days, the question arose as to a name for the claim that was to prove one of the greatest finds since the old days of the Gold Rush.

On one side of Shanty sat Bill; on the other side, a demure, red-headed little girl whose adoring brown eyes never left the kindly, weather-beaten face.

"I think, lad," Shanty said solemnly across the remnants of turkey and cranberry sauce, "that in honor o' the day it oughta be called 'Christmas Mine,' for—"

But Bill shook his head.

"Nope—it's goin' to be called 'The Even-Steven!' You wouldn't find many pals who would give their lives for you!"

The sheriff and the old prospector looked at each other. Shanty nodded gravely.

"I reckon that's so; the 'Even-Steven' it shall be! An' don't ye be takin' yer pal's death too much to heart, lad. For if Steven is the b'y I think he was, he'd be glad that he could trade his life fer the happiness o' two sech as yerself and the wee lass!"

"And you too, Shanty," Bill said quickly.

The old man smiled. Tears of complete happiness were smarting behind his own eyelids. Then the sheriff lifted his big white coffee cup.

"Here's to you all!" he said heartily. "A merry Christmas, and many of 'em!"

Trouble Hunter

(Continued from page 7)

too," he challenged.

"Come along," Hague nodded.

Johnny spoke. "How about shovels? We may have to dig through."

"Two in the car," said the engineer.

JOHNNY went out first. Tony came second, carrying Stella. Jim Hague was last. The wind tore the door from his grasp and slammed it shut.

Johnny, gripping the wheel, rode out to meet the wild gods of the north. The storm snarled at the car, and snowflakes hissed, and gathered on the windshield, and defied the wiper. Slowly they climbed out of the hollow that held the mines. At the top of the rise the full wind caught them. The car trembled. Johnny, glancing out a side window, could not see the mine plain at all. The world had become a shroud of snow.

Jim Hague spoke from the rear seat. "She's riding easier than I expected."

"The plow's been through," Johnny answered. "It'll be tougher as we get on."

Tony sensed their unspoken thoughts. "Please, Boss! We make doctor?"

"Leave it to your uncle," said Johnny.

They ran into deeper snow. Presently the windshield was caked; the wiper, choked, ceased to work. Johnny got out and cleaned the glass. Then he had trouble in starting. The wheels spun with futile power. Evidently there was ice under the snow. If they stalled—

He backed, and made a fresh start. This time the chains took hold, and they moved ahead slowly into the blinding whiteness.

"About two miles?" Mr. Hague asked.

Johnny glanced at the speedometer, and nodded. Five more miles to go. The road was obliterated, and only an open lane through the snow-weighted trees showed him where a road had been. He had to guess at the middle. . . . Deep snow again, and a hill. He threw into first. They crawled, and slowed. He nursed the throttle with a gentle foot. The engine began to knock. The car hesitated, and moved again. The front wheels crept over the brow. Moving—just about moving.

"She stop!" Tony cried in alarm.

But the car continued to move. One last struggle, and they were on the down grade.

"Nice place to begin to slide back," Johnny commented. His mouth was dry. Now he had to be careful on this down grade. Too much brake and they might skid. Leaning over the wheel he peered ahead, and tried to hold the center of the lane. They reached the bottom, and ran along a level stretch.

"Three miles," said Mr. Hague.

Abruptly, without warning, they nosed into a drift, and the engine died.

For a moment nobody spoke. Johnny, catching the mirror with his eye, saw Tony's face reflected—it was stone. The child stirred and moaned.

"Shovels!" Johnny cried. The sound of agony had gone through him. They had expected this. They had brought shovels, hadn't they? He sprang out of the car. Tony handed the child to Mr. Hague. "I dig," he said hoarsely.

THE gale smashed at them, roaring through the trees, and they braced and slipped and dug. Soon they were powdered white. Snow clung to Johnny's eyebrows, and stung his sight. He faced the wind, and in the lash of it his face grew raw. He dug, panting.

Tony worked like a madman, heaving his shovel in a fury of attack. They leveled the drift, and cut paths for the tires. They crawled under the car and got out the snow packed solidly against crank case and rear housing. Johnny wormed out from under and grinned wearily.

"How about a little joy ride?" he asked.

They climbed in. The car lurched and paused; lurched and stopped, lurched and plowed forward. They cleared the drift and were free again!

"Four miles," said Hague.

A turn in the road, and the storm suddenly zoomed with redoubled fury. A deluge of snow was blown out of the trees, and almost buried them. The car staggered on. The wind shield was caked again. Johnny crawled.

"Please." It was Tony's voice. "We make too slow."

Another drift. Fortunately, it didn't block the whole road, and they struggled through. Johnny's arms began to tremble.

"Six miles," said Hague. "We're almost there. Careful of that turn at the foot of this hill, Johnny. There's a rocky drop on the left."

Johnny pounded the wind shield, and some of the snow fell off. Careful! He crept as far to the right as he dared, feeling for the edge of the road, and held his breath. He knew the spot—they called it Spiker's Drop. A driller named Franz Spiker had gone off there in a car two years ago. He pounded the wind shield again and strained his eyes. Dimly he saw the turn. And at that moment a mass of snow fell out of the trees and pancaked against the glass.

The road and the white, swirling daylight were gone. He might as well have been blind. Terror shook him, but his brain stayed clear. There was only one thing to do. Stop. He jammed on the brake. The car jolted, veered, slid, and went into a skid.

Tony gave a horror-stricken cry. Not a word came from Jim Hague.

Johnny could only sit there in helpless fear, and wait. The universe seemed to spin, and turn, and reel. There was a crash. Had they gone off the drop? Then he grew conscious that all movement had ceased. The snow had been shaken off the wind shield. Drunkenly, crazily, they had made the turn and were stalled on a level stretch of road. One fender was battered. That must have been the crash he had heard.

Slowly, very slowly, he released hands that seemed frozen to the wheel. His nerves steadied. "Got another pair of chains?" he asked.

It was several seconds before Jim Hague answered. "Under your seat, Johnny."

He raised the car, adjusted the chains, and lowered the jack. A touch on the starter button, and the motor came to life.

THEY went on into the white maelstrom. With four chains Johnny found his control of the machine surer, and called himself names. Why hadn't he thought of four chains at the start? They passed a house, a second, a third. The boy gave a shout.

"Jim!—we've made it."

"You're a driver, Johnny."

The car slid into the curb. Tony carried Stella. Hague rang a bell. A ruddy-faced man opened the door.

"Why, hello, Hague. What are you doing over here on a day like this? What have you there—a child? Come in, come in. Miss Post!"

A nurse appeared, and a procession moved to the examination room. A small light focused on the innermost depths of the child's throat. Tony stood as if rooted.

"Our old friend quinsy," the doctor said cheerfully. "Probably began as tonsilitis and then developed the abscess. A stroke of a lancet and she'll get immediate relief. It's just ripe for cutting. Now, if you gentlemen will just step outside—"

"What you do to my Stella?" Tony said darkly.

"I make her better," said the doctor—and after a moment, Tony followed Jim Hague and Johnny to an outer room.

The engineer and the boy sank into chairs, but the shovel man stood near the door, twisting his cap in his hands. And there he stayed, through dragging minutes, until the door opened again, and the nurse came out with the patient. The look of agony was gone, and the small face was at peace.

"You'll pardon me, Hague." The doctor's voice boomed from the inner room. "I have a call to make and must go along. I wouldn't take that child out for an hour or so. Keep her well wrapped. I don't envy you your drive back to Minertown."

The nurse laid Stella upon a couch and Tony tiptoed forward to peer down.

"She sleep," he said in awe. "Boss, I thank you much. And you, Johnny."

"Glad we could help you," said Jim Hague.

Tony found a soft chair and sat in it gingerly. Out in the hall a cathedral gong struck the half hour. Johnny twisted restlessly. What was the matter with Jim Hague? Here he had Tony where he could give him the works. Was he going to let the chance slip?

Then Hague began abruptly: "About to-night's meeting—"

"Boss," Tony said, "we do no good with talk. I no want argue."

"I do," Jim Hague said a little grimly. "You fellows think you haven't been treated right on the bonus. You're making a mistake."

"Mistake?" Tony was, all in a moment, the man with a cause. "Is it mistake for 38-cent bonus? Once it was bonus for dollar. Sometimes more. Soon maybe it come 25-cent bonus. Always smaller and less. Somebody has big pocket, no?"

"Nobody has a big pocket, Tony. Nobody has been stealing your bonus. Business has been bad. The amount of bonus depended on a lot of things—tonnage, whether the ore ran high grade or low, cost of production, the selling price. The market has been off. The company hasn't been making much money. Last year we couldn't pay interest on our bonds. Do you know what a bond is?"

"I know bonus is only 38 cent. Who get other 70 cent?"

"There wasn't any other 70 cents," Hague explained patiently. "Business has been bad. Miner poor; company poor, too. You understand that, don't you?"

"I understand only 38-cent bonus," Tony said doggedly.

Johnny gave a long sigh. This thing was going haywire after all.

Jim Hague stood up, and walked to the window. "Snow's over," he said casually. "Sky's breaking." He came

Two Soldiers in a Train--

And as it clicks smoothly toward Paris, one of them grins, leans back against the cushions, and starts to tell how he was officially killed in action. Luckily for readers of *The American Boy*, Captain Lawrence G. King was at hand to set the story down. You'll read it, in all its gripping detail, next month.

"PRISONERS A.W.O.L."

back to stand for a moment by his chair, and only Johnny noticed that his hand shook on the back of it.

"Tony," he said, "you know what a bank book is?"

Yes, Tony knew about bank books. They were good.

"The company keeps books like bank books," Jim Hague said. "They are good. They tell the truth. They say that 38 cents is all the company can now pay."

"One time it was dollar," said Tony.

Hague tried again. "If you have $5, can you go to the store and pay $10 on your bill?"

Tony shook his head. No, that could not be.

"That is how it is with the company. The company hasn't the 70 cents it used to pay."

"Who take it?" Tony demanded with a cunning leer. "Boss, you tell me that."

Jim Hague looked at Johnny with a despairing laugh. His eyes were desperate. And suddenly Johnny was flinging himself into the argument.

"Look here, Tony," he burst out, "you listen to me!"

"I listen."

"We came pretty close to being killed at Spiker's Drop, didn't we?"

Tony nodded gravely.

"We knew when we left your house that it was going to be a bad trip, didn't we?"

Tony nodded again. "It was for Stella."

"Sure it was for Stella, and for you, and for your wife. Mr. Hague took a big chance for you. Is it likely that a man who'll risk getting killed just to help you will sneak up behind you and steal 70 cents out of your pay check?"

"Please, you say that again, Johnny."

Johnny said it again. A shadow of bewilderment appeared on the shovel man's face.

"I don' know," he said, half sullenly, and lapsed into frowning silence.

The hour was up. The nurse appeared, Stella was carefully wrapped, and Tony carried her out to the car. The storm had passed, the day was gone, and overhead a star glittered brilliantly. Johnny turned on the head lights. The snow had begun to crust with frost and gleamed with icy diamonds.

With the storm over, with a clear wind shield, with a chain on every wheel, Johnny found the driving easier. Mile after mile they made, through the black night and the crystal-clear snow. Then they topped the final rise and Minertown was below them. Lights outlined the tailings piles and gleamed at the separators and the shafts, but the clatter and thump and thunder of the mines was gone. It was Christmas Eve.

Tony prepared to leave the car. "Boss, I thank you once; now I thank you twice."

He walked toward his house. The door of the cottage opened; voices called to each other in Polish. Johnny slipped the car into gear and drove off.

"Let's go home," said Jim Hague. "No use in your going back to Hogan's."

SUPPER was a silent meal. Mrs. Hague asked a question with her eyes, and the engineer shook his head. Afterwards, he sank into a chair with a book. But Johnny noticed that he didn't turn a page.

There was a small tree in the living room on a stand, but nobody seemed to have the heart to trim it. Upstairs Mrs. Hague moved about restlessly. Apprehension held the house.

Johnny picked up a New York newspaper and rustled aimlessly from page to page. Suddenly he stopped, his eyes fastening themselves on a short paragraph in the financial section.

"Say!" he whispered to himself—"perhaps this'll help. Maybe Tony'll listen to printed talk even if he won't listen to the boss' talk."

He glanced at Jim Hague, staring at his book. No use bothering him—there was only one way to do this, for Tony couldn't read English.

Swiftly, silently, Johnny folded the financial section, slipped into the hall and put on his overcoat, and then went out into the cold, clear night. He headed straight for the little Polish church and found there, as he had hoped he might, the frail, gray-haired pastor. Johnny thrust the financial section into the older man's hands as he talked.

"If you'd read the paragraph to Tony!" he urged. "All it says, of course, is that for the second time the company's passed its dividend. But if *you* go over to the meeting in Sokol Hall and tell Tony that it says right there in black and white in a big city paper that the company isn't making money, perhaps—*perhaps* he'll stop yowling about that 70 cents."

Wearily, the gray-haired man considered the matter. "Worth trying," he decided, and patted the boy's shoulder. "Good boy, Johnny. Better go back to Mr. Hague." And then he hurried off toward Sokol Hall.

So Johnny went back. Back through the cold, clear night, with the sky a sweep of blazing jewels over his head. Back to Jim Hague, who gave him the ghost of a grin as he came in.

"You're a restless cuss, Johnny," the engineer said, and then his eyes returned, unseeing, to his book.

Johnny picked up a magazine and read—and might as well have read backward. He glanced up at the clock. Nine-thirty. The meeting would be in full swing now. . . .

He went over to the desk and wrote a letter—and might as well have written backward. . . . Again he glanced up at the clock. Eleven!

Jim Hague had shifted to another chair and was sitting near the telephone. Waiting for a possible call? From whom? Hogan? Baldy Scott? Johnny picked up another magazine, and presently put it down. The clock said twenty of twelve.

The engineer stirred. "Feel like a little drive, Johnny?"

"Anything you say," Johnny answered casually.

"Come on then. Some air would do us good. We'll just drive round the camp."

But we'll end by coming past Sokol Hall! Johnny thought, and his heart began to pound.

He sent the car down into the plain of the workings, past the silent conveyors, around behind the deserted separating mills, through the tailings road between the dark change house and the quiet shaft of the Big Bill. Then up a grade to the mountain highway, and off into a side road. Then into another road, and his hands tightened on the wheel. They were coming to a building of lighted windows and an open door through which men were pouring out into the night. The meeting was over.

Johnny knew that beside him Jim Hague sat taut.

The crowd grew in front of the door and spread out. He blew his horn for a clear road. They'd recognize the car. He gripped the wheel tight.

Light from the windows played over the automobile. They went on through the snow. Cries and shouts broke out behind them.

"What's that?" the engineer demanded sharply.

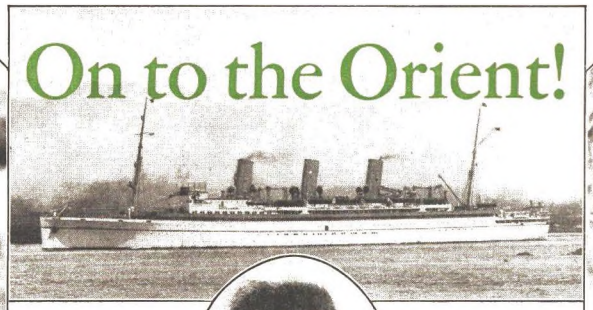
But Johnny's hand was on the button of the horn. It blared a wild rhythm. *Toot, toot, toot-toot-toot! Toot, toot, toot-toot-toot!*

"Johnny!" Jim Hague had him by the arm.

"Didn't you get it?" Johnny cried. "They were yelling, 'Merry Christmas, Boss.' They're staying with the job! Tony saw it. There'll be no strike. Everything's jake. Let's go home and trim the tree."

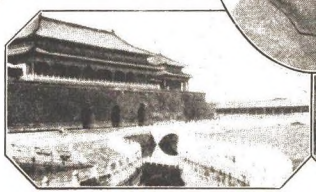
And at that moment the bells of the Polish church rang in Christmas morning with a joyous peal.

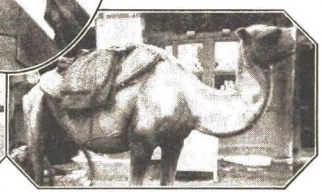
On to the Orient!



You'll sail on an Empress liner; see coolies astride their burros (left); gaze at the great throne hall in the Forbidden City in Peiping (below); all under the chaperonage of Upton Close.

In Korea you'll see burden bearers, with their heavy loads (right); and gangling, supercilious camels, that are something more than circus animals, on the other side of the Pacific.





AGAIN the Orient beckons! Last year two *American Boy* readers—James Kline of Minneapolis, a student, and Mary Spotswood Payne of Lynchburg, Va., a teacher—took a three-months' trip to Japan and China with all expenses paid. They visited Tokyo, Peking, Shanghai. They saw with their own eyes the magnificent tombs of the Shoguns at Nikko. They gazed on the vacant throne of the great conqueror, Kubla Khan, in Peking. They talked with high officials — men whose names to-day are on everybody's lips.

This year, again, two readers will take the magic tour. In co-operation with the Pacific Era Travels, Inc., *The American Boy* is offering two trips with all expenses paid from your doorstep and back to it. The trip will go to the authors of the two best 300-word essays on the subject:

"Why I Want to Spend a Summer in the Orient."

One trip is for readers under 21. The other is for teachers — grade, high school, or college. The winners will be members of the Upton Close Cultural Expedition and will have the personal chaperonage of Mr. Close, famous authority on the Far East, and Mrs. Close. Because of Mr. Close's prestige in the East, you will personally meet and chat with some of its most famous personages.

In addition to the two first prizes, there will be, in the contest for readers, six original oil paintings by *American Boy* illustrators.

You have as good a chance to win one of these great prizes as anyone. If you do, you will be leaving your home at the close of school in June. You'll proceed to Vancouver, B. C., by the scenic lines of the Canadian Pacific Railway. On July 2, you'll board the *Empress of Canada*, giant liner of the Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. And after two weeks of deck games, of chats about the Orient, and evenings of recreation—all while you're steaming steadily toward the rising sun — the East, with its shrines, its Buddhas, it temple bells and cherry trees, will lie at your feet. (En route, each way, you'll have a day in languorous, glamorous Honolulu.)

The trip will last all summer. You will learn why Peiping (Peking) is called the jewel city of the world. You will marvel at the men who built the Ten Thousand Li Wall, called "Great." You will see with your own eyes the making of porcelain, lacquer, and silk robes. A summer in lands you've dreamed about — and you'll return to school with more knowledge of the Orient than a year's study of geography could give you.

Remember These Rules

WRITE, at once, to the Pacific Era Travels, Inc., 112 E. 19th St., New York City, enclosing three cents for return postage, and ask for helpful literature on the Orient.

Get your essay in by *January 15*. Mail it to the Contest Editor, *The American Boy*, 550 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, Mich.

Keep your entry to 300 words. Although the longer essays won't be disqualified, preference will be given the shorter. Typewrite, or write clearly in ink, on one side of the sheet only.

If you're a teacher, write at the top of each sheet the word "Teacher" and the name of the school in which you teach. Put also your full name and address. If you're a reader — readers must be under 21 to be eligible— put at the top of each sheet your name, address, age, and the school you attend (if you attend one).

Please do not ask for advance information on the winners, or request us to return your entries. Keep a carbon if you wish. (And remember to enclose your best reading ballot on page 45.)

Send for the literature to-day. Steep yourself in the magic of the Far East. Then, while the mood is on you, write your essay, and send it in. Remember that it must be in *The American Boy* offices by January 15. The winner might as well be you!

FIRST AID! QUICK! THE PUP'S IN A BAD WAY!

It's All Due to the Cartoonustration Contest

"HELLO, Doctor." The Editor speaking. "Doctor, can you come at once? Our Office Pup is in a bad way. You see, he made the mistake of reading five hundred cartoons in one day. . . . Yes, cartoons submitted by *American Boy* readers in our Cartoonustration contest—in the October issue we invited readers to illustrate the Funnybone Ticklers on our joke page with original cartoons. And they did such a good job of it that the Pup's done in.

"Well, Doctor, Pluto got down to the office at seven this morning. When I arrived at eight-thirty he was helpless with laughter. At eleven he was hysterical. When I returned from lunch he was maudlin. At three he began to inflate and at four it happened. . . . Yep, split his sides—both of them—all the way from hindquarters to headquarters. Can you hurry down and sew him up? It might be a good idea to put in a zipper. Then he can split his sides all he wants. Thanks. Good-by."

While the doctor is busy with Pluto, the editors wish to extend hearty congratulations to every entrant in the Cartoonustration contest. There were so many good cartoons—deftly drawn and aptly illustrating October Ticklers—that the judges had to go into a hilarity huddle. And before they came out, more than one of them began considering the matter of Zippers for Easy and Painless Sidesplitting.

The three best cartoons — winners of $10, $5, and $3—are reproduced with their Ticklers on this page. The honorable mentions, listed alphabetically, are: Jack Abshier (17), Kansas City, Mo.; M. E. Barton (17), Oregon, Mo.; Robert Bash (15), Oklahoma City, Okla.; Ned Bassett (17), Toronto, Ont., Canada; Franklin Bingman (17), Washington C. H., Ohio; Burton C. Blanchard (19), Windsor, Vt.; Ann S. Crutcher (13), Harrodsburg, Ky.; William E. Decker (19), Moline, Ill.; Richard P. Frank (17), Jeffersonville, Ind.; Burney Hogarth (17), Chicago, Ill.; George Jorgensen (17), Chicago, Ill.; Fred Kayser (16), Detroit, Mich.; Walter Kellogg (18), Syracuse, N. Y.; R. W. Lapham (19), Pittsburgh, Pa.; Alex Miller (17), River Rouge, Mich.; James A. Mitchell (18), Columbus, Ohio; Harlow Parker (16), Pasadena, Calif.; Victor Quintana (15), Denver, Colo.; Duane Rimel (16), Asotin, Wash.; Frank Rovsek, Jr. (16), Milwaukee, Wis., Katharine Sampson (18), Conshohocken, Pa.; Harry W. Schaade (14), New Middletown, Ohio; Bernard Schmittke (17), Cleveland, Ohio; Myer Silverman (17), Boston, Mass.; Ben Sumrall (15), Seattle, Wash.; Donald Tobin (16), Compton, Calif.; Bob Tollefsen (16), Seattle, Wash.

FIRST PRIZE $10
Ed Nofziger (18), Long Beach, Cal.

Intimately Acquainted

A traveler going to New Zealand was asked by a friend if he would inquire while there as to the whereabouts of his grandfather, Frederick Thompson. One day the traveler was introduced to a fine old Maori of advanced age. "Did you ever meet an Englishman named Frederick Thompson?" he asked.

A smile passed over the Maori's face. "Meet him?" he replied. "Why, I ate him."

SECOND PRIZE $5
Arthur Vogel (19), Toledo, Ohio

Rather Cold Trail

Breathless Hunter: "Say, boy, did you see a fox run by here?"
Boy: "Yes, sir."
Hunter: "How long ago?"
Boy: "It'll be a year next Christmas."

THIRD PRIZE $3
Gordon Nunes (17), Porterville, Cal.

But Will They?

"Many worse things have come to pass," sighed the school teacher as she gazed at the incoming class.

Ghosts of the Scarlet Fleet

(*Continued from page 10*)

was safe—at least for a time!

The darkness was thick as I made my way deeper into the rock, and the dank, unhealthy air gave no promise of daylight. Nor did I seem to be progressing upward. I recalled the rocky headland beyond La Touche's house, and wondered if I were burrowing into the bowels of that. Did La Touche's men know of this underground passage? Would they be waiting for me at the other end of it?

My wounds began making themselves known as I stumbled slowly along the twisting way, and suddenly my head became so giddy that I sank to the rock floor. How long I remained there, unconscious, I do not know. I only know that I woke again to darkness and rose again to my feet, and once more went on.

As I tried to pierce the darkness, I wondered if human hands had fashioned this tunnel. My hand explored the wall, and I began to realize slowly that it was lined with brick. What a vast amount of labor it must have taken!

I turned a corner, and stopped. It was still black as pitch, but something was different. What was it? I sniffed. And then I knew — the air was fresher. Cleaner, somehow! My heart pounded as I hurried on.

Another turn—and I saw a light. A faint glimmer, but to me it meant as much as the sun itself. For light meant the end of the tunnel. It meant perhaps a cavern—and human beings. I paused—would I meet La Touche's men?

I staggered on a few paces and stopped. Vague objects swam before my eyes. I cursed my weakness. Things were going blank. I dropped to my knees and fell forward on my face, sprawled out.

When I again opened my eyes, I found that I was at the entrance to a vast chamber. I got to my knees and sat upon my heels and looked about me. Barrels, chests, boxes, and bales were littered about as though some giant hand had flung them, haphazard, into this place. Tapestries, folded and lying about in profusion.

I knew instantly that I was in a treasure chamber filled with the wealth of the seas and of years! Jeweled rapiers, goblets of gold, chalices, censers, candelabra, half-broken cases out of which poured rubies, pearls, opals, amethysts, diamonds. Wealth, beyond the dreams of avarice! The sight took my breath away, and I knelt there gasping and unbelieving.

It was then that I became aware of someone else in the room. I heard footsteps first; then I saw him. A small man he was, white-haired and bent—a figure as amazing as the nature of the objects that surrounded him. Like some spectral being he walked out of the shadows of the big boxes and barrels, treading carelessly through the scattered jewels and goblets, as though they were less valuable than the rock of the floor.

I ROSE hastily and grasped more tightly the one knife that remained to me—the other I had lost somewhere. If this were one of La Touche's keepers, he would never live to carry news of me to the outside. But he was unarmed, and I relaxed and examined him as he approached.

White hair, pouring over a dirty tunic of greenish grey. Matted white eyebrows that almost concealed a pair of faded old eyes. A palsied hand that was stretched out toward me, as though in supplication. So old he seemed that I felt he must have lived already a hundred years—like some wretch who has been sentenced to live forever, in penance for his sins.

Now his shaking hand was pointing at me, and he was nodding.

"Yes," he said. "It is a human being."

He spoke as though he had always lived with shadows, and as though he talked to himself rather than to me.

"Merfil, it is a man," he said to himself. "He has come from the Pit. He *must* have come from the Pit. He has dared the crocodiles and thus he has learned the secret! Merfil, he may bring you peace and forgiveness."

There was such a wistfulness in the voice, such a pathetic bearing to the ancient figure, that my sympathies leaped to him. To reassure him, I placed my knife in my belt, smiled, and waited until he should speak to me, instead of to himself.

"He might speak for you, Merfil," the old man continued to himself. "For he is young, and the young have clean hands."

He stepped nearer to me now and raising his hand, he stroked my white shirt and touched my hair.

"Would you speak for Merfil?" he whispered.

Only then did the name impress itself upon me. Merfil! He whom The Laugh had called the hardiest buccaneer on the Main? Grandfather of The Laugh. With difficulty I covered my amazement.

"What would you have me say?" I asked him. "I would be away from here and to safety. Away from La Touche."

"La Touche will not find you here," he said, in the cracked tones of one who is not used to speaking above a murmur. "He will not dare the Pit. None dare the Pit—and my sentinels." He laughed. "Guards that have never failed me. Fine sentinels, mine!"

Then he peered at me and nodded appreciatively.

"But you dared the Pit," he said slowly. "You were brave—very brave."

I speedily told him that I had descended into the Pit through no choice of mine. La Touche's men, I explained, had thought to make sport of me.

"Others have come like that," he whispered. "I have seen them and tried to save them, but they have never found the ledge, and my guards—" He covered his face with his hands. "But you were brave—and that's why you're here. And you shall be my friend, and you shall speak for Merfil."

WITH that he took my hand and led me through that amazing treasure house into what appeared to be an Eastern pavilion. The place was soft with carpets and divans, and Merfil, still holding my hand, bade me be seated. At the same time he seated himself on the floor and looked up at me with pathetic eyes.

"Once, so many years ago that I cannot remember, I was as La Touche is," he said slowly, and his eyes suddenly filled with terror. "I burned and I slew. All ships were my prey, and with Rat o' the Main, Red Castaban, Stukeley, Bleech, and Panama Too, I ruled the Main."

He paused, while I listened, fascinated.

"Merfil," he murmured, as though his mind were turning back fifty years. "Merfil of the Main. Merfil, terror of the seas. Merfil the marooner."

There was, in the ancient pirate's manner, a touch of pride, mingled with contriteness.

"They died to the music of my guns," he whispered. "The waves threw them up and the yellow sands shrouded them. They were Merfil's victims, and from the Americas to Spain I filched my treasures, and none knew where Merfil hid his hoard. Then one day I saw it over the sea, through the murk of the storm—the cross that was a sword. And

(Continued from page 39)

it seemed that something had been taken away from my eyes, and I saw Merfil—a terrible creature with an evil face. I saw his soul shrunken and almost dead, and I took a boat, and man never saw me again.

"I had a son who followed the sea—the captain of an honest ship engaged in peaceful trade. And him I have seen but once since I was a young man and he a baby. Only once—" Merfil's hand shook, and he shut his eyes as if to rid himself of some terrible vision.

"I have been here where the treasure is for too many years to count, and here I will remain until somebody comes to speak for me and save me, and turn the treasure to honest uses. And these other pirates that followed me — La Touche and Mistral—they shall never get this treasure. There is a map—a map purporting to lead to the hiding place. But it is false and leads nowhere. And if pirates discover this place—despite the false map—it shall be worse for them."

I hardly noticed the sudden fierce gleam in the ancient man's eyes, my head was so buzzing with the things I had heard. Should I tell Merfil that he had a grandson—a grandson who was with Mistral? A troubadour who was in the confidence of the worst of the pirates? No — that would grieve him.

Merfil had mentioned a false map. Was that the map I had seen in La Touche's room? It must be, for I knew now that all these rogues were seeking the treasure that surrounded me in these caves. What would La Touche say if he knew that the wealth he sought was beneath his very feet? I almost laughed aloud, but I forebore, for Merfil's hand was on my sleeve and his faded, pleading eyes were upon me.

"Will you speak—for Merfil?" he asked.

"Aye," I answered him. "I will speak for Merfil, if you can get me away from this island of the Lost Secret."

Over the old man's face came a look of joy and relief. Like a thirst-choked man sighting fresh water, he sank weakly against the divan and looked into the distance before him.

"The blessed mercy," he whispered to himself. "The blessed mercy!"

AS I looked through the pavilion's opening into the treasure house, I knew now how all these riches had come here, and I could picture Merfil in the days of his youth, monarch of his buccaneers, and a thing to be feared at sea. Now, at my feet, a white-haired old man begged for my mercy and asked me to speak for him.

Slowly he rose to his feet, a look of peace upon his face. Taking from the wall an old musket, he beckoned to me.

"Come," he whispered. "I will take you to the passage of shadows and to the freedom beyond, and I will find a boat to bear you back to your friends."

We paused at the pavilion's entrance.

"That boat has been waiting—waiting through the years," he murmured. "Come to Merfil's cove, and then away, to entreat mercy for me."

With interested eyes, I looked to right and to left of me as we passed through that place of loot, and tried to picture the years Merfil had lived here in this rich loneliness, with every chest reminding him of a burning merchantman, the plank, the open boat!

We passed a heap of goblets and swords, and I stopped to pick me a long rapier with a jeweled hilt. I tested it and found the weight and balance to my liking, and straightway thrust it through my belt. Perhaps I might find occasion to use a pirate's sword to kill a pirate.

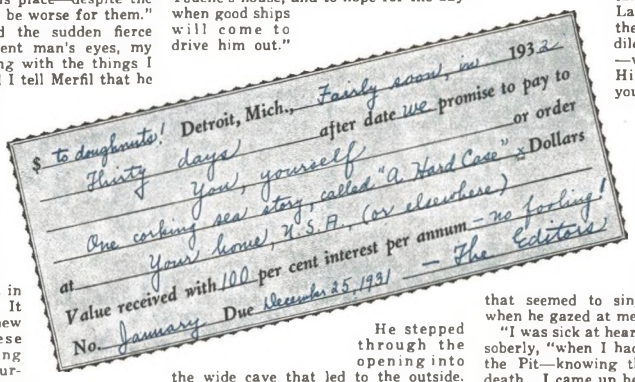
So we came to where apparently just a blank rock barred further progress. My guide marked my surprise, and his eyes smiled, and he chuckled.

Then he bent down, picked at a ring in the floor, and pulled. A slab of rock came easily up, as though it were balanced, and revealed stone steps that led into a passageway below.

I went first and he followed, and I felt fresh air against my face, and a few minutes later I was mounting a slope, and Merfil was raising another slab of stone.

Merfil paused as daylight came filtering into the dark tunnel.

"I have taken you to the middle part of the island," he explained. "Many times have I come up here to bathe in the sunlight and to look down upon La Touche's house, and to hope for the day when good ships will come to drive him out."



He stepped through the opening into the wide cave that led to the outside.

"You are safe," he told me. "They do not come up here."

I stepped out into the cave and saw before me the rocky bareness of the higher part of the island. This spot could not be far from where Sergrid had first found me. When my eyes had got used to the light I stepped to the very entrance to the cave.

"From here," Merfil said in his cracked tones, "I will take you down to the cove—the hidden cove."

As we started, I caught a glimpse of the roof of La Touche's mansion, far below, but the path that Merfil took soon hid the house from view. In silence we walked over a hill of tumbled rocks and entered a steep gorge that led down to the sea. We turned a corner —and stopped.

THERE, standing not a rod away, was a tall figure wearing the garb of one of La Touche's men. I grasped the jeweled sword that I had stuck through my belt, and Merfil half raised his old musket. The ominous figure was walking this way, head bent, and unaware that we were in front of him. So much the worse for him.

But even as I prepared to attack him, a glad cry came to my lips. The great head came up and the buccaneer looked at me and amazement came into his face, as though he were seeing a ghost.

"Sergrid!" I cried.

The momentary awe passed from Sergrid's face, and he ran toward me and grasped my hands and laughed into my eyes.

"Alive, by the living sea, alive, Alistair Ross!" he gasped. "Or do I dream?"

"Nay," I answered him. "It is no dream, Sergrid. I *am* alive and ready now to obey your commands."

And there we met, in the gorge halfway down to the sea, that stout-hearted Knight of the Sea and I. And I told him how I had escaped the Pit, and of what I had discovered beneath the earth, and of Merfil.

By that time the old pirate had come forward, and he looked at the great Sergrid in a most distrustful manner and he shook his head and muttered. Then he turned to me.

"I would have you speak for Merfil. You, young lad!"

Laughingly, I drew him toward Sergrid.

"Have no fear," I murmured. "This man is my friend and he will carry out my promise, for it would be a sacred duty on his part to do so."

"Amen to that," exclaimed Sergrid. "My sword hand upon it, old man. Have no fear. I would be blooded before I would deceive you."

Then Merfil believed the blonde giant, and his timorousness left him, and he was more at his ease.

"'Tis part of the secret you have found, Ross," murmured Sergrid to me. "Fate has played well with you, and for some better reason than we mere mortals know. Little does La Touche know what the pit and its crocodiles guard! And wait —wait until you tell His Eminence what you have discovered!"

He clasped my arm and his eyes were like those of an older brother as he smiled down into my face. Shall I ever forget that giant of a man and the great heart that beat within him, and the courage that seemed to sing within his eyes when he gazed at me?

"I was sick at heart," Sergrid went on soberly, "when I had to lower you into the Pit—knowing that below you lay death. I came up here to be alone, and to mourn. But—" his eyes blazed again —"you are alive!"

"And awaiting word from you to His Eminence," I reminded him.

Whereupon Sergrid became all business. Carefully he began to recite to me La Touche's strength—his ships, the number of his men, his cannon and stores of ammunition.

I was amazed at the size of La Touche's force, and asked him to repeat all he had said. This he did and he finished by saying:

"Already a boat awaits you in a cove of my own secret." He turned to Merfil. "Maybe you know the cove beyond the gorge, old man."

Merfil nodded.

"Is there aught I do *not* know upon this accursed island?" he answered. "It is Merfil's cove you speak of, and I was about to lead this young man there."

Ere either of us could speak again, distantly there came a call through the morning air, and then the sound of a pistolet's report.

Sergrid ran to the turning of the gorge, his sword ready, and as I followed, it was to see a sight that turned the blood cold within my veins.

There, racing toward us, was a wolfish-teethed band of men—and at their head was La Touche, his rapier drawn, and the blood lust of revenge upon his white and wicked face. Coming down the gorge, they were, the way Merfil and I had come, barring our way back to the underground passages.

Chapter Ten

"THAT slab of stone, Merfil!" I cried, "did you close it?"

"Aye," the old man answered fiercely. "They'll never find that entrance. And if they *did* get in, it would be to their doom."

I didn't understand what Merfil meant, but I felt relieved, and I turned to Sergrid His face was shining, and his great sword—it was as long as I—was out.

"Run, Sergrid!" I shouted. "They must not find out that you are my friend!"

"Nay! Let them know!" There was a great joy in Sergrid's voice. "They have already seen me. Come—back!"

Speedily Sergrid led us downward to where the gorge was as narrow as a man, and where the rock jutted out, offering good protection!

"Merfil," he ordered. "Down to the cove with you! I have a boat down there—see that it is ready."

Without a word Merfil scurried off, showing great agility for his age. The roar of the onrushing pirates was growing louder as Sergrid turned to me.

"Ross," he said, quickly, anxiously. "Only one can remain and that one must be I!"

I would have spoken, but his look silenced me.

"Nay, I know what you are going to declare," he added. "But it will be of no avail. You have the message to deliver to our leader, and back to him you must go."

As Sergrid paused, imploring me with his eyes, there was a report, and a ball hit the rock that protected us, and bits of stone fell at our feet. We were well protected. The opening was barely wide enough to admit two men walking abreast. As for pistol balls, the jutting rock would stop them, and if any pirate ventured into the narrow opening, we could quickly finish him. I hefted the sword I had found in the treasure chamber. It would be a merry fight.

"Hurry, Ross, and to safety," Sergrid urged me. "Merfil will be waiting by the boat. You must away!"

I shook my head. "And leave you here?" I questioned. "Alone?"

His lips were smiling.

"Could any man feel lonely with 'Wotan' here?"

Sergrid raised his sword, and his laughter echoed amid the rocks. But I stood my ground. To leave him to his death—and such a fate seemed certain—was something I could not bring myself to do.

"Go, Ross, go!"

The laughter had died upon his face, and there was urgency in his manner.

The next instant, running footsteps sounded in the gorge, and four figures had leaped into the opening, the morning sunlight upon their swords.

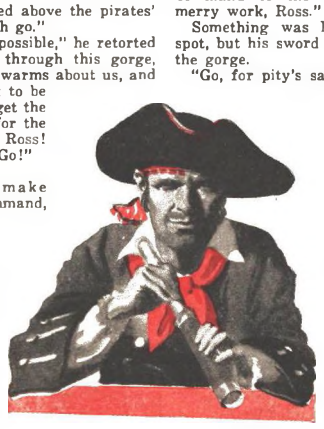
I was at Sergrid's side and I took one pirate in his stride. Even as he spitted himself upon my sword, Sergrid, with two sweeps—one to the right and one to the left—rid himself of two more antagonists. Ere the fourth attacker could fire a pistolet into Sergrid's face, that great blade had whirled—and not a sound told of the passing of the smitten man!

"Go, Ross!"

In that breathing space, he looked commandingly at me.

"Fight your way backward to the boat with me," I shouted above the pirates' cries. "Let us both go."

"It would be impossible," he retorted instantly. "Once through this gorge, they would be in swarms about us, and you will find work to be done ere you can get the boat to sea. Go, for the sake of our order, Ross! I command you! Go!"



ERE he could make good that command, six more figures came crowding by twos into the narrow way. As we stepped out, one rogue fired a ball that struck Sergrid in the leg. I saw him wince, but the next moment he was laughing and his sword was swinging, and those daring attackers were swept away as though they had been so many flies. I was at Sergrid's side as he drove forward, and his inspiration was mine. I pierced one buccaneer and left him in his wound, and another forced me back toward the narrow pass, only to be dispatched by that gleaming and incarnadined blade of my companion.

Ten still forms, lying grotesquely amid the rocks, bore evidence to our opening advantage in that fight. My heart was pounding wildly.

Ere we retreated behind our protecting rock, we could see La Touche, two pistolets in his hands, ordering another attack. His men, cowed and wondering, had drawn back, and were gazing at Sergrid as though he were some god.

Then I heard a shot, and I saw a writhing man go down as La Touche fired at him, and then some twenty men came raging downwards with the sun shining upon their steel, and their eyes grim with intention. To save ourselves from a pistol shot we waited behind the ledge until footsteps sounded in the narrow way.

A moment later I was thrusting at a garishly dressed rogue who loomed up before me as though metamorphosed from the rocks themselves. He plied a pretty blade and he grinned most horribly as he sought to pierce my guard.

But the lessons I had taken from Camponello made me his master, and fighting him backward I drove through his guard and gave him the point clean through the shoulder. He dropped his rapier, clutched his wound, and ere I could spit him again, he had turned and staggered away.

Sergrid's great blade was holding his foes back. Two men, unwary enough to approach, had paid the penalty. The cleft skull of one and the silent figure of the other told their own tale. I was back at his side and facing that ring of swordsmen, and even as I drew near to Sergrid, he sprung. It was the spring of an animal rather than of a human, and that great gleaming double-edged sword, more like a reaper's scythe than anything else, had done its harvesting ere my aid was needed.

Screaming with fear, and staggering in their wounds, three men fell backward, nor did Sergrid despatch them as they lay amid that ring of dead. Ere ball could be fired we were again back behind our rocky shelter.

"Back, Ross, back!" he cried to me. "Back, or by Thor I will bear you back and then both of us will die!"

I hesitated, but I knew I could no longer brook his will. There was anger written on his face.

"God guard you, Sergrid," I answered—and I held out my hand. My throat was choking me.

"God speed your boat, Ross," he answered, his anger dying away. "Go now. I doubt me if I can hold the gorge for long, for they will bring their whole command to the attack. 'Twill be merry work, Ross."

Something was holding me to the spot, but his sword was pointing down the gorge.

"Go, for pity's sake," he cried. "In another moment—!"

Slowly and regretfully, I walked down that gloomy gorge. I heard Sergrid's laughter behind me, and pausing, I turned to see him standing upon a piled mass of men, swinging that great sword and bringing death to a new band of attackers.

There was a sinking feeling in my heart as a turn in the gorge

(*Continued from page 41*)

shut him off from view, and there was a madly glorious song in my ears, for I could hear Sergrid singing as he fought, and never as long as life remains to me shall I forget the moment or the words.

Hoi a, the sheen of my blade!
Hoi a, the bite of its steel!
Hoi a, are ye afraid?
Hoi a, come ye to heel!
Gleam of my sword in the sun.
See craven foes on the run.
Hoi a, and hoi a, and sing,
Song of the sword that is king.
Song of the might of my blade,
Trusted and tried, unafraid!
Thor speed the song of my brand;
Strengthen the might of my hand.
Hoi a, to Valhalla's land!
Hoi a, Hoi a, Hoi a!

The song echoed about me and was still in my ears as I saw, ahead of me, the sea. Down a sandy beach I sped to find Merfil struggling vainly to launch a boat of considerable size.

SHE was fast embedded in the sand, and now I understood Sergrid's plea that I hurry away. Truly it would be some time before she could be floated, and as I raced toward Merfil, I wondered if I should have strength enough to get the boat launched.

"Hasten, young sir," cried Merfil, as I approached him. "I am afeared that you will not be alive to speak for me, and someone must speak for Merfil, else Merfil will lose his soul."

I took no notice of his words, for there was hard work to be done.

Getting a grip on the boat's stern, I put my back to her side, and firmly embedding my heels in the sand, I tugged and tugged until the veins started in my forehead and my arms felt lifeless. But I was shifting her, and as though to give me encouragement, that song volleyed toward me from the gorge and I knew that Sergrid still lived and held our enemies at bay.

The work was slow, painfully slow, but move the boat did toward the caressing little waves, and the rising tide was aiding my task a trifle. Nearer and nearer I got her to the waters, and at last with a final heave, I forced her free of the sand and she floated seaward.

I was over the side and into her in a moment and setting the sail, not knowing how futile was to be my haste.

"Young master, young master!"

Merfil's quavering voice was hailing me. Pausing in my efforts, I turned, and followed the direction of his pointing finger. The rope I had been holding fell from my hands.

Coming around the island was a big ship, and she was sailing in this direction, and I realized her intention at once. La Touche was going to throw another attacking force into the gorge from this end.

Over the intervening space of waters there came the sound of a booming gun, and a shot fell midway between my boat and the large ship. They had seen me, and now there could be no escape.

But, as that thought came, the wet, grotesque figure of Merfil was scrambling over the side, and with eager fingers he was bringing the boat's head into the wind. As the sail filled out, he chuckled. I had expected fear, I had fancied that any hope of escape now was out of the question, and it had been in my mind to leap back to the shore, and join my sword with Sergrid's!

But now, with the sail filling to the wind, our little boat was bowling along and was already in deep water.

"Merfil," I cried. "We must go back—my friend would have it so. There can be no chance of escape now, for we have only the present advantage of the wind and sea. They're crowding on sail and how can we hope to escape them?"

He chuckled again.

"Merfil will show you," he whispered.

Our boat bowled along and another challenging shot fell far behind us. Gazing backward at that big craft, watching the sails filling out and her speed increasing in consequence, I saw also that a boat was leaving her side and rowing toward the cove we had just left.

We turned a headland now, and lost sight of the pursuing craft. Ahead of us was the open sea, but we were still skirting close to the rocky shore. Beetling, black cliffs towered above us, and as I gazed at them, Merfil, his old eyes keen and shining, turned the tiller so that our boat raced toward what appeared to be the solid rock itself.

"Merfil, hold back," I cried. "We shall dash ourselves to pieces. Merfil—!"

I started toward him, but it was too late. We were on the lip of the inrushing waves and we would strike the rocks before we could turn.

The next instant, to my utter amazement, Merfil was lowering the sail, drawing out the little mast, and gazing backward at me.

"Down, down for your life, young master!" he cried.

Instinctively I ducked my head, and lo, the boat, instead of crashing into the rocks, sped through a small opening in them. A tunnel so cleverly concealed by nature that I had been unable to detect it from seaward!

We were in utter darkness and being borne along at a rapid rate. There was a roaring in my ears, and the boat was rocking, and I crouched in the middle of the craft, appalled.

Chapter Eleven

ABOVE the noise I could hear Merfil chuckling. It was the laughter of insanity, I was certain, and in frantic haste I scrambled toward him.

At that instant there came the spark of flint and steel and a few moments later the red gleam from a lanthorn fell upon Merfil's face. He was grinning and nodding his head, whilst about us the waters roared their strange song.

"Where are we going, Merfil?" I shouted, above the noise of the flood.

He chuckled and his bright little eyes were on mine.

"La Touche is a fool," he answered me. "La Touche will think you are dead and you can lie low and let him think so, young master."

"Aye," I answered him. "Very low. At the bottom of some dark whirlpool!"

"Nay, young master," he cried. "We go toward the second secret of this island that contains so many. We go to the pool of Merfil, for it was I who found it—and thereafter I will show you many mysteries, young sir!"

I sank back, partly relieved. Mayhap, the old man was not mad, after all.

"La Touche would have caught us," he went on, his eyes gleaming in the light from the lanthorn. "There was only this way, and it is well that you should know these secrets. To-morrow, the next day, the day after, I can speed you upon your way, and none may know of your departure from the island."

Raising the lanthorn, he showed me the way ahead. I was gazing at a tunnel just a little wider than the boat, and it twisted and turned so that the sides of the boat were cruelly treated by the rocks against which we were buffeted.

Merfil plumbed my thoughts.

"Maybe this boat will not be seaworthy afterwards," he announced. "But you need have no concern over that, Master Ross — and see, we are coming to the end of our journey!"

He pointed ahead and I saw that the tunnel was growing wider and that a large and darkling pool lay at the end of it. Into this we sped, toward a barred entrance in the rocks beyond it—a wall with the water coursing under it.

"The exit to the other side of the island," Merfil announced. "And see, Nature's natural landing stage."

He swung the boat out of the current into calmer waters, and with the aid of the lanthorn's light showed me a broad

rock ledge, at one end of which barrels were piled.

Then I did not know what those barrels contained. But Merfil enlightened me at once, and grim was his face.

"It was dangerous bringing these hither," he said, as he steered the boat toward the ledge, and tethered her to an iron staple in the rock. "Gunpowder, Master Ross, and enough of it to blow La Touche and his dogs to perdition."

That is what Merfil meant when he said that if La Touche went underground it would be to his doom!

"I deemed them safer here, and I had no other use for them. The contents of many a ship's magazine lie here—awaiting the day."

Merfil was clasping and unclasping his hands. With his ragged clothes, his withered face, and his tattered baldric, he seemed hardly human.

"One day the moment will come," he whispered, his old eyes gleaming. "The long train of powder, the opened gateway to freedom and then the explosion that will send La Touche and his men into eternity."

He came nearer to me and touched my arm.

"But not yet," he murmured. "Not until you have spoken for me and have won me the pardon that I need. And to-night maybe you will go."

With that he turned away, and in the rays of the lanthorn light I saw him disappear through an opening in the rock. A few moments later, to my infinite relief, he returned with wine and food.

"I have always kept Merfil's pool replenished," he told me. "To come here at times has been a change from my treasure chamber by the crocodile pit, and often I have pondered going higher for my pardon, and taking La Touche with me through the air."

SEATING myself upon the ledge, I looked out over that broad and mysterious pool through which the current raced like a broad pathway. I had never seen the like before, and as I drank the old wine that Merfil handed me, and partook of some stale cakes that he told me he had made with his own hands, I marveled that he had kept his secrets so long from La Touche.

After munching a few bites, Merfil began to busy himself with the boat, and I had time now to think over all that had happened. But I could think only of Sergrid and his fate. If only I knew what had happened to him. Was he still alive?

"Merfil!"

"Aye, young sir?" Merfil replied, looking up.

"What think ye of Sergrid's chances of life?" I asked anxiously.

He smiled, and as he smiled, he tossed a rope upward to me.

I noticed that it traveled to a pulley placed in the rock above the spot where the current of water ran under the barrier. Clearly, the rope was the method for raising the barrier.

"I must go now," Merfil said abruptly, as I stood with the rope in my hands. "Raise the portcullis, and await my return in patience!"

"I would come with you," I replied.

Merfil shook his head.

"Nay," he answered. "Your life is too valuable for that. You must rest—you are not healed of your wounds."

Already he was preparing to untether the boat.

"If, mayhap, I do not return," he said calmly, turning to the tiller, "take the dinghy there, and leave by the way I am going. And good fortune go with you. You will find oil and flint and steel by the lanthorn."

With a resigned sigh I raised the barrier and watched him steer toward the opening. A few moments later he was lost to view.

When he had gone I was swayed by a sense of indescribable loneliness. To be beneath the earth and nigh to these gloomy waters was dispiriting. I sighed and sank wearily against the powder barrels. Merfil had spoken truly. My wounds had sapped away my strength. The horrible Ping had manhandled me, and La Touche's men, in their drunken delight, had jabbed me cruelly as Ping had borne me to the Pit.

Would I ever get out of this? Would I ever see the Cardinal to tell him of the strange wonders of this island?

Propping my head against the barrels, at last I fell into a fitful sleep that was disturbed by many a fantastic dream. To my fevered brain it seemed that The Laugh had come to strum his lute and sing his strange songs by this shadowed pool. Barracuda's green eyes regarded me, and I saw Doon with the eternal knife between his teeth. Camponello and Midgley stepped arm in arm across the rocky ledge, and Maroon waited in the center of the waters, a whip in his right hand and a long sword in his left.

I awoke with a start to find myself alone, and with the lanthorn gone out. Feeling around, I discovered the flint and steel and can of oil by the lanthorn, and I blessed Merfil's foresight. I started the light back to life and clasping my knees, my back now to the rock and my eyes looking at those dark waters, I waited.

How many hours went by I do not know. But I deemed a day to have come and gone ere I decided that Merfil was not going to return.

I arose and looked at the dinghy Merfil had pointed out. Lowering myself into it, I discovered that it had two very crude oars and no sail. How far could I get with such a craft?

RETURNING to the ledge, I found a filled water keg, some wine, some of Merfil's strange cakes and some dried fruits. I bore these to the ledge and was about to load up the little boat, when distantly I heard the thumping sound of a boat striking the sides of the narrow tunnel. Even as I turned I saw Merfil returning by the entrance to the pool. With a swing of the tiller he was out of the main current and alongside the landing stage.

"Sergrid—did you see aught of Sergrid, Merfil?"

I caught the rope he flung to me, made him fast, and drew him to the ledge.

He shook his head.

"Time enough to know *his* fate," he answered. "Time now for you to go, young master. High time!"

Merfil appeared agitated, strange.

Looking down into his boat, I noticed that it was stocked with things that had not been there before. Water kegs and cases, the contents of which I was ignorant. Powder and shot, a sword, and four pistolets.

"You must go," he insisted again. "It is the right time. Night, a fair wind, and La Touche and his men making merry. Come now. I shall go with you as far as the sea."

I pressed him to tell me what he had been doing. Had he been to the gorge? Was Sergrid's body still there? Was there any news of that great-hearted Norseman?

As though not hearing my pleadings, he busied himself with the boat. At last he was ready. I caught at the rope that lifted the stone barrier, while he steered the boat into the current. As we came nearer the exit I pulled on the rope and raised the gate until we could go through. When we were safely through I tossed the rope into the waters.

The gate crashed shut behind us and we commenced to bump our way through the tunnel, with Merfil steering uncannily. Had it not been for his masterly hand we should have suffered great damage.

With many a twist and turn we proceeded toward the sea, to come finally from that darksome place and into a

(Continued from page 43)

tiny cove, concealed amid rocks.

Riding in the cove was a small craft with her sails set. She was about twice the size of the one in which we now sat. Merfil gazed at her with pride.

"Mine, Master Ross," he announced, as we propelled our boat across the cove toward her. "Fashioned with my own hands, and in my loneliness."

We pulled alongside and I peered over her side to find that apart from some large object covered with sacking, she was empty.

"Arms, Master Ross," he announced, indicating the sacking. "Examine them when at sea. 'Tis a parting gift from me."

His eyes were keen and his manner businesslike.

"Now to get your stores aboard," he commanded squeakily. "The wind and the tide are right, but they may not serve you for long, and I would have you away at the very earliest moment."

He crossed to the other ship to help me stow my cargo.

"Water for days," he chuckled, as I passed up the kegs. "Powder and shot, food, and rare wines. It will be good voyaging, Master Ross."

There was something strange in his old eyes that then I did not understand. He was stowing with a master hand, and a strength unbelievable for one so old.

"She's very seaworthy," he announced, indicating the boat. "Rides high and should weather most storms. Keep her into the wind and she will serve you. She needs a good steersman, too."

AT last we had all the things transferred, and when that was done, he passed me up three lanthorns.

"Now, and before we part, young sir," he whispered, "I would have your fair and honest word that you go as my ambassador to the Cardinal whom you serve. Bid him know that he has a friend waiting upon La Touche's island. Tell him that Barracuda and La Touche plan to join hands against the Scarlet Fleet. This I have learned. Tell it to him in my favour, and ask forgiveness for my soul, Master Ross."

"Aye, assuredly I will," I answered him. "For you have befriended me, and His Eminence shall know that you have."

Merfil chuckled, rubbed his hands, and nodded like a pleased child. That strange look lay within his eyes, and now that the time had come for us to part, he seemed loath to let me go.

"Farewell, Master Ross," he exclaimed. "Good winds and fair voyaging—"

He climbed slowly over the rail and into the other boat. I threw off the rope that held the two craft together. Turning my boat's head seaward, I slowly passed the other vessel.

Merfil was standing up in it and his eyes were smiling.

"You will come back," he cried, "and bring forgiveness with you."

"Aye," I answered, as the boat, finding the wind, gathered in her stride and stole seaward into the night and toward safety.

I had never dreamed that I could escape first the Pit and then the ship at Merfil's cove, and my heart was full of thankfulness to the ancient Merfil.

With my hand upon the tiller, I watched him as my ship met the seas. He was becoming shadowy, vague, and I noticed that he did not move, but stood there like a statue, gazing after me. At last he was misted in the darkness of night and then gone from my sight.

Time had come for me to make everything shipshape. Lashing the tiller, I hung my lanthorn to the mast and commenced to place my stores in more convenient places than they were at present. To protect them as much as possible, I walked forward and drew the sacking away from those arms that Merfil had named as a gift to me.

As I picked up the sacking, a cry of wonderment came to my lips. At first I told myself that I was dreaming. This *must* be some figment of the imagination—something come to taunt me.

Then I bent down and touched what I saw there at my feet, and touching knew the truth.

Sergrid lay here upon the bottom of this little craft—Sergrid of the Giant Sword—his eyes closed, his face white, and his lips half parted. And that long sword beside him.

So this was Merfil's present!

With a cry of amazement I drew the sacking away and cast it from Sergrid's still form. So still he seemed that I thought he was dead.

Sinking to his side, I raised his head. There was a cruel gash down his right cheek, and there were other wounds as well; wounds to be tended. I brought my face close to his lips and learned that he still breathed.

Carefully I laid his head down, and with my eyes filling with tears of joy, I hastily broached a keg of water and by the lanthorn light bathed his face. How he lived I could not explain, for he had a multitude of wounds and he must have lost much blood.

There were other things that mystified me as I bound up his hurts. How had Merfil found him—brought him to the boat? Merfil was not strong enough!

As I worked over Sergrid's wounds, washing them, and binding them with the cloths Merfil had stowed in the boat, I grew more and more fearful. How could man live with all these gashes?

How still he was! I had seen Sergrid's eyes filled with fire. I had watched the might of his arm as he had harvested La Touche's rogues. Was this the same Sergrid? He lay like a child, his head against my arm, and he breathed so faintly that at times I feared me that he had already slipped into the shadows.

From time to time I moistened his lips and eagerly watched over him for signs of increasing life. At last, reluctantly, I left him to set my course and lash the tiller. With the wind filling our sails, we were bowling merrily forward, and La Touche's island already lay well behind. The seas were only moderate, and for this I was glad, for I could safely leave the boat to the waves and give all my care to Sergrid.

I rigged up a sacking bed for him, and with the coming of the dawn I found to my intense relief that the outflow of blood had ceased. I blessed Merfil for the thoroughness of his cargo.

But even as I rejoiced, my thoughts turned to the hazardous future. Could we ever hope to conquer this isle, manned by so many rogues and guns? It was a giant's task we faced—that I knew as we bowled forward to find my master somewhere in the vast sea.

(To be continued in the January number of THE AMERICAN BOY.)

Damaged in Transit

(*Continued from page 29*)

187-pound blight hit him, he curled up like a cheap watch spring; J. P. slapped himself in the left ear three times with his right foot and all it needed to make a Zeppelin out of him as he sailed through the air was a coat of aluminum paint. But, as I say, it was no news to father. The first authentic report he got of the occurrence was the next day when somebody handed him a newspaper just as he was regaining consciousness. He was practically a complete loss—no salvage.

MEANWHILE, numerous and sundry things were happening to me. The collision with father didn't appear to bother the human catastrophe to any visible extent, and as I was in his path and unable to get out of the way I suffered considerably at his hands and feet. As a matter of fact, it seemed to me that he grew even more ferocious; I felt he even went out of his way to make sure he would not miss me.

When the impact came I was not tossed to one side as father had been, but instead forced into the ground about the same distance, or at least it seemed so to me. The big boy placed his hand firmly on the top of my head and when he pressed down sharply my dive for his knees was deflected with the result that I landed on my face in the soft ground. At practically the same moment he stepped violently on my neck and not over half a second later the place where I lit was merely a landscape as far as I was concerned.

I had been squashed into the ground a foot or more when the rest of the team reached the spot marked X and proceeded to fight the battle of the century over my remains. By the time they had struggled back and forth over my grave three or four times I was considerably in need of air. I had been underground so long that if anyone had sprinkled a little water on me I should probably have sprouted like a spring potato. Then, too, in disappearing from the public eye so suddenly, without letting anyone know where I was going, I was not missed from the team for some little time, and several of the boys figured that I had merely got discouraged and gone home. It was the merest accident when a player inadvertently stumbled over one of my elbows which was still above ground an inch or so, and thereby gained a clue to my whereabouts.

When the fire department, in response to a hurry call, had arrived with a load of shovels, I was dug up, washed off, and laid out in the sun to dry a few moments. As I took stock of my features, it seemed to me it was hardly worth while to try to salvage what little was left just for the few years I had ahead of me.

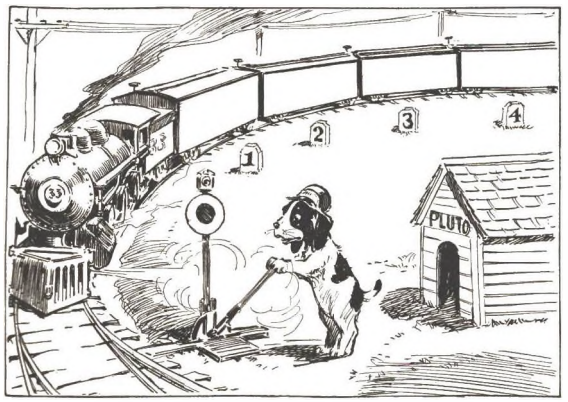
I felt considerably down-hearted and demoralized.

Gradually I came to the conclusion that I was not the man I used to be. My neck had been partially unscrewed or something and after a couple of tentative trials I discovered I could turn my head entirely around, like a hoot owl, without moving my shoulders. Also my knees seemed to have developed some peculiar features in that they bent in the most unlooked-for places, and I could sit down either backward or forward. My left shoulder blade was higher—or the right one was lower—than the other, and I had lost two more teeth, to say nothing of a lot of skin that somebody once loved to touch, almost all my clothing, and a reputation which up to that time had been good enough to keep me in fairly good standing as a pillar of the First Congregational Church.

As I say, I no longer play football. I find it is strictly a young man's game.

I'm thinking of taking up golf some of these days. Or maybe crokinole.

Your Best Reading Special



(Ballot idea by Robert Reynnells, Clarkston, Mich.)

THE track is clear for the Best Reading Special, bound from you to *The American Boy*. To see that the train bears the proper cargo, pick out the four best stories in this issue. Write their titles, in order, on the four box cars. Clip the ballot and consign it to the Best Reading Editor, *The American Boy*, 550 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, Mich. Keep us informed on the kind of stories you like best, and we'll keep you supplied with that kind!

Your Name.....Age.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

In the Morning Mail

"MERRY CHRISTMAS, Ed!"

"Merry Christmas, Plute!"

"Going to get anything in your stocking, Ed?"

"Expect to, Plute."

"I wish I had a leg like you, Ed. A dog's stocking isn't worth a nickel for hanging up. It's as good as a pipestem with a bend in the middle. But I've brought you a present."

"Kind of you, Pup. What is it?"

"A ballad. You see I got a letter

C. A. Stephens

from Woodrow Wilson, Rockwall, Tex., saying that since reading my ballads he has no desire for Shakespeare, Browning, or any of those duffers. So naturally I had to sit down and write a ballad. It's not a pig Latin ballad as suggested by Norman Sleezer, Jr., Freeport, Ill., nor a ballad telling of the brave deeds of the editor, such as Dick Goebel, Overbrook Hills, Pa., asks for, but simply a tragic tale of unrewarded heroism. Let me recite it before it overcomes me. Please overlook the rough spots in the meter. I was too—too unstrung to smooth it up. Anyway, it's the sentiment that counts in ballads."

Just to be different the Pup has placed the ballad in the center of the page this month. He craves distinction.

"Well," grins the Ed, after listening to the heart-rending ballad, "at least you were decorated."

"Perhaps so," the Pup replies mournfully, "but it's not the kind of decoration you can show people."

With a sigh the Pup turns to the stack of Morning Mail letters and picks out one of the hundreds of favorable comments on "Johnny Bree," the mining serial by William Heyliger. The letter is from Jack Guenther, Columbus, Ohio, and it analyzes Johnny Bree so well that the Pup wants every fan to read it.

"Dear Pluto: The ability to create a definite state of mind toward a story character is one requirement I demand from my authors. I was prompted to write this since I finished reading 'Johnny Bree' in the last *American Boy*. In this really great story, the hero has faults—faults that are presented so clearly that no misconceptions can be made. This sarcastic, overconfident personification of American youth was *real*. Johnny Bree—how I longed at times to give him a good hard punch in the nose and tell him where to get off; how I longed to applaud his daring!

"I read a great deal, and I have found altogether too many authors who would have the reader understand that the hero (usually a clean-cut, modest, courteous young example of perfection) is only capable of doing the right and proper thing at precisely the correct time. Johnny Bree was different. His mistakes were natural, his ways were natural and his emotions were natural. A tale like 'Johnny Bree' is bound to meet instant approval because the hero is so very much like the average boy who is reading it."

Gordon W. Higinbotham, Turners Falls, Mass., says that Johnny Bree taught him the value of sticking at your job.

The most interesting letter this month, Pluto has decided, is that of Albie Gathright, Bridgeport, Conn.

"I have never read anything in *The American Boy* concerning a man whose very life depicted sportsmanship," writes Gathright. "The man I refer to is Christy Mathewson. We all have our ideal—Mr. Mathewson is mine. Christy has passed on. But to me he still lives.

"For years Christy Mathewson was a big league pitching star, the mainstay of the New York Giants. His entire baseball career may be described as a long chain of victories, but his greatest and best success lies in what he has done for the game. As a winner he was modest, as many are in every walk of life. As a loser he stood alone—self-controlled, unperturbed, a prince of courtesy.

"Matty had firmness of purpose, intelligence, clean habits, and friendliness. To me he will always stand out as an inspiration. He's my ideal."

You'll be interested to know, Gathright, that back in 1916 *The American Boy* carried two articles by Mathewson on how to pitch. Matty's personal message to *American Boy* readers, at that time, was: "Play the game fairly and don't kick at the umpire's decisions." The Pup would like to hear from other fans on the subject of their ideals. Who's your hero? And why?

"Can't you get us stories on debating, journalism, writing, or some phase of literary work?" pleads Leigh Fischer, Amarillo, Tex.

There's a story on journalism in this issue, Fischer — one that gives the reader a keen insight into newspapering. The authors, Robert and Hoyt Moore, have been newspaper men all their lives, and the best of their experience has gone into "Facts—and By-lines." If you want to know just how much experience has gone into the story, read the thumb-nail sketch that follows. It was written especially for Morning Mail fans by the Moores. Here it is:

"Writing thumb-nail autobiographies is something we've had little experience with. However, we believe it would grow on us, for it does something to the vanity that is quite thrilling.

"Perhaps the readers of 'Facts—and By-lines' might wonder how two persons go about writing a story. The explanation is simple. One person writes the story and the other rewrites it. That gives the advantage of getting two viewpoints into the same story. Sometimes that helps a yarn. Other times it may ruin one!

"We are brothers, born in the western end of Tennessee, and have been moving slowly northward since that time. Thus far we have traveled some forty miles and have become Kentuckians. We're just barely Kentuckians, at that, for Fulton, Kentucky, where we have lived for the past 22 years, is on the state line. Our office, where we publish the Fulton *Daily Leader*, is located within 150 yards of the line, and if we could throw a baseball as far as we once could, we could heave it into Tennessee from the office door.

"Our father was a Baptist minister for fifty years, more than thirty of which he was also connected with newspaper work. We brothers began to set type and fool with presses before we were ten years of age. Robert worked for a time on a St. Louis newspaper, but Hoyt has spent his entire time in country newspaper work.

"Our writing experience has been in

Robert and Hoyt Moore

two epochs. More than twenty years ago we wrote and sold several stories, including two to *The American Boy*. About that time we bought a newspaper and began to wonder how we were going to pay for it. After it was paid for we again began to flirt with the writing game, and discovered that rejection slips were as easy to collect as they had been. We also made the pleasing discovery that checks for accepted stories were much larger than they were twenty years ago.

"Robert is unmarried and has more cash reserve than Hoyt, who is married and has two children. The older child, a girl, thinks *The American Boy* is the best in the world, and wants her dad to have a story in every issue. She enjoys the distinction of being the first to read a completed story. If she likes it, her father takes heart; if not, he feels disheartened. The younger child, a boy, can't read as yet, but takes much interest in the art work of the magazine.

"P. S. In the picture, the one with the coat is Robert, and the solemn-looking one without a coat is Hoyt."

There are two letters, this month, from widely separated parts of the world. Philip Bendt, Magnitogorsk, U.S.S.R., says that Siberian peasants live in clay houses about twenty feet square, the roofs of which are three feet above ground, and the floors three feet below. There are just two rooms, kitchen and bedroom. In other words, the houses in Siberia are a lot like the 'dobe huts of Texas!

Carl Southeimer, Paris, writes that he recently visited Nurnberg where there's a beautiful old castle. According to an old legend, a robber baron was brought to this castle and condemned to death. As a last favor he asked

The Ballad of Unrewarded Courage

Listen, my lads, with ears pricked up,
To the midnight patrol of the Office Pup.
The night was clear and the air was cold;
The cats were abroad, and the cats were bold—
But the Pup was aware—and his face was grim—
That saving the city was up to him!
He trotted up Main to the grocery store,
And hounded a leopard away from the door.
"Some people might say that the leopard's a cat,"
Growled the Pup, "but they ought to know better than that."
At State Street and Locust, alongside the ramp
Of the Service Garage, Pluto barked at a tramp.
"The owner may never find out," grumbled Plute,
"That I've saved his garage, by a whisker, from loot."
Down State Street halfway, with a sharp flanking sally,
And his heart in his mouth, Pluto cleared out an alley.

His breath came in pants as he galloped down Buck
And routed a sinister furniture truck.
Not far from a hydrant he came to a stop
And defended the street from a treacherous cop.

Then homeward he turned with his duty well done,
As the clock in the steeple was tolling out one.
But lo, on the porch of his home was a light,
And a voice, "So it's you I heard yapping to-night!"
Then a foot swung in action and Pluto was booted,
Not far from the spot where dogs' rudders are rooted.
And Plute crawled away like the bravest of Stoics,
With no one to learn of his nightly heroics.
With his head on his paws, Pluto sighed, "It's a pity,
But that's what you get for saving a city."

(Next month: Pluto rescues a maiden in eight stanzas.)

for permission to ride to death on his faithful horse. He was allowed to do so. His way led along the castle wall, sixty feet high. From the top of the wall, the gallant mount made a terrific leap and landed safely on the other side of the ditch. To prove the legend, the guide showed Southeimer two horse-shoe-shaped dents in the wall!

The Pup wishes at this time to pause a moment in memory of two men who have contributed to the enjoyment of *American Boy-Youth's Companion* readers. The first man is C. A. Stephens, beloved of all *Youth's Companion* readers. When Dr. Stephens died, in September, he closed a career of writing that lasted for sixty years. It seems hardly believable that Dr. Stephens sold his first story to the *Youth's Companion* in 1871! In the 'Nineties, his stories of Maine farm life became so popular that the editors believed that if he should switch to another magazine he would carry at least 40,000 subscribers with him. The picture shows him at his home in Norway Lake, Maine.

The other man is Clyde A. Nordquist, youthful Detroit artist, whose wood block illustration for the editorial page poem "Heritage" you have admired in this issue. Mr. Nordquist, who acquired his wood block technique from the famous Paul Honore, has illustrated many poems for *The American Boy*. He passed away early in October.

Pluto wants letters. In his cash account he has five bones for the most interesting letter he gets during the month. And he wants especially to hear about the man or woman you have picked for your ideal—and why. Plute's address: The Kennel, *The American Boy*, 550 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, Mich.

The Master Minds of Mars

(*Continued from page 16*)

standards about four feet high ending in cross bars, much like parrot perches, stood here and there. A polished gray area on the wall, covered with what might be letters, figures or hieroglyphics in red, formed the only decoration. The ceiling, some ten or twelve feet high, glowed with pale blue light radiating from spots forming a regular pattern. The air was fresh.

"Ach, *writing!*" cried the professor as he caught sight of the "blackboard." Oblivious, then, of all else, he dragged one of the couches to the wall and sat in rapt contemplation of the inscription.

Alan stood by the dais in the center, narrowly examining the room. Ted ambled around it, looking closely at wall, floor, and "blackboard"—the professor made an impatient exclamation as he passed in front of it. He picked up the standards and examined them curiously. He shook the bars on the doorway. He was, Alan thought, a curious cat in a strange garret.

He stopped suddenly beside Alan.

"Could you find your way out of this?" he asked.

"I doubt it," answered Alan. "I'm all mixed up—"

"I don't often forget a trail I've been over. But I couldn't find the sphere. I was flat on my back most of the time and couldn't see—"

Alan started. "He said he could!" He turned swiftly to the professor.

"Can you find the sphere again?" he asked, shaking the engrossed man gently by the shoulder.

"What is it? Oh!" The professor came back to reality. "I'tore up some paper und let the bits scatter as we came—"

"Good boy!" commented Ted. "Never would have guessed it of him! I should have thought of it myself—"

But how they might use the trail was not evident. Between them and safety stood bars of heavy shining metal, a short passageway, a trip across the great domed hall, a mile-long corridor and then a distance in the open anywhere from five to fifteen miles.

"Let's get scientific," suggested Ted, "and count our supplies. I've got a knife, a wrist watch, my automatic, and three extra clips of ammunition—"

"What's your contribution, Doc?" asked Ted.

Alan emptied his pockets of his automatic, 57 cents, a small bunch of keys, a box of matches, two clips of cartridges, a pocket compass, an engineer's slide rule and a watch.

The professor did not answer. They heard him muttering. "If this is X then *that* must be an invariable und N square must—but if it is not, then—why, oh, why did I not bring a book of logarithms!"

"Is there sense in that gibberish?" Ted wondered.

The professor had picked up a piece of what appeared to be red chalk and was making figures on the floor. He dropped to his hands and knees; the equations grew under his fingers too fast for Alan to follow. Again he touched the old man on the shoulder.

"Let's see what's in your pockets, professor!" he begged.

ABSENTLY the professor turned out his pockets. A flash light, a watch, an automatic, the supply book of the *Wanderer*, a small pair of pliers, a pencil, half a dozen envelopes covered with figures and algebraic formulae, half a stick of chocolate—

"We seem to have everything we don't need and nothing that we do!" commented Ted. "If that sliding rule were a file, now—"

"Slide rule? You have a slide rule?" The professor awoke eagerly from his prepossession at the word. Ted picked Alan's tool from the little pile of resources and handed it over.

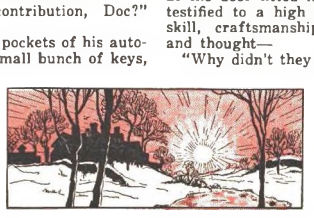
"Good, good! I make me mine own logs!" cried the professor. Instantly he was figuring again.

"That may be swell mental exercise, but it's no help!" grunted Ted. "What do we do next?"

There was nothing to do but sit and imagine—a deadly operation, for imagination held too many horrible possibilities. Three men with three automatics could account for perhaps thirty Martians or robots. After that—what? Alan looked at his bruised wrists, black and torn. He saw again the spear about to strike home—

Yet mechanical marvels they had seen proved these beings intelligent. The machine-ostrich, the queer digging machines which had captured and carried them, the oddly Martianlike robots which walked and acted like their masters, the excavated halls, the smooth floors, the metal furniture, the polish and finish to everything—even the precision with which the pinkish metal bars at the door fitted in their sockets—all testified to a high degree of scientific skill, craftsmanship, superior brains and thought—

"Why didn't they kill us, out there?" asked Ted. "I wish I thought they were scared of the gun. But they didn't give a hang, either about the noise or the dead bugs."



(Continued from page 47)

"I don't know," Alan was just as puzzled. "They're so blasted cold—just about as interested as if somebody had busted a nickel vase. Gosh, Ted—it's got me down. . . ."

Ted wore a frown on his broad face. "It's getting me, brother. The difference is that they're so—so impersonal. They're all machines, even the living ones—"

"—absolutely beyond comprehension!" came in a low voice behind them. "Einstein is child-simple compared to it. If that is X it does not good sense make." Alan followed the professor's pointing finger to a character formed of a circle with a line across it. "If it is not X und is a figure, I do not know calculus, und—" his voice trailed off.

"It's up to us to get out of this!" growled Ted. "He's no good at this sort of thing. Brains may be swell on a blackboard, but—"

Alan came to the scientist's defense. "He dropped a trail of paper—that's practical enough!" he said. "And it's going to take brains to plan our escape. You can't fight rock and metal or an army of machines just with big biceps—"

Ted shrugged his shoulders. Alan flushed. All the fighting so far had been done by Ted. "If you hadn't shot we'd not have been jailed, maybe," he said hotly. "He told you not to—"

"If I hadn't shot you'd be dead!" answered Ted. Which was so true that Alan shut up.

He wandered away to press his face against the bars. Presently he called in a low voice, "Come here.

"Look!" he whispered. "They don't pay any attention!"

BACK and forth through the passageway hurried a strange procession of buglike creatures. Here and there a robot waddled jerkily. Occasionally one of the four-armed, six-legged machines jerked along like a thousand-leg. Many passed within touching distance. But no eye was turned their way, no curiosity displayed, no interest taken. The living and the machines passed by, each intent on some secret purpose of its own, apparently too busy, too intent to care about what could only have been, to them, strange creatures behind the bars. . . .

Ted reached out suddenly and caught at the thin arm of one of the buglike Martians as he strode hurriedly by. The jerk was sufficient to spin the creature half about. He snapped his wiry arm to his side, continuing without a glance.

It was worse than unflattering; it was uncanny. Had there been curiosity or resentment, had there even been threats, the pair might have feared less than when faced with this supreme indifference.

Ted tried the experiment a dozen times. Sometimes he could touch; sometimes he could but shout for attention. Touch and sound were alike ineffective.

Exasperated, Ted grabbed up one of the little standards. Watching his chance he thrust it suddenly through the bars and between the legs of a robot galloping by. The obstruction tripped the machine; it fell heavily. Then it got up exactly as a man might rise after an unexpected tumble and ran on its way without a glance.

Ted tried the same experiment with a living Martian, with unexpected results. Like the machine the creature fell to the floor of the passage. But he did not rise and they saw one tiny leg bent back sharply above the joint they were compelled to call a knee.

"Now you have done it!" cried Alan. "His leg's broken—"

He gasped amazed at the next move of the creature on the floor. He showed no sign of pain or distress but spoke in the peculiar clinking syllables to the next robot which passed. The machine stopped, and the injured Martian twined his antenna about the "body" of the machine, which picked up the living creature and helped him hobble away. Neither the injured nor the rescuing mechanism so much as turned heads towards the cause of the accident!

"There's a key somewhere!" pondered Alan. "If I could get a clue — there must be a reason. They were interested enough in the great hall to use a spear. That biggest Martian examined us carefully enough, too. If I could only get a hint—"

The muttering behind them grew louder. The professor crept across the floor still writing equations. "Harmonic analysis is child's play—it is not infinitesimal calculus und it cannot be—but why not? Bessel's automorphic functions und—no! Now I try a trigonometric continuity—"

Ted pulled Alan out of the professor's way. "Let him alone," he whispered. "He's at least lucky enough to forget where he is."

Alan wandered again around their prison. There was nothing to do. A dozen times he examined the fine workmanship of the chamber, its smooth stone floor, the oddities of the parrot-perch standards. Ted sat on the floor looking out through the bars. The professor crawled about, oblivious, making mathematical demonstrations, running to the "blackboard" every now and then to look, trotting back to his place—

FOUR hours elapsed before anything happened. Ted wondered when they'd eat; Alan was getting thirsty. Then a noise whirled all three heads, even the professor forgetting his absorption.

The bars at the doorway slid back. Six robots stalked in. Ted drew his automatic. "No, no!" cried the professor. "It is no good, resistance. We must communicate with them—we cannot fight!"

There was nothing to resist. The robots merely formed a rank behind them and pressed slowly forward. The inference was inescapable. They were to go somewhere.

"Anything's better than this," gritted Alan. "Come on, professor—"

They walked together through the doorway. The robots herded them back up the passage and again into the great hall. It was no longer occupied by only a few—a great concourse of Martians was assembled, and the use of the little standards about which they had been puzzled was made plain. Each of the strange beings was draped over a standard, his thin arms hooked over the cross bars.

"Martian chairs!" grinned Ted. "One on me—I never guessed that!"

They were led to the center of the hall, before the platform. "The King Bug again," whispered Ted. The space about the platform was clear for a circle of 40 feet; behind that, rank on rank, the Martians rested motionless on their standards. Here and there a clicking word or two was heard; in general the assembly was silent. The "King Bug" said a few words in his metallic voice. As one, the assembled creatures raised thin arms above long and narrow heads.

The three stood in a group in the center. Ted turned his back to the platform; the others faced it. "Don't want any spears in my back!" he stated.

"I don't believe they mean harm—" begged the professor.

"Guess again!" interrupted Ted suddenly. "He's on his way, spear and all—"

Alan and the professor whirled, to see just what they had seen a few hours earlier. Coming at them, spear leveled, emotionless eyes staring blankly, was a slow-moving robot. Ted, half crouched, had his automatic in hand.

"Ted! Do not shoot!" That was the professor. "We do something else—"

(To be continued in the January number of THE AMERICAN BOY.)

Those Christmas Presents?

Send Your Friends Framed American Boy Covers

Roman Legion.

Launcelot, riding out from his castle gate, his shield over his arm and his spear at the carry! And the Roman Legion marching through Gaul to new conquests. The Legion picture is the first *American Boy* cover printed with a gold background.

Complete plans for making the modernistic frame—it's indicated with the Launcelot cover—will be sent free of charge with each request for covers.

Sit down now to figure the number of covers you need—and don't forget that you'll want at least one picture for your own room. Specify the number of each you want and send ten cents for each, preferably in coin, to the Cover Editor, *The American Boy*, 550 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, Mich. We'll fill orders as long as the supply lasts.

BUSINESS of scratching your head and pacing the room. . . . Business of thrusting your hands deep in your pockets and mumbling to yourself in a desperate monotone, "Books, skates, neckties, socks. . . . Harry's got a pair of skates. . . . I could give Bill socks but that's not very original. . . ." And so on far into the night.

If you're in a spin over the Christmas shopping problem, here's a gift that will put you in a smooth glide. A gift that's different, and inexpensive, that will bring your friends pleasure every day in the year.

An *American Boy* cover, printed in *four colors*, and set in a modernistic picture frame.

Two covers are available—the two reproduced in miniature herewith. They're printed on glossy stock, without the magazine's nameplate. Sir

Sir Launcelot.

Facts--and By-Lines

(*Continued from page 19*)

utes ago. He may be able to talk."

Phil's heart was thumping madly, but he approached the bed and spoke with steady voice.

"I'm Carter, of the *News*—I'd like to ask you about the wreck."

For a moment Phil feared he was too late. The engineer's face was deathlike, and his eyes were closed. The breathing was faint, irregular, and for a long silent moment, there was no movement, no sound from the stricken man.

Then, slowly, the eyes opened.

"Reporter," came a thin, flat whisper. "Glad to see you. Name's Murphy—George Murphy. Been pulling the Cross 12 years without an accident. Now this—" and the flat, thin voice floated off uncertainly.

The orderly stooped and lifted the man's head to another position. The thin, flat voice started again.

"I'd rounded the curve at forty miles. Always slow for that curve, for it's bad. Then—I hit the straightaway, and green lights stretched out for three miles. All clear, no grades, no curves. I'd eased her over and was hitting sixty, when something went wrong with the rail. Wheels failed to bite and she left the rails and headed for the fields. . . . I stuck. I didn't jump. I brought her to a stop before any cars left the tracks, except the mail and baggage, and nobody was killed in them. A bad wreck, and I guess I'm done for, but no passengers were killed. I'll go with a clear record on that. Must have been a spreading rail. . . ."

The thin voice died away, the staring eyes again closed. The orderly beckoned Phil to the hall.

"Dead?" questioned the reporter, in a strained voice.

"Not yet," came the answer.

"He didn't know a dozen were killed?"

"No. He was unconscious when they dug him out, and got the idea somehow that he had saved his train. Let him go out with that belief."

Phil's eyes suddenly felt the sting of salt as he glanced back at the figure in that lonely farmhouse. But he was getting the facts! He stopped in the dimly lit hall long enough to jot down a few notes—enough so that he'd recall those last words. Big Jim wanted facts, and he'd get 'em!

Then back to the wreck. Rescue work was now fully organized and making progress. All of the dead and injured had been taken from the shattered cars, and ambulances, loaded with injured, were screaming down the highway.

(*Continued from page 49*)

Already railroad and police officials were making identification. Phil fell in with this group, began taking down names. Then he turned to his task of getting statements from those who had been on the train. He found the flagman again and got his story; he talked to several passengers, and to other members of the train's crew. He located the railroad's division superintendent and found out when the tracks would be cleared.

It was time to start his story. His head and his sheaf of copy paper were crammed with notes, and a busy imagination was shaping a "lead" paragraph as he went to his car for his typewriter.

He had noticed a telephone in the farmhouse, and there he went to work. He met the orderly coming out soberly. Murphy was dead.

"He went out," the orderly said, "still believing he had saved his train."

An excited woman answered Phil's knock, showed him a room where he could work, directed him to the telephone. It was heartening to hear Pat's whimsical voice over the line, and it brought Phil sharply back to everyday affairs.

"Listen, Pat," he said, a sudden ring of authority in his voice, "I'm ready to start writing. But there are lots of injured in the city hospitals, and you'll have to send Williams out to round up names, addresses, and extent of injuries. Tell him to get a coroner's statement, and one from railroad headquarters. I've got the list of dead, and I want you to start Joe out here in about 30 minutes. Get me?"

"Got you," came back Pat's pleasant voice. "You talk like a real newspaper man. Thought at first it was Big Jim."

"On your way, feller." A lighter note came into Phil's strained voice. "I've got to get busy."

The typewriter on the table underneath the flickering lamp, Phil prepared to start his story. He knew the standard formula well. Tell the story in the first paragraph, plainly, simply, briefly; then elaborate if the story is worth it. He had already worked out a lead on this scheme: "Twelve were killed and many injured last night when—" And so on. But as he fingered the keyboard he kept thinking of that quiet form under its blanket across the hallway; remembering that flat, thin voice he had heard.

SLIPPING a sheet of copy paper into the machine, his fingers began slowly to type out words and sentences.

"I'd rounded the curve at 40 an hour. Go slow on that curve, for it's bad. Then—I hit the straightaway, and green lights stretched out for three miles. All clear, no grades, no curves. I'd stepped her up and was hitting 60, when something went wrong with the rail. Wheels failed to bite, and she left the tracks and headed for the fields.

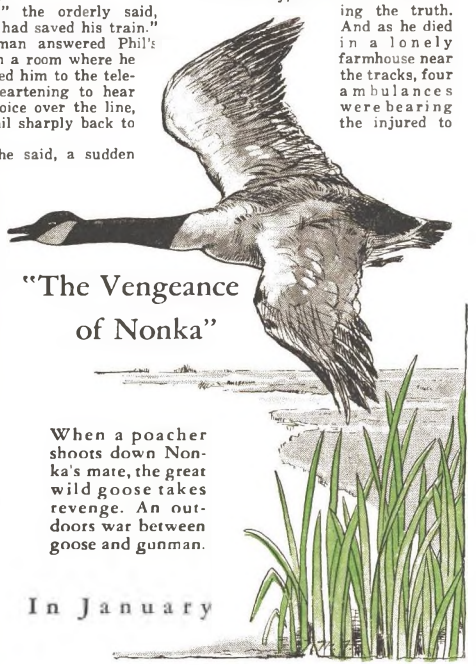
"I stuck. I didn't jump. I stopped her before any cars left the tracks except the mail and baggage, and nobody was killed.

"A bad wreck, and I guess it's done for me. But no passengers were killed. I'll go with a clear record on that. Must have been a spreading rail."

Mechanically Phil slammed the carriage back, and the next paragraph began to grow under speeding fingers.

Those were the last words that George Murphy, Tennessee Northern Railway engineer, uttered last night, and he went to his death believing he had saved his train. The truth was that, less than a quarter of a mile away, his train lay wrecked, with 12 passengers dead and many injured. For the Southern Cross, Tennessee Northern crack express, was wrecked 10 miles south of town, the first accident Murphy had had in the 12 years he had been pulling the train.

Mercifully, he died without learning the truth. And as he died in a lonely farmhouse near the tracks, four ambulances were bearing the injured to city hospitals and the dead were being identified by police and railway officials.



"The Vengeance of Nonka"

When a poacher shoots down Nonka's mate, the great wild goose takes revenge. An outdoors war between goose and gunman.

In January

Phil paused and looked bleakly at the typewritten words. Maybe it was a rotten way to start a story. Maybe Big Jim would crack wide open when he read it. But somehow that picture of Murphy's dying eyes, the memory of that flat, thin voice, with its babble of green, beckoning lights, persisted in his mind, and he passed swiftly on to the body of the story. Page after page flowed through his machine, and piled in an uneven mass at one side.

Whether it was good or bad Phil did not know. He only knew that for once he was feeling a story. He started a description of the scene of the accident, and again he saw that mass of wreckage piled along the right of way, saw the smoky torches and the row of dead, heard the wailing of the sirens from ambulances and police cars; and his flying fingers could hardly keep pace with the procession of his thoughts.

Dimly, as from afar, he heard the door open, and Joe, ink-stained and subdued, stood before him in the radiance of the flickering lamp. He thrust a handful of typewritten sheets at him, and continued his writing. When he looked up Joe was gone, and again he bent to his task.

Then another period of mad writing. The telephone rang sharply, and he rose to answer it. It was Pat.

"I'm not Big Jim," came the bantering voice, "but I know a story when I see it. Boy, you're hot—you're torrid!"

"Don't bother me now," Phil answered abruptly. "Send Joe back for the rest of the stuff. I'll be through by the time he gets here, and then I'll mop up and come in."

Back to the typewriter, he pounded steadily on to the end. His watch told him that he had only one hour until press time. No time to look over the stuff now; it would have to go as it stood. But Phil knew that a part of himself had gone into that yarn.

Then Joe again stood before him, and he gave him the last half of the story.

"Beat it for the office as fast as you can travel, Joe," he said wearily. "I'm going to check over the death list again and follow you in."

HALF an hour later Phil headed his coupe northward. At the office he found that Williams had rounded up the details of the hospital cases, together with a statement from the railroad offices. Joe was in with the rest of the main story, and Pat had split it for the four machines. Working with steady precision, the composing room jammed the story together; make-up men threw the type into the forms; and on time to the minute the press began to turn out the papers.

Phil had little heart for looking at the story. Dimly, as through a mist, he saw the black streamer head across the first page, and the black box which carried the names of the dead and injured. But he was too tired to care. Something had gone out of him into that story, and he could not banish from his tired and aching head the memory of George Murphy, dying out there in that quiet farmhouse. Prodigally he had called on his strong young body during the past few hours, and now he was tired and aching and sick at heart. Slowly, he sank in Big Jim's chair.

The street door opened, but he did not look around until Pat Norris' startled gaze attracted his attention. Slowly he turned.

Big Jim stood just at his back, big hand reaching out for a paper. With hat pulled down over his eyes, and a muffler high about his throat, his face was in deep shadow as Phil sprang up and gave the chief his chair. Big Jim sat down slowly, fever-brightened eyes taking in the wreck story. Phil watched him in sick suspense.

For perhaps a minute—a long minute—Big Jim read in silence, then the big head came up.

"Have the press stopped," he rumbled. "Gotta make a change."

With weariness suddenly intensified, Phil rose to obey. Well, he had done his best—his aching, weary head testified to that. He just didn't seem to hit it. . . . He reached the pressroom, and ordered the wheels halted.

Big Jim came lumbering just behind him, a slip of paper extended to him.

"Here," he said gruffly, hoarse voice unnaturally loud in the sudden silence of the pressroom, "open up the first page and stick this by-line above that wreck story. When a man writes a yarn like that, he ought to have credit."

Phil stared at the paper, almost unseeing. A by-line—his name, "By Philip Carter," in black type above the story! Then he hadn't done so badly—

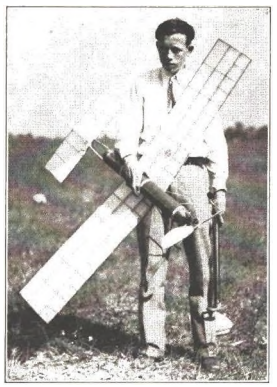
Big Jim turned to him. "You earned it, kid," the boss said, that sudden friendliness in the feverish eyes and the hoarse voice softer. "You got into that story. That lead of yours was unusual from a newspaper standpoint, but it had something bigger than the usual. Some call it hokum, some call it human interest.

"I don't know what it is—but I know folks eat it up. You crashed through, kid," and he turned and lumbered back toward the city room, with Phil walking in a daze behind him.

Build a Compressed Air Monoplane

HERE'S a ship that will stamp you as a graduate model plane expert —The "Rich Champion," a sturdy compressed-air craft that will soar through the skies like a Japan-to-Seattle airplane!

Every builder, sooner or later, wants to try his skill on a model with a real power plant rather than the usual rubber bands. The "Rich Champion," with its compressed-air motor capable of 250 pounds pressure, its solidly braced construction, and its simplicity of design, is just the job to give you a great model-airplane thrill.



It's air-driven and air-supported.

The "Rich Champion" has proved itself in competition. In 1929 it won first place in the National Recreation Tournament in Louisville, Kentucky. It has a wingspan of 60 inches and a fuselage length of 36 inches. With its dihedral of 9½ degrees, it is extremely stable in flight. And it will regularly make flights of 35 to 40 seconds with a pressure of only 150 pounds.

You can get plans for the model by sending ten cents to *The American Boy*. The drawings include full-size reproductions of wing, stabilizer, and rudder ribs, incidence block, and propeller blade, and full written instructions that will guide you to successful completion.

Please send the ten cents in coin—you can make a coin card out of a scrap piece of cardboard. Address your letter to the Airplane Model Editor, *The American Boy Magazine*, 550 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, Mich.

Plans will be distributed as long as the limited printing lasts. Be wise and — SEND FOR YOURS TO-DAY.

Here's the Red Flash!

(Continued from page 26)

Before sanding, set the wings together in their finished position and mark the under side of each. This may seem useless, but many a veteran model builder has finished up a set of glider wings only to find on assembling that he has sanded the curve on the wrong side of one of them. The drawing shows the recommended curve. Notice that most of the sanding is done on the upper surface. The lower surface, almost flat, should be sanded enough only to make it smooth. The halves are tapered in thickness, as was the stabilizer. The ends are paper thin.

The two halves should be cemented together with the ends resting on two books in such a manner as to raise the tips 1½" above the table.

While the wings are drying, make the wing block. This is carved from a piece of balsa ½" square and 1⅝" long, using the template of the flat wing block surface for laying out the shape. Notice that the block is ½" high at the front or curved end and only 7/16" high at the rear or pointed end. When it has been finished to size, a shallow V is cut in the upper surface. This can be done by making a straight cut down the center of the block along its entire length. After the center cut is made, the V can be easily finished with a sharp knife. This V should just fit the V formed by the two halves of the wing. Cement the wing block on the fuselage.

The control surfaces and wings are, of course, cemented to the fuselage. Books placed under the tips of the wings and stabilizer will hold them in place while drying. If you look along the fuselage from the front with the glider in flying position, it should look like the little sketch shown in the lower right hand corner of the drawing. The rudder should be at right angles to the stabilizer. The model is dyed a bright red with the exception of the black curved lines indicated on the drawings.

The nose of your model must be weighted in order to gain the forward speed necessary to obtain sufficient lift for soaring. This can be done by inserting lead slugs through the cockpit, and cementing them in the nose of the fuselage.

Remember, too, that this model is not designed for stunting, but rather for soaring. Take it up on a hill with the wind sweeping up the slope, and launch it just as you would if you were taking off in it—into the wind. Don't throw it —just release it from your hand. If you've properly balanced it, you'll see it rise aloft on the breeze and soar away.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc.

Required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of THE YOUTH'S COMPANION COMBINED WITH THE AMERICAN BOY, published monthly at Detroit, Michigan, for October 1, 1931.

State of Michigan } ss.
County of Wayne }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Elmer P. Grierson, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of THE YOUTH'S COMPANION COMBINED WITH THE AMERICAN BOY, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to-wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher—The Sprague Publishing Co., Detroit, Mich. Editor—Griffith Ogden Ellis, Detroit, Mich. Managing Editor—George F. Pierrot, Detroit, Mich. Business Manager—Elmer P. Grierson, Detroit, Mich.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.)
The Sprague Publishing Co., Detroit, Mich.
G. O. Ellis, Detroit, Mich.
M. S. Sprague, Detroit, Mich.
K. C. Leonard, Detroit, Mich.
E. P. Grierson, Detroit, Mich.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)—None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is..... (This information is required from daily publications only.)

ELMER P. GRIERSON,
Business Manager.

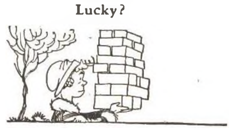
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 18th day of September, 1931.
A. M. KIEFER.
(My commission expires June 11th, 1935.)

The Readers Know

"Dad," said the son who had just been graduated from college, "I want you to give me some advice on running a newspaper."

"You've come to the wrong person, my boy," replied the experienced editor. "Ask any of my subscribers!"

Lucky?



"My sister was lucky the other night. She was at a party where they played a game in which the men had to kiss the girls or buy them a box of chocolates."

"How was your sister lucky?"

"She came home with 14 boxes of chocolates."

Better Safe Than Sorry

Teacher: "Why are you late this morning, Jack?"

Jack: "I saw a sign."

Teacher: "What has that to do—"

Jack: "Please ma'am, the sign said, 'School Ahead—Go Slow'."

Still, Finders Keepers

Mrs. Sprat (over the telephone): "Willie has swallowed his $20 gold piece. Do you think we can trust Dr. White with the operation?"

Mr. Sprat: "Certainly, certainly. He's perfectly honest."

Cautious!

"I want a very careful chauffeur who doesn't take the slightest risks," warned the would-be employer.

"I'm your man, sir," answered the applicant. "Would you mind paying my salary in advance?"

Well, You Try It

Teacher: "Johnny, I want you to give me a sentence employing 'piquancy.'"

Johnny (after a moment's thought): "Ma asked me this morning if pa was awake yet, an' I said, 'I'll take a peek an' see.'"

A Ray of Hope

A well-known public man was addressing the inmates of a lunatic asylum, and after three-quarters of an hour one of the inmates got up and walked out of the hall. Later the speaker said to the superintendent that he hoped he had not hurt anyone's feelings.

"Oh, not at all," replied the superintendent. "That man has been here for 20 years, and this is the first sign of intelligence he has shown yet."

Took Pity on Him

"Tell me the truth now, Eric. Who did your home work in arithmetic?"

"Father."

"Quite alone?"

"No, I helped him with it."

Anyhow, He Was Dumb

Kind Old Gentleman: "Poor fellow, I wonder how long he's been deaf and dumb."

Poor Fellow (adjusting his sign): "About 10 years, boss, if you was speakin' to me."

Not His Privilege

Teacher: "Listen here, young man, are you the teacher of this class?"

Pupil: "No, I'm not."

Teacher: "Then don't talk like an idiot."

Good Ole Pals

Professor: "What do you mean, Mr. Jones, by speaking of 'Dick' Wagner, 'Ludie' Beethoven, 'Charlie' Gounod, and 'Fred' Handel?"

Freshman: "Well, sir, you told me to become familiar with the great composers."

He Aimed to Please

Mr. Archbold: "I don't like the looks of that halibut."

Fish Dealer: "Well, if it's looks you're after you better buy some of those gold fish."

Funny!

Tackle: "How did Jack get that sore jaw?"

Guard: "Another chap cracked a smile."

Tackle: "Well?"

Guard: "It was his smile."

And Then—!

Surgeon (to attendant): "Go and get the name of the accident victim so that we can inform his mother."

Attendant (three minutes later): "He says his mother knows his name."

The 'am What Am 'am

The American was a guest of a Cockney family in England. They were eating ham. The young son said, "Please pass the 'am, Father."

"Don't say 'am," his father scolded. "Say 'am."

The mother turned smilingly to the American. "They think they're saying 'am," she said.

Keen Repartee

"Really, Bill, your argument with your wife last night was most amusing."

"Wasn't it, though? And when she threw the ax at me I thought I'd split."

Add Fish Stories

A lamb, a frog, and a skunk wanted to go to a show. They counted their money and found that the lamb had four quarters and the frog had a greenback. But the skunk had only a (s)cent and a bad (s)cent at that. It wasn't enough to buy tickets for all three, but just then a sardine came along so they solved the problem by sitting in his box.

The Simple Life

Senior: "How are you getting along at home since your mother's been away?"

Senior: "Oh, life is much less complicated. I can now put my socks on from either end."

He Wore No Label

"Why didn't you put my luggage in here, as I told you to?" thundered an irate passenger to the grizzled porter, as the train moved out of the little railway station.

"Eh, mon," returned the other patronizingly, "yer luggage is no sic a fule as yerself. It was marked Edinburgh, and is on its way there. Ye're on the wrang train."

Strategy Is Strategy

"Here, young man, you shouldn't hit that boy when he's down."

"G'wan! What do you think I got him down for?"

—And Monthly Payments

"What is a pedestrian, Daddy?"

"It is a person with a wife, daughter, two sons, and a car."

A Debt to Sher Gul

(*Continued from page 21*)

the highest award for bravery that the King can bestow.

Then Maxwell remembered. Sher Gul Mohammed, the Euzufzai, who at Maiwand had charged alone into the Afghan horde to bring out his colonel, left for dead! His colonel, Maxwell's father! Maxwell stared at the little white-haired Pathan, and a lump rose in his throat. This man had lost an eye and spoiled a leg in saving his father from a grisly death by torture at the hands of Afghan crones.

He had to swallow twice before he could speak again to the wizened hillman. "Sher Gul Mohammed," he said, "I have been grateful to you all my life. I am honored in your presence. My father will be glad indeed to know that we have met."

"Is he well, huzoor, my Maxwell sahib?"

"He is well, Ressaldar Major. Thanks to you, he lives happily at our home in England. And always when old friends from India eat our bread, he speaks of Sher Gul Mohammed."

"That I know well, sahib. Thirty years I rode at his shoulder, through battle, hunger, thirst, and pestilence, and there grew up between us that which neither time nor sea nor death can kill. And when we depart this life, I am assured that we shall ride together once again in some new world."

Maxwell said quietly, "And how come you here, thus alone to this fort in the night?"

The old man seemed to falter. His whole presence lost its air of arrogance and pride, and his gaze met Maxwell's with a look, half pleading, half defiant. "Sahib, woe and shame is mine, but I have heard that to-day you took prisoner my only son, last of my house."

"No, Ressaldar Major. I took one man only, the Garuli mullah, who has been fomenting war. He shot the colonel of the Uzbeg Rifles from ambush with his own hand."

"Dust in my mouth and shame on my soul, it is my son. Cursed be the day I let them send him to the school at Quetta to learn English. I dreamed he might be Ressaldar Major after that. But he talked to dogs of babus and his blood turned white, and then he went north to Turkestan, where he learned lies and madness."

THE old man's words left Maxwell speechless, and Sher Gul Mohammed went on with pathetic urgency: "But he is a boy only, huzoor, puffed up and ignorant and thoughtless. These two years I have been trying to lay hands on him, not having seen him since he went to Quetta. But the dogs would not let me enter Garuli. He is the last of all my house; the great war, plague, and vendetta took the rest. Give him to me and I will lock him up and beat him well. I will remind him what it is to be heir of the house of Gul Mohammed, and he will forget the hot air learned of babus."

"Ressaldar Major, how can I do this thing? He is the life of the unrest, which, if not checked, will assuredly end in war from Kabul to Peshawar. Already troops are gathering from India. With him out of the way, the jihad will lose heart and fade. If it keeps on, thousands will die before it is put down."

Sher Gul Mohammed shook his head in deprecation. "Nay, sahib. Is the sircar, the government, so easily deceived? This boy of mine is but a cat's-paw. It is not he who spreads fire from Garuli, but another—a big man with yellow hair and a yellow beard. He is the envoy of powerful men in the North, men who seek always to stir up hate and war. The big man is wise and subtle, knowing that there is no war cry in these hills like that of Islam. So he speaks always through his yellow beard the words of the Koran: "And when the sacred months are past, kill those who join other gods wherever ye shall find them."

The old Pathan paused, looking anxiously into Maxwell's face for understanding. After a moment, he went on.

"He has made drunk my son with lies and flattery, till the boy holds himself a sucking Messiah and travels up and down the land gone ghazi, preaching holy war. But in the plan this foolish son of mine is less than nothing. They could replace him with a dozen others, and they will."

Maxwell's mind raced. This was real news. So a big yellow-bearded man at Garuli was the real trouble maker, the fountain-head of the war agitation. An envoy of powerful men in the north—that sounded probable. The authorities had been keeping a weather eye open for trouble from the north, Maxwell knew. Then this young firebrand of Sher Gul Mohammed's was, as his father said, a mere cat's-paw. His capture would make no difference — men would continue to gather, and the border would burst into war.

Maxwell's heart sank. Then he had done nothing. The yellow-bearded man was the one to capture—but how could he do it with only fifty sowars? He had failed. His swift decision, his grueling ride into the heart of hostile country, and his mad charge against merciless odds were wasted.

But was it all wasted? Suddenly temptation assailed Maxwell. Headquarters knew nothing of this big man with the yellow beard. They were sure that the mullah was the key man of the trouble, and even though time proved that he was not, the officer who had captured him in such a raid as Maxwell's would be a made man at once. There would be glory, promotion, high honor for distinguished service — and shining new lines would be written in the Maxwell record. Hugh Maxwell would have added his measure of luster to the family name. Yet—

Maxwell's young eyes came back from distance and focused on the face of Sher Gul Mohammed in the yellow lamplight close before him; on the face of an old man, gazing up at him with an expression almost childlike with age, haunted and pleading, and — Maxwell realized it now—utterly trusting.

SUDDENLY, for a moment, he was swept back to his Cornish home, to the fragrance of roses, to the happy days of his boyhood, to the loved sound of his father's voice. And it came to him that all of this he owed to the white-haired Pathan before him, who had laid down everything in the name of loyalty to bring his father back from death itself, and who now gazed up at him with such perfect faith, asking for his son's life in the name of that same loyalty.

If he released the boy, the record he had longed to make went with him. Moreover, he would be left to offer awkward explanations. How could he face a flint-eyed general and say that he had led his men deep into hostile territory, risking his whole command and actually losing three, and had captured the Garuli mullah only to release him for a sentimental family reason! Already the news would have reached headquarters and at least two regiments would be thundering on their way to escort him back.

"Don't be a fool!" Maxwell whispered fiercely to himself.

Ambition had him in its grip. Pride and ambition. After all, he had performed a splendid act of courageous leadership. His name would be told with envy in every mess in India. And

(Continued from page 53)

should he give this up, exchanging it for censure and possibly disgrace? He had earned it at the hazard of his life, at the hazard of death by torture.

That which had happened between Sher Gul Mohammed and his father twenty years ago belonged to history. And surely that fanatic boy, even though comparatively harmless, should be held under restraint for a time. Of course the news of the real key man, the big man with yellow hair, must be speedily divulged. Then eventually the young cat's-paw, after a period of punishment and stern instruction, would doubtless be released. But it was a man's duty as a soldier to hold him now.

With this conviction strong upon him, Maxwell's gaze came back to the fierce old face whose lone eye watched him unblinkingly. And at the pleading in its depths a strange grip closed about his heart. Again he saw the grand old Cornish manor, he smelled the roses and the lavender, and heard the rooks caw in the wind-rocked elms. But for this crippled ancient man he never would have known those splendid years. Now the old Pathan was agonized at the danger to his misguided son, whose crime to Afghan mind, nurtured on bloodshed, was a trivial thing. He pleaded for a gift that was Maxwell's to give.

The old man's voice came, tremulous and supplicating. "Sahib, mine only son, last of my house. They will hang him, for twelve months' boyish fooling."

The grip on Maxwell's heart tightened. Could he, if he held the young mullah, guarantee to this old man that his son would not be hanged? Each beat of Maxwell's heart was like a stab now. Then something seemed to burst and a warm flood surged through his body. His lips trembled. There were tears in his eyes. And he knew that whatever the cost to himself his debt to Sher Gul Mohammed must be paid.

He went out to the courtyard and called in a voice that shook: "Ressaldar!"

At once the deep tone from the shadows answered, "Sahib!"

"Bring the prisoner."

Two guards brought in the boy, with his fluff of jetty beard and his wild, young-eagle face.

"All right, Ressaldar," Maxwell said.

WHEN Ghulam Hyder and the escort had left, Maxwell said, "There is your son. It is in my mind to release him to you. But I must first be assured that you will keep him safely shut up, where he can do no harm of any kind, until he has beyond the shadow of a doubt been convinced of the error of his ways. Will you promise me this, O Sher Gul Mohammed, you who are unfalteringly faithful to an obligation?"

"I promise, huzoor," answered the white-haired Pathan, his one dark eye steadily meeting Maxwell's gaze.

"Then take your son," said Maxwell. "I, too, would be unfalteringly faithful to an obligation. Take your son, in payment for my father's life."

Sher Gul Mohammed stood gazing at his son with eye half baleful, half compassionate. Then the old man turned to Maxwell, saying hoarsely, "Huzoor, blessed be thy house forever!"

Maxwell took from his pocket the key of the boy's handcuffs, and handed it to the father. Grimly, the old man thrust it into safe-keeping in his garments, leaving the boy's wrists chained.

"As we go out," he reflected aloud, "mayhap we shall meet those coming to this wolf cub's rescue. I will arrange for that." He unwound his puggree and, stepping behind his son, gagged him with speed and science. Cutting off what remained of the long cloth, he lashed one end to the chained wrists, the other to his own girdle. "Thus, my lord," he said grimly, "we shall arrive at my village without mishap."

Then the old man fell on his knees and seized young Hugh Maxwell round the ankles. "Thanks and mercy, O son of my Maxwell sahib! My greetings to him, and say Sher Gul Mohammed does not forget."

"It is I who thank you, Sher Gul Mohammed, for twenty years of my father's life. But there is no time to lose. At any moment we may be surrounded."

The old Pathan rose and said to his son: "Boy, march!"

The boy shrugged insolently and made a muffled grunting.

His father said shrilly: "Thinkest thou I am some puling schoolmaster of Quetta?" He jerked the cloth. "March!"

Again that shrug; whereupon Sher Gul Mohammed whipped out a knife and drove it ruthlessly into his son's shoulder. The boy recoiled convulsively and almost fell.

"That is the first lesson in my school, thou dog! Now march!"

The mullah turned for the door and Maxwell led them to the wall gap and watched them clamber through before the eyes of two astonished sentries. When the shadows had engulfed them, he went back to his room.

Well, that was that. So much for his dreams of adding to the Maxwell record, and for his career as a soldier. He was a ruined man, he reflected, as far as the Army was concerned. Suddenly he felt very tired.

THERE was a sound of hurrying feet, and to him entered Ghulam Hyder, indignation and mistrust in every line of his gigantic figure, with a panting sowar who had been posted as a sentry a mile up the Gut.

"Well, Wali Khan?" Maxwell asked.

"Huzoor, they come. Nigh two thousand men."

Maxwell licked his lips. Now, with his fifty men, he must stand off two thousand fanatics. If he failed, he would meet death by exquisite slow torture. If he won, he would face disgrace and humiliation before his seniors.

No, there was still another way out. It would be easy to die fighting between the stone gateposts where the yelling men of Garuli would be sure to concentrate their charge. That was it. He would place himself there in the gap, sword in hand. Then, at least, at home they would remember him as a soldier.

"How long will they take to get here, Wali Kahn?"

"An hour at least, huzoor. I saw them afar off in the moonlight and guessed their number by their masses. They travel slowly, being encumbered with banners and men on foot. I saw the raven banner of the chief of Garuli in the van. He is coming with all his men and those of many villages also eager to set free this mullah."

Ghulam Hyder's hot eyes lay on Maxwell's. He knew the mullah was already free, and he wanted to know why.

"You have done well, Wali Kahn. Call in the other videttes, Ressaldar."

Then Maxwell flung himself with desperate energy into his preparations for defense. Lucky that re-enforcements from his colonel must be on the way, swiftly drawing near. There would be a big force attacking, if the chief of Garuli and all his men were there. There must be a thousand fighting men at least in Garuli. . . .

He was striding across the court to inspect the rear wall when in his mind a thought was born that stopped him in his tracks. If what Wali Khan said were true, then there could be few fighting men in Garuli. He knew how Pathans dashed out at the call of a jihad. And envoys who served the powerful men in the north did not go to war. They worked in the dark, destroying, agitating, spying. . . .

In that moment when he stood there motionless, he saw a chance, a reckless, forlorn chance, to turn his desperate dilemma into glorious success; and he resolved to risk everything upon it. His

voice rang out in a great shout.

"Ressaldar! O Ressaldar!"

The deep voice, steady and alert, answered, "Sahib!"

SHER GUL MOHAMMED squatted in the innermost chamber of his village fortress. Before him was a steaming bowl of curried mutton and across from it sat his son, still handcuffed, sullen and quiet.

"Thus you shall come to see how these men who oppose the sircar are fools," the old man was repeating. "They have filled thine ears with dreams and fancies, keeping out facts. Consider now the things that be, as you may easily find them. And I know thy father's son will come to see the truth. . . ."

An ancient woman shoved her head into the room. "There is a sahib, with troopers, demanding entrance."

The old man scrambled to his feet, seized a rifle, and hobbled up to the octagonal watchtower above the gate.

"I am Sher Gul Mohammed. What wantest thou? . . . Allah! Maxwell sahib! A thousand pardons, huzoor. These baggages of mine did not know thee. Open there! Open the gate! Swiftly, thou loiterers!"

He hobbled from the tower as through the opened gate tramped Maxwell and six sowars, afoot, and yellow and white with the dust of swift, stealthy progress through the arid hills.

"Sher Gul Mohammed," Maxwell said, without preamble, "I have need of thee."

"All that I have, sahib, even my son and my life, if it must be."

"Nothing so precious, Ressaldar. Hillmen's clothes for me and these, camels to make others believe we are a peaceful caravan, and a guide to Garuli."

WHEN Alexander marched on India through the Khyber, he camped at Garuli. Jenghiz Khan pitched his yurts there. Timur and Ibr-u-din stood on its rocky hill flank and watched their interminable pagan hosts march by. Now, on a far later day, another would-be conqueror of India, a big man with a yellow beard, sat at a camp table and gazed down the slope to where the age-old road wound through the naked crags. Yellow-Beard was giving all his brains to fanning into war the fierce sons of Islam, so that after they had shed their blood in breaking down the frontier, he and his kind might march safely through.

He was writing his monthly report: "All goes well. Our plans prosper. I have a boy, half-educated by the English, who serves me well. When I give the word, there are a hundred thousand Pathans who will follow him to India, believing him inspired of the Prophet."

There he paused and, filled with content at his success, let his gaze fall idly down the slope to where three hillmen labored up toward him, three ordinary men of that country, tall, swaggering, wrapped in voluminous white garments, with black skull caps on their heads, and all armed to the teeth. They came slowly up the path, entered, and regarded him in silence.

"Well," he said in Pushtu, "you bring news from Jangore?"

"Yes," said the youngest man in the same tongue, "news from Jangore," and he shoved into Yellow-Beard's startled face a heavy automatic pistol. "The news that your work here is finished. Do you want to live?"

Yellow-Beard sat rigid, glaring into the eyes which too late he had realized were blue.

"It is your life or mine, you understand," Maxwell went on. "But if I die, you will die first. So you will go with us quietly, where we go, taking care to attract no attention. I am Lieutenant Hugh Maxwell of the Bengal Lancers, come to arrest you. March!"

Yellow-Beard did not move.

Maxwell said, "Wali Khan!"—and Wali Khan drew a short, evil knife.

"I ask once more only," Maxwell said. "Did you ever see a Khuttuch cut a throat? It makes no noise."

Yellow-Beard rose. With a sowar on each side of him and Maxwell behind, he strolled slowly down the hillside. Halfway down, the four met some boys, herding goats.

"Speak to them," Maxwell commanded.

Yellow-Beard said, "Thy goats are fat, sons!"

The boys laughed. One answered, "Next year I shall be able to ride with the men. Goats!"

Wali Khan said, laughing, "Firebrands, always, these Garuli men."

Without mishap they crossed the main road and went up a little nullah or ravine till they came to a deep bend. There waited four sowars with three camels and the boy from Sher Gul Mohammed who had been their guide.

At a word from Maxwell these fell upon Yellow-Beard, bound him and gagged him, and rolled him in a carpet till he looked like any other of the carpet bales with which the camels were laden. Then, quietly, they turned and made their way up the nullah, the men singing softly one of those crooning road songs immemorial in Asian caravans.

Maxwell, even then hardly able to believe he could have been so unreservedly successful, said, "To the ancient blockhouse of Jangore Gut, son, by the swiftest and most secret route."

AT the stronghold of Jangore Gut, the fight was done. In the declining sunshine, the hillsides were strewn with dead and wounded hillmen, while round the walls clustered two regiments of cavalry with a pack-mule machine-gun company. Within they cared for their wounded, and the survivors of Ghulam Hyder's force paraded before the colonels of the two regiments.

Ghulam Hyder answered the senior colonel, Barry.

"Sahib, we captured the Garuli mullah as we rode out to do, but he—he escaped in the night, and Maxwell sahib with six men went out after him, telling me to endure until you came."

The two colonels looked at each other.

"Young Maxwell's made a sweet mess of it," Barry remarked. "How he could let the fellow go, after risking court-martial to grab him, I can't understand. This'll be the last of Maxwell—if we ever see him again. The court-martial will break him. This mess—we've 13 killed and 70 wounded—will take some explaining in England. Well, to-morrow we struggle back, with our wounded. No use in waiting for poor Maxwell, I'm afraid."

But in the night a sowar wakened Barry. "Huzoor, Maxwell sahib is here!"

"I would see him at once," said Barry, instantly awake—and waited, aware of a heavy depression. "This sort of thing should never have happened to a Maxwell," he murmured to the other colonel, who had joined him.

Then Maxwell appeared, followed by two sowars, who half-carried, half-dragged a bale of carpet. Maxwell, his eyes burning triumphantly in his haggard face, saluted.

"I have the honor to report, sir, that the danger of a jihad is over. It ended with the capture of this prisoner."

The sowars had unrolled their bale, and Yellow-Beard, powerless and defeated, dully surveyed the colonels. . . .

There were two comments made later that young Hugh Maxwell treasured above his promotion.

One of them came from Colonel Barry. When he fully understood the situation, he said with a twinkle that couldn't conceal high pride: "After all, this is the sort of thing that happens to a Maxwell!"

And from Sher Gul Mohammed, came the message: "With Yellow-Beard gone, that foolish boy of mine sees the truth. I thank you, O son of my sahib. And I am filled with joy in you—a Maxwell sahib is always a Maxwell sahib!"

Stamps in the Day's News

By Kent B. Stiles

THE Post Office Department has announced further details regarding the 1932 series—described here last month — that will commemorate the birth of George Washington two centuries ago. The new information is that there will be five stamped envelopes—1c green, 1½c brown, 2c red, 4c black, and 5c blue. A single design, Mount Vernon, will be used on all five.

These and the regular adhesives will bear the first President's name and the dates 1732 and 1932, but the regular stamps will each have its own Washington likeness and there will be design variations in panels and other details. The colors selected are ½c dark brown, 1c green, 1½c light brown, 2c red, 3c purple, 4c warm brown, 5c blue, 6c orange, 7c black, 8c olive green, 9c pink, and 10c orange. They will be sold first on January 1 at the Washington post office and the Philatelic Agency in Washington, and at post offices elsewhere on January 2.


This Sudan air definitive pictures General Gordon.

How Stamps Teach

STAMPS constantly remind us of political developments in far-away lands. Two recent and striking examples involve Belgian East Africa, now receiving its first definitive stamps; and Cook Islands, which re-enter philately after an absence of 11 years. Studying these two situations, we also learn a bit of geography.


Don Pablo Iglesias, revolutionary leader, on one of Spain's new stamps.

Before the World War, the east-central part of continental Africa was a German colony called German East Africa. British, Belgian, and Portuguese military forces occupied the terrain and under the peace terms it was assigned to Great Britain under a mandate. Britain, however, permitted Portugal to retain an area known as Kionga, and Portugal attached this to its colony called Mozambique. Britain also gave two of the provinces, Urundi and Ruanda, to Belgium, and Belgium created a new colony, Belgian East Africa, which it attached administratively to Belgian Congo (philately's Congo).

In 1922, stamps of Congo were overprinted *Est Africain Allemand Occupation Belge* and *Duitsch Oost Afrika Belgische Bezetting*, each signifying German East Africa under Belgian Occupation. Two years later the two provinces' names were overprinted on Congo adhesives, and these provisionals continued in use until, late this year, pictorial definitives appeared, engraved in Paris and inscribed Ruanda-Urundi. Thus the provisionals went out of use.

The definitives are in 15 values from 10 centimes to 10 francs. The 10c offers a mountain view and the 50c a buffalo's head; the other designs present natives and their customs in war, industry, the arts, and domestic life.

The Cook Islands, otherwise the Hervey Islands, are a Pacific archipelago, which Captain James Cook, English explorer, discovered. They became a British protectorate in 1888 and were annexed by New Zealand in 1901. It was while they were under British protection that they received (1892) their first stamps.

The islands governed by New Zealand include Penrhyn, Aitutaki, and Rarotonga, and these three were given their own stamps when New Zealand postal paper was overprinted with each of their names, respectively in 1902, 1903 and 1919. These provisionals were followed, in 1920, by a definitive series for each island. Thus Cook Islands passed out of philately except as a historical name.

Now it returns, for the 1920 definitives have been withdrawn and new stamps, inscribed Cook Islands, have been issued for use throughout the group. Capt. Cook's landing is depicted on the ½ penny; the discoverer's portrait on the 1p; a Maori native canoe on the 2p; natives working a cargo between shore and schooner on the 2½p; the port of Avarua on the 4p; a ship in moonlight on the 6p; and on the 1 shilling a likeness of King George.

Niue, or Savage Island, another of Cook's discoveries, and a New Zealand dependency since 1900, is often mistakenly regarded as being part of the Cook Islands. Its stamps have been similar in design to those of Penrhyn, Aitutaki, and Rarotonga, however, and its new series resembles that of the Cook Islands' but for border and name.

Around the World

THE German dirigible *Graf Zeppelin's* recent visit to South America resulted in the issuing of special stamps in Brazil and Paraguay.

Portugal revised its spelling 20 years ago and Brazil has just done the same. So *Instrucçao* (Instruction) inscribed on Brazil's 2,000, 5,000, and 10,000 reis values has been changed to *Instruçao*, thus bringing three new varieties.

Sudan's definitive air stamps offer a statue of General Gordon at Khartoum. A noted British soldier and administrator, Charles George Gordon was once governor-general of the Sudan.

Yugoslavia (philately's Jugoslavia) has issued stamps that for the first time are inscribed *Jugoslavija* instead of *Kraljevina*. In nine values from 25 paras to 30 dinars, their design is a profile of King Alexander.

A portrait new to philately is that of Joseph Simon Gallieni, appearing on Madagascar's newest stamps. A French general and statesman, Gallieni was appointed resident-general (afterwards governor-general) of Madagascar when the latter became a French colony in 1896, and it was he who completed the subjugation of the natives and brought the island peace and prosperity. During the World War, when the German armies were approaching Paris, Gallieni was appointed the capital's military governor, and subsequently he played a vital role at the Marne.


One of the recent stamps issued for Belgian East Africa.

Paraguay has issued new definitive air stamps in these values, colors, and designs: 5 centavos gray-blue, a monument; 10c purple, orange tree and cactus plant; 20c vermilion, tobacco plants; 40c green, palm and trees; 80c greenish-blue, bird in flight.

IMPORTANT RATE CHANGE

Stamp collectors should bear in mind the NEW POSTAL RATE of 3c for letters going to CANADA and 5c for letters going to ENGLAND.

Peril Above the Lightning

(*Continued from page 11*)

and began reading a magazine.

"Well, I've still got some work to finish," chimed in Collins as he got up to go out.

"About time you did some," growled Stelle. "You've got less to do than any man on the station, and you don't have to risk your neck either, and yet you make more fuss about your work than anybody I ever heard of. Go on, you old elephant, and pick up your straw, and I hope it breaks your blooming back."

"Peevish, eh?" answered the corpulent Collins. "Sore because you had to stay on the station while the rest are in town. Well! Well! I'll take it out of you both at three-handed bridge when I get back."

"Three-handed bridge, my aunt. Get out of here!" And Stelle threw a magazine at him for emphasis.

Stelle and I had been reading for perhaps five minutes when he suddenly looked up.

"You know, John—" he began, but he got no further. "What's that!"

"Listen!" I exclaimed.

Outside a klaxon horn was screeching violently in the drizzle. It was the alarm for an air raid.

"That old fool Collins must have his little joke," grunted Stelle.

I went to the telephone.

"What's the idea, Collins?" I asked.

"Sure enough alarm, sir," came his reply. "Wing headquarters orders up two machines at once. Zeppelins sighted off Lincolnshire."

"How can anybody sight anything in this weather?" I rasped. "Put me on to the wing adjutant at once."

"Hello. That you, Myers?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the colonel having a little joke about this air raid?"

"No, the order just came through from brigade headquarters."

"Do you know that it's raining here, and thundering beside?"

"It is here, too."

"I wish you'd telephone brigade again and ask them to confirm the order."

"All right, sir."

Stelle refused to discuss the possibility of an air raid, and for the life of me I had to agree with him. I took another look out of the window. The fine drizzle was still coming down. The thunder was a little more audible and the lightning more visible. High above was the same monotonous and forbidding gray, at perhaps ten thousand feet. There was no possibility of an air raid. The whole thing was madness.

A minute later the klaxon rang out again. Stelle stood up a little worried. I glanced at him and he at me, and in that exchange was all our friendship and concern for each other. We had both come from the same regiment three years before. We had braved death together a hundred times. I don't believe that two men were ever so close as we. With a flash of angry determination, I went to the telephone.

"Give me the colonel," I ordered.

"Hello! That you, sir?"

"Yes. All the machines off?"

"Look here, sir, this is sheer madness. It's already drizzling over the field and a terrific thunderstorm is coming up from the east."

"Better have a shot at it, Cardell."

"Very well, sir. Will you take the responsibility?"

"Yes. Get off at once."

"Very good, sir. We'll be off in two minutes." I hung up and turned to Stelle.

"Come on, Stelle, we've got to go."

Stelle growled something about colonels and got up.

I hurried into my fur-lined flying boots, buckled myself into my big leather coat, put on my fur-lined helmet, and inside of two minutes was out on the field where two tiny planes were already waiting with their engines slowly turning over. A horrible fear gripped me. I couldn't explain it. I couldn't throw it off. I couldn't analyze it.

I went to my plane, got half in, and then got out again and ran to Stelle's plane, shook him warmly by the hand and yelled, "Good luck, old boy!"

Why had I done it? One didn't usually shake hands with such dramatic fervor. I dashed over to my plane, jumped in, ran the engine up for a moment, and slowly pulled the throttle back. Then I adjusted my helmet, pulled down my goggles, and waved my arms for the chocks to be pulled away from the wheels. A second later we were racing over the ground and then up into the air.

It was almost impossible to see anything, for the drizzle immediately clouded up the windscreen and the moment I attempted to look out over the side my goggles were bespattered. I had to take the goggles off and look out sideways without moving my body, for the drizzle cut like a knife when I attempted to put my unprotected head outside the cockpit. I got one last look at Stelle as I shot up through a cloud. He was far below me, flying straight out into the teeth of the storm. That was like him. Always the shortest way, and if a dirty job had to be done—"Let's get to the dirt!"

At about fifteen hundred feet the plane was literally thrown about like a straw in the wind. But at about three thousand, beyond the drifting clouds, all was calm. I settled back to the monotonous job of climbing to some twenty thousand feet, wondering what I had to face in the dim gray regions aloft.

I HAD time to think of my earlier nervousness. Was I afraid? No, not in the ordinary way. It was a depression. A dreadful uneasiness. I began to feel the trouble was I hadn't been as much of a man as I should have liked. I shouldn't have called the colonel to shoulder the responsibility. I should have just gone ahead. And then I decided that I had done right—that there seemed nothing stupider than to go up in a thunderstorm to look for a Zeppelin, which probably did not exist, when I could hardly see my hand in front of me.

I had now reached the edge of the high grey cloud belt. Only a few miles to the east, in the direction I was going, I could see streaks of lightning shooting across the clouds. It was a fearful sight. As I look back on it I'm amazed that I could have attempted such foolishness, for it would have been easy to give up and land again on the field. And yet I had to go on. I was not going to be a coward. Up into the dense mist of the clouds I went.

For twenty minutes, seeing absolutely nothing, I tried to keep on a steady compass course. I stalled. The air speed register showed zero. I felt myself sideslipping. I tried to correct it. I seemed to make it worse. In those days we had none of the fine instruments that are used to-day. The more I tried to keep on a level keel the worse things seemed to get.

Finally, I saw the lightning and some lights on the ground. It was quite dark now. The lights acted as a guide, and I was able to right the machine. Then I came to the appalling conclusion that I had been spinning and had come down through the clouds again. I grew angry.

I again set the compass course and determined that I would fly for two minutes by the watch to make sure that I was flying straight, and then I would ascend into the clouds, and no matter what happened I would not budge the

(Continued from page 57)

controls. It's easy to talk about these things, *but the temptation to move the controls is tremendous.*

I started up. Pretty soon the bubble that told when the plane was flying on an even keel shot to one side. Obviously the plane was sideslipping. Normally I should have put on bank to bring the low wing tip up to a level position. But I resolutely set myself against the temptation. I was rewarded, partially, for the bubble came back almost to center, though it never stayed quite there.

I was climbing as fast as I could and yet the air speed suddenly went down to zero. I steeled my nerves and refused to push the control stick forward to pick up speed. Sure enough, the speed picked up of its own accord. For fifteen minutes I stuck out this grueling test, with every nerve on edge, and then a wonderful thing happened. The plane suddenly shot out of the black clouds into clear air under a starry sky. I was through the gray dome.

When I had recovered from my surprise my first thought was, "How clever these Germans are!" It was a perfect night for a raid, for by flying on a compass course they could at least make sure when they were over England and drop their bombs. And they could do it all without the least fear of being seen from the ground. A perfect night!

I SAILED aimlessly for an hour and saw nothing. I had almost made up my mind to land when I saw what I supposed to be "archie" (anti-aircraft gunfire) bursting above the clouds. I immediately changed direction and scanned the sky impatiently. If only there had been searchlights playing! But the most powerful searchlight ever made could not penetrate the layers of clouds below.

I was now cruising at about twenty thousand feet and it was terribly cold. I knew that the Zeppelins usually came over at about twenty-two thousand, and I figured that I had a better chance of seeing one if I kept at about my present height. However, the chances of seeing the enemy ship seemed hopeless.

I had used up half my gasoline by now, and not having the remotest idea of where I was, I again began to think of going down. After a moment's thought I resolved to stay on patrol for another hour. I couldn't get back to my own field anyhow. I know now that I stayed up because I was afraid of myself. I wanted to prove my nerve. So I stayed on.

Things always happen quickly in the air, and quite suddenly my curiosity was aroused. I saw a star go out. Then I saw another one go out. Then I saw one suddenly come into being. Was I seeing things? It must be a cloud. Another star went out. Two more flicked into sight.

A Zeppelin! My heart raced. Yes, it must be a Zeppelin. Clouds don't move like that and a single cloud at such a height is very rare.

I was flying parallel to the Zep, and I immediately pressed the trigger on the control stick to warm up the gun, which shot through the airscrew. Then I turned and flew straight for the ship.

It must have been a great distance away, for I flew for half an hour without seeming to get any closer to it. I kept track of it only with the greatest difficulty.

A few minutes later I lost sight of it altogether. I flew on. I was desperate. Disappointment rankled in my soul. Finally, after what seemed an hour but was probably only a few minutes, I saw the light from the exhausts of the giant ship ahead.

For fifteen minutes I flew wide open. The exhausts grew plainer. Five minutes more, and they were only two or three hundred feet ahead and perhaps five or six hundred feet above me. I dived the machine with the engine full on and gradually brought the nose up in a gentle zoom. For a few seconds I hung on my airscrew with my finger pressed hard against the trigger. A stream of tracer and incendiary bullets flew upwards. Nothing happened.

I flew level for a few minutes, and regained the distance I had lost. I dipped the machine more gently and pulled it up again, to pour a deadly stream of bullets into the monster ahead. The Germans, by this time, had discovered they were being attacked, and were firing at random.

I repeated my second performance, closer. *Rat-tat-tat,* snarled the machine gun. A thin flame shot out into the frozen air.

That was enough for me. I switched off the engine and made a weak Immelmann turn that was much more like a half-flat spin, and in another second or so was speeding away.

Not a moment too soon. As I was turning, the sky lit up from the enormous fire that was raging on the Zeppelin. I turned my plane to bring it parallel with the distressed Zep and saw it already one thousand feet below, its nose down, burning furiously from midships to stern. It was a terrible sight and an unforgettable one. It nauseated me, once the excitement was over, to think of those thirty or forty frantic men I had sent to their doom.

The Zep was descending rapidly, and as it went down its nose dropped at an even angle.

There was an explosion. I couldn't hear it, but suddenly, a little forward of amidships, pieces of burning fabric shot out into the darkness and long blue flames shot up five hundred or more feet into the air. Then the huge ship dropped like a stone, and in a second was swallowed up by the clouds below.

SLOWLY I throttled back the engine until it was doing about half its revolutions, and began a gradual descent to earth. I have always been very emotional, and the sight of that burning Zeppelin going to its doom almost unnerved me.

My old uneasiness reasserted itself. I wondered what had become of Stelle, and I realized that I had been too busy thinking of myself to give him a thought. We were both in the hands of fate, and yet I felt responsible for his safety. This was no night to fly. It was bad enough for me, and I had had ten times the flying experience that Stelle had.

I arrived at the top of the cloud bank, took one look at the star-studded vault above, and plunged into the heavy cloud mist. It wasn't long before a terrific brightness lit the fog, and a second later the plane trembled. I realized that I was flying through a thunderstorm, and vaguely I wondered if I should ever get home alive.

Down. Down. Down. The altimeter showed three thousand feet, and yet I could see nothing. Could the clouds be so low? Two thousand feet! I grew frightened. What if the ground were higher here than at the landing field? I might fly into a hill! I had visions of having to make a forced landing in a deserted field, probably wrecking the tiny plane.

Fifteen hundred feet! I decided to light a wing-tip flare, and pressed the button. The air was as clear as a crystal. I shuddered and looked down. There was the cold North Sea! I shuddered again and turned the plane due west.

Half an hour later, without a drop of gas in my tanks, I landed in a small emergency landing field in Yorkshire, more than two hundred miles away from my starting point. I immediately went to the telephone and called up the colonel.

"Colonel Rogers talking."

"This is Cardell, sir."

"Thank God you're down, my lad. We've kept the whole system alight for you. What have you to report?"

"Shot down a Zep at 12:43, above the clouds somewhere off the coast of Yorkshire. Must have fallen into the North Sea. Went down in flames."

"Great work! Come back as soon as you can." The colonel was not given to the slightest excess of praise, and "Great work" was the zenith of his expression.

"Please tell the squadron I'm safe. And, hello—hello—"

"Yes."

"Have you heard from Stelle?"

"Not yet. I'm worried about him."

A chill swept over me. Instinctively I knew the truth.

Gradually, as the cold mists rolled away at the approach of dawn, I came to know the reason of my own uneasiness. Whatever glamor there was in my exploit faded away as I realized I had lost my best friend.

Contents for December

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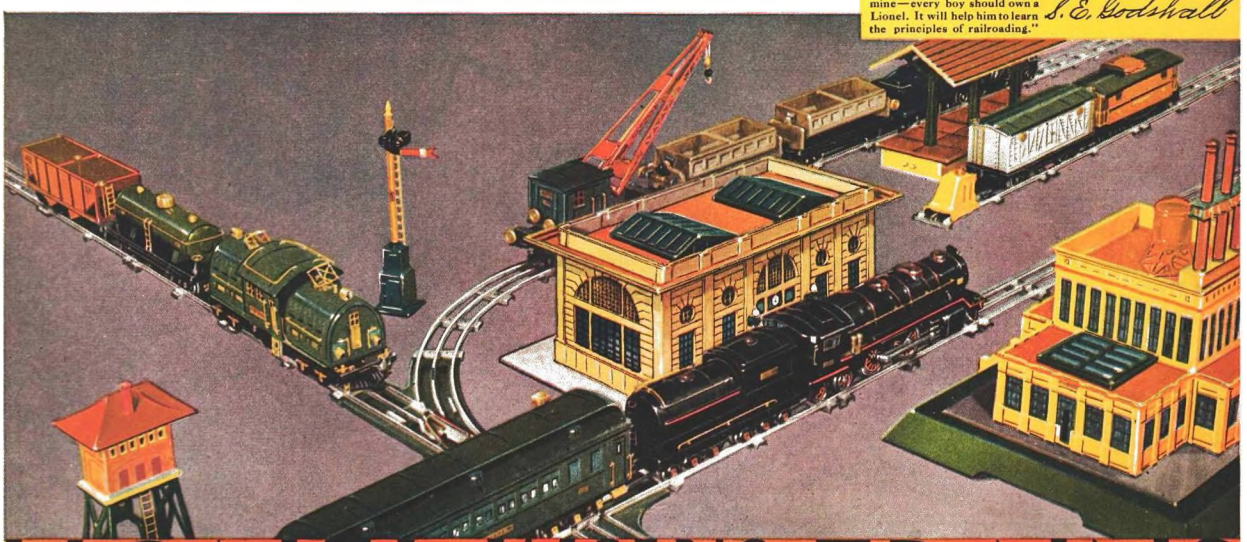

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