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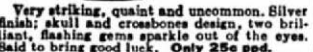
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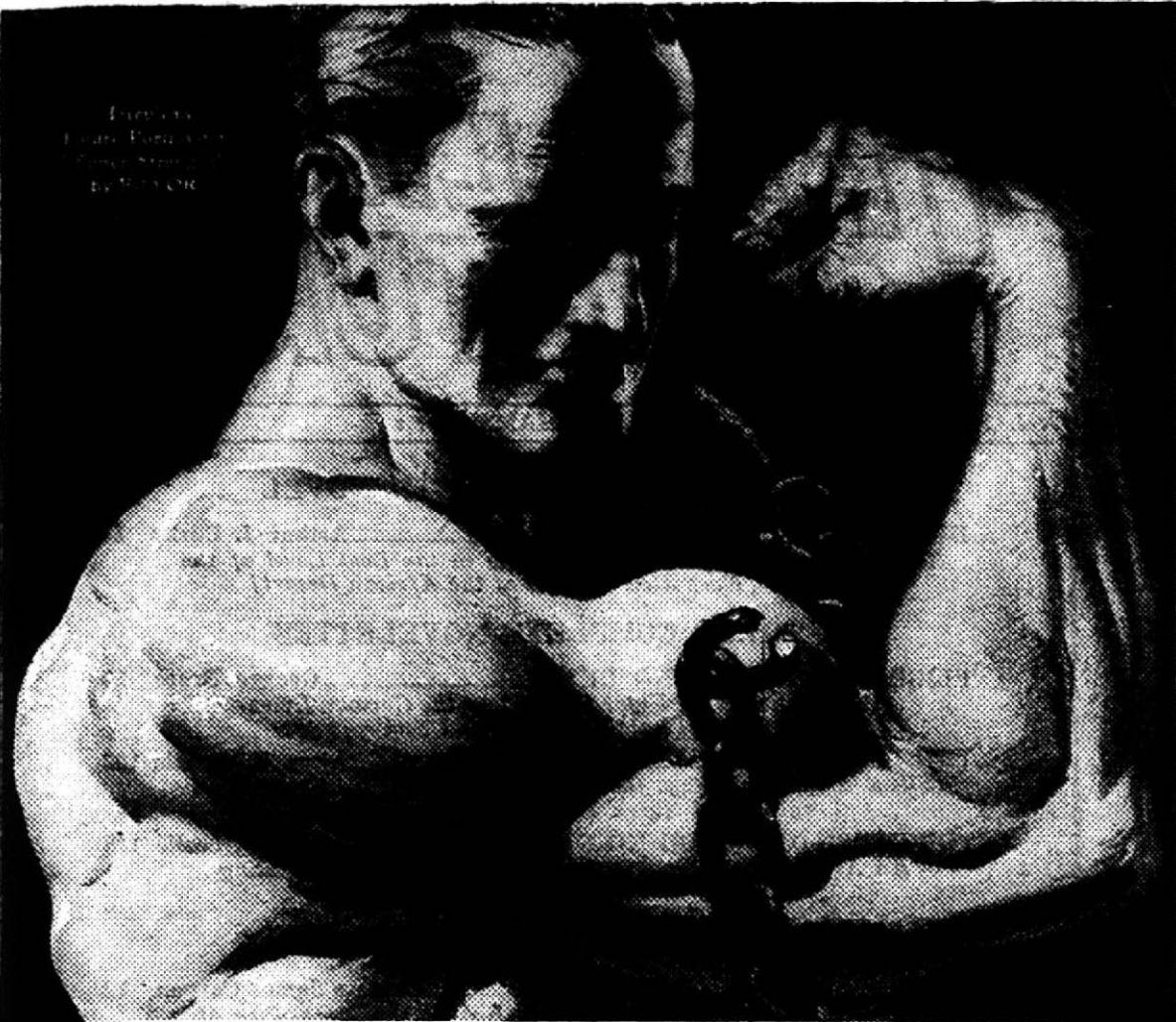
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THRILLING ADVENTURES



Vol. XIII/ No. 2

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

April, 1935

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Published monthly by METROPOLITAN MAGAZINES, INC., 22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y.
M. A. Goldsmith, President; N. L. Pines, Treasurer. Copyright, 1935, by Metropolitan Magazines,
Inc. Yearly, \$1.80; single copies, \$16; Foreign and Canadian, postage extra. Entered as second
class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., on Oct. 16, 1931, under Act of March 3, 1879.

Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope, and are submitted at the author's risk.

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It's hard to find a field with more opportunity awaiting the trained man. Why, in 1933—one of the worst depression years—the Radio industry sold \$213,000,000 worth of sets and parts! Radio set sales increased 45%—tube sales increased 25%! Over 300,000 people worked in the industry. It's a gigantic business, even in the worst business years. And look what's ahead! Millions of sets are becoming obsolete annually. 17,000,000 sets are in operation on which over \$200,000,000 are spent each year for repairs, servicing, new tubes, etc. Broadcasting stations pay their employees (exclusive of artists) approximately \$23,000,000 a year. Advertisers pay 600 broadcasting stations over \$75,000,000 a year for radio time and talent. A few hundred thousand \$40, \$60, \$75 a week jobs have grown to thousands. These figures are so big that they're hard to grasp! Yet they're all true! Here is a new industry that has grown to a commercial giant! No wonder business leaders predict a brilliant future for this great and growing business!

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"Sent Out" by Business Men
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at a Fraction of the Expense

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Forty years ago the horse and buggy business was supreme—today almost extinct. Twenty years ago the phonograph industry ran into many millions—today practically a relic. Only a comparatively few foresighted men saw the future ahead in the automobile and the radio. Yet irretrievable waves of public buying swept these men to fortune, and sent the buggy and the phonograph into the discard. So are great successes made by men able to detect the shift in public favor from one industry to another.

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Some of the Savings
You Can Show

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,000! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$88.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

Profits Typical of
the Young, Growing Industry

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, as much as \$5.83 may be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share may be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollar's worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollar's worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

This Business Has
Nothing to Do With
House to House Canvassing

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever size the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation has actually produced enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A Georgia man made \$802.50 his first two weeks. A Connecticut man writes he has made \$55.00 in a single day's time. Texas man nets over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

No Money Need Be Risked

in trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overworked—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a necessity but does not have any price cutting to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—that pays more on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, use the coupon below—but send it right away—of writ if you wish. But do it now. Address

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■ For 12 years the Weil Belt has been accepted as ideal for reducing by men in all walks of life... from business men and office workers who find that it removes cumbersome fat with every movement... to active outdoor men who like the feeling of protection it gives.



"I suddenly realized that I had become a fat man". The boys kidded me about my big "paunch".

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What a change! I looked 3 inches slimmer at once and soon I had actually taken **EIGHT INCHES** off my waist... and 20 pounds off my weight!

It seemed to support the abdominal walls and keep the digestive organs in place... and best of all, I became acceptable for insurance!

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DON'T WAIT... FAT IS DANGEROUS!

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I WILL PAY \$350.00

JUST FOR THE WINNING ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

Again, I will award \$3,500.00 (including \$1,000.00 for promptness) to some ambitious man or woman who answers my announcements. **YOU MAY BE THE ONE TO GET IT!** But before announcing the plan under which this fortune is to be awarded, I am offering a reward for the best answer to the question, "WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH \$3,500.00 CASH IF YOU WIN IT?" Just answer this question now. Tell me in a sentence of 20 words or less what you would do with this fortune. **NOTHING MORE TO DO TOWARDS THE \$350.00 CASH PRIZE!** It so simple! The first answer that comes to your mind may win the \$350.00 prize. Nothing "fancy" is needed—just tell me in **PLAIN WORDS** what you would do with the \$3,500.00.

20 Simple Words Win \$350.00

Nothing More for You to Do! Costs Nothing to Win! Nothing to Buy! No Selling! No Puzzles!

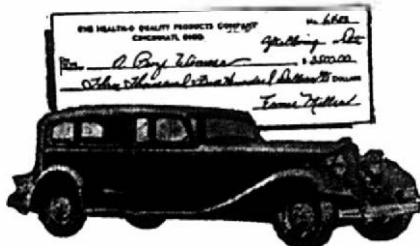
There is no way you can lose anything. Simply tell me what **YOU** would do with \$3,500.00 if **YOU** obtained it. The prize for the winning answer is \$350.00. Just sending an answer qualifies you for the opportunity to win \$3,500.00. Just think what \$3,500.00 could mean to you! You could start a business—invest in bonds—pay off a mortgage—buy new furniture and clothes or use the money for education. Think of all the things you could do with it. Plan now—then write your answer—rush it to me at once. Yours may easily be the winner.

Rush Answer—\$100.00 EXTRA For Promptness!

Send your suggestion within 3 days from the time you read this announcement and I will add \$100.00 to your prize. If yours in the winning answer . . . making a total of \$450.00 cash. So don't delay. Nothing more to do now or ever towards getting the answer prize and qualifying for the opportunity to get your share of over \$6,000.00 to be awarded. **EVERYBODY TAKING AN ACTIVE PART** in the prize distribution plan to be announced **WILL BE COMPENSATED IN CASH**. . . . Think what you would do with \$3,500.00. Write your answers and rush it to me. **SEND NO MONEY!** . . . Nothing to buy or sell to get the prize for best answer. No "puzzles," "number paths," or "lucky numbers" to win in contest for over \$3,500.00. Act promptly—**TODAY!**

You May Win!

Only one answer accepted from a family. Use your own name. You must be over 16 years of age and reside within the Continental U. S. \$350.00 given for the best answer to this question, "What Will You Do with \$3,500.00 if You Win It?"



EVERYBODY who follows my answers—
You will be COMPENSATED in CASH

Answers must be postmarked not later than May 31, 1935. Construction, spelling, neatness or ingenuity not considered. Judges will consider answer only for practical value of the idea. Duplicate prizes will be given in case of duplicate or tying winning answers.

ERNIE MILLER, Mgr.
H. O. Bldg., Cincinnati, O.
Dept. DE-704C

Just Sending Answer Qualifies
You for Opportunity to

WIN \$3500.00

Some say I am wrong. They say that awarding money to people will not help to bring back prosperity. They say that the people who get money from me will spend it foolishly. Now I want **YOU** to tell me what you would do with this fortune if you obtained it. Someone is going to get \$3,500.00 all cash. If you win the \$3,500.00, what will **YOU** do with it? Tell me in 20 words or less. Just sending an answer qualifies you for the opportunity to win \$2,500.00, plus \$1,000.00 for promptness . . . making a total of \$3,500.00 in final cash distribution, details of which will be sent at once. Here's an opportunity of a lifetime! Rush your answer today. **SEND NO MONEY!** Just tell me what you will do with the money if you win the \$3,500.00 that I have promised to award to some yet unknown man or woman.

Ernie Miller

\$350.00 PRIZE COUPON

ERNIE MILLER, Prize Mgr.
H. O. Bldg., Dept. DE-704C.
Cincinnati, O.



If I win the \$3,500.00 prize, I will use it as follows: (Write your answer plainly here, in 20 words or less)

Name.....

Address.....

Town..... State.....

Date I read this offer.....

EMPLOYEES ONLY!



and Yet Ambitious Men are Getting in! The Question is: "Are YOU Ambitious?"

DON'T stand outside that gate and envy the men who are in the midst of the romance, adventure, fascination and good pay of Aviation! **YOU DON'T HAVE TO.** For right in your own home, in your spare time, I'll give you the training you need to get started in this fast-growing, well-paid industry. Send today for my free book. It tells all the facts.

I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME QUICKLY—IN SPARE TIME

What branch of Aviation appeals to you? Whether it's flying, or a job on the ground, plenty of places will be open to the right men—the trained men. The question is—**ARE YOU AMBITIOUS?** Opportunities are actually made for the young men who are willing to train for them. I am offering you the chance to get out of a low-pay rut and enter a big, fast-growing industry with a tremendous future—**AVIATION.**

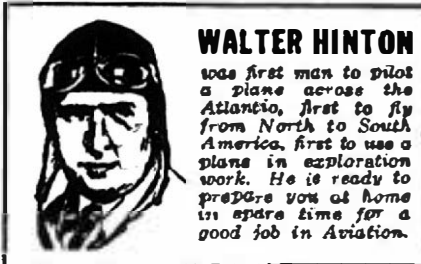


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MANY MAKE \$40, \$60, \$75 A WEEK

Yes, sir. Through the simple, practical method I have worked out, I can train you at home, in your spare time to fill many good-pay jobs in Aviation.



WALTER HINTON

was first man to pilot a plane across the Atlantic, first to fly from North to South America, first to use a plane in exploration work. He is ready to prepare you at home in spare time for a good job in Aviation.

There are over 40 different types of jobs to choose from in Aviation. Many of my graduates have been able to get into good ground jobs paying \$40, \$60, \$75 a week. Others, with the additional low-cost flying instruction I arrange for, have become pilots at \$300 a month or better. Send for my FREE book now and get the FACTS.

AVIATION IS GROWING FAST

Get in on the ground floor of this amazing industry. Aviation is growing fast—and it is still a young industry. It's big development is still ahead. Start NOW to CARE IN on Aviation's big future. Get on Aviation's Payroll soon.

My Course will give you the training you need to get through that Gate up there quickly. The lessons are easy to understand—hundreds of photos, charts and diagrams make everything clear. It's a practical, success-proved course. In it I've packed the knowledge gained from 16 years of practical experience and over 400,000 miles of flying.

Act Now—Get My Free Book

Send now for my FREE Book explaining everything. It tells about the opportunities in Aviation. It tells what my training will do for you. It tells about my money back agreement and free employment service. It tells what many of my graduates are doing and making. Fill in the coupon and mail it TODAY!

WALTER HINTON, Pres.
Aviation Institute of U. S. A., Inc.
1115 Connecticut Avenue
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Gives Credit to Training

"At present I am employed with one of the largest builders of aircraft on Long Island, and I can truthfully say that it was the knowledge I received through Walter Hinton's complete course in Aviation that I secured this position." — Carl Schneider, 4315 Graham Avenue, Astoria, N. Y.

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1115 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D. C.
Please send me a FREE copy of your book, "Wings of Opportunity." I want to know more about my opportunities in Commercial Aviation, and your tested method of home training. This request does not obligate me.

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City State Age

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TIRED OF DRUDGERY ?



for only
\$1.00

YOU CAN LEARN THE SECRET OF SUCCESS!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A MILLIONAIRE

Why remain "just one of the crowd?" Become "one of the winners!" Now is the time to start. A new day of prosperity is dawning! Be prepared to take advantage of the golden opportunity that will come your way. Out of the depths of the depression into glorious success and riches!

Millions are starting their business lives all over again—and starting from the bottom too. The same chances are within the grasp of all. But remember "many are called, but few are chosen." Only a handful will come through to the top of the ladder. Most will forever remain a part of the struggling crowd—drifting—plodding—striving—always hopeful, but always just missing the mark.

Which would you rather be? Rich and successful—with your own car and home and the chance to travel and see the world—or poor and a failure—living the same humdrum existence from day to day?

The Millionaire of Tomorrow may be out of a Job Today! The "new deal" is waiting for men to take positions in high places—Wealth—Position—Power are ready for the man who is prepared—and that man CAN BE YOU.

It's not a college education—or money—or luck that will bring you success. Many millionaires never went to grammar school—were penniless and achieved success despite "bad breaks." The secret of success is Business Knowledge. You may not know geography or algebra or history, but YOU MUST KNOW THE A.B.C.'S OF BUSINESS—and only one man in five thousand knows them!

MAKE YOUR OWN FUTURE

Take your fate into your own hands! Don't leave anything to chance. Learn the Secret of Success in Business as explained in this series of 18 folios, called National Success Course.

This course has been written by a man who is president of a \$2,000,000 corporation . . . a man who started out in

life without health . . . without education . . . without a penny! He tells you his secrets of making money, and he tells them so clearly, so simply, so easy to understand, that every ambitious man can grasp them and **MAKE THEM WORK!**

A FEW TOPICS

- First Steps in Business Efficiency.
- How to do Business with Banks.
- How to Develop Your Memory.
- The Factors of Business Success.
- Managing Men for More Profit.
- The Money Value of System.
- How to Advertise Successfully.
- How to Close Sales Completely.
- How to Collect Money.
- Premium and Sales Plans to Increase Business.
- Psychology of Salesmanship.
- The Power of Right Thought.
- A Retail System of Accounts.
- Fundamentals of Manufacturers Cost System.
- Points of Law Every Business Man Should Know.

WAS \$24.00
NOW \$1.00

DON'T DELAY!

Many smart business men paid \$24.00 for the National Success Course. But we've arranged a special edition—absolutely complete in every way—so that thousands of ambitious men could take advantage of it today. If you're anxious to lift yourself above the crowd—get out of the rut—and steer yourself to financial security—we urge you to mail the coupon NOW.

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DRIVE YOUR OWN CAR!



OWN YOUR OWN HOME!



ENJOY OCEAN TRAVEL!

BEVERLY HOUSE INC.
22 West 48th St., N. Y.

Dept. TA-4A

Gentlemen:

Please rush my set of the National Success Course. I enclose one dollar in cash, check, money order.
 U. S. Postage stamps (small denominations).
No C. O. D.'s.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... STATE.....



Crowds a Lifetime's Progress in 400 Days

The Amazing But True Story of LaSalle Student Brown's Career



"It's almost unbelievable—but just a year ago, I was living in a little board shack, trying to raise a family on an unskilled man's pay. I decided—since everything else had failed—to try LaSalle home study."



"I had to work 12 hours a day, studying at odd moments. I used to sneak my books to work, sensitive to ridiculing friends. They were the 'poor saps'—for not one of them has since bettered himself in life."



"The boss's eyes were sharper than I reckoned; within five months I was suddenly promoted from 'Hey, you' to 'Mr. Brown' with the title of Night Superintendent—over the heads of men twice as long with the company."



"On my new job, I immediately applied the things I had learned through LaSalle. I organized a maintenance system since adopted by other companies. A director said 'Brown knows more about handling men than any other man in the company.'"



"Unexpected rewards came outside my work, as the result of reading that remarkable LaSalle booklet, 'The Second Milestone.' I have been a speaker on business methods, and urged to run for political office. My opinion is sought by men I was afraid to speak to a year ago."



"As I stand in front of my new home, I am proud that in one year I have made what is lifetime progress for many men. Now I'm buckling down to more LaSalle training to meet future opportunities."

How We Build Men

This man's career may seem amazing to you, but to LaSalle it is not so unusual. Along with Brown, thousands of others have, these past years changed poorly-paid jobs to well-paid positions of honor and trust.

Training some 825,000 men and women has taught us that Success demands three things. If you have all three, not even a major business depression can stop you from getting ahead.

First of all, *training*—the ability to do a job better than the next man. LaSalle home-study training is recognized as a quick way of acquiring such ability. Second, there must be a *Success Plan*. This, LaSalle also supplies—bringing you expert consultation on business and personal problems; helping you overcome handicaps; building confidence . . . speeding you ahead. Third, and this is vital—there must be *ambition*; the courage to stick! Given this, LaSalle can supply all else you need to win success. This coupon is your test—this minute can be the most important in your life! Why not send the coupon NOW?

LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

Dept. 4329-R CHICAGO, ILL.

Kindly tell me about your Success Plan and training in the business field I have checked below:

- Higher Accountancy
- Law
- Business Management
- Modern Salesmanship
- Business Law
- Business Correspondence
- Expert Bookkeeping
- Industrial Management
- Business English
- Personnel Management
- Traffic Management

Name

Address

Position

LA SALLE
EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

Kidneys Cause Much Trouble Says Doctor

Successful Prescription Helps Remove Acids Works Fast

Dr. T. J. Restelli, famous English scientist, Doctor of Medicine and Surgeon, says: "You can't feel well if your Kidneys do not function right, because your Kidneys affect your entire body."

Your blood circulates 4 times a minute through 9 million tiny, delicate tubes in your Kidneys which are endangered by drastic, irritating drugs, modern foods and drinks, worry, and exposure. Beware of Kidney dysfunction if you suffer from Night Rising, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes, Acidity, or Loss of Pep.



Dr. W. R. George

Dr. Walter R. George, for many years Health Director of Indianapolis, says: "Insufficient Kidney excretions are the cause of much needless suffering with Aching Back, Frequent Night Rising, Itching, Smarting, Burning, Painful Joints, Rheumatic Pains, Headaches, and a generally run-down body. I am of the opinion that the prescription Cystex corrects such functional conditions. It aids in flushing poisons from the urinary tract, and in freeing the blood of retained toxins. Cystex deserves the endorsement of all doctors." If you suffer from Kidney and Bladder dysfunction,

delay endangers your vitality, and you should not lose a single minute in starting to take the doctor's special prescription called Cystex (pronounced Sias-tex) which helps Kidney functions in a few hours. It is swift, safe and sure in action. Gently tones, soothes and cleans raw, sore membranes. Brings new energy and vitality in 48 hours. It is helping millions of sufferers and is guaranteed to fit you up and make you feel like new in 8 days, or money back on return of empty package. Get guaranteed Cystex from your druggist today.

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ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

GET A MODERN WOMAN'S REMEDY TO

RELIEVE PAIN AND DELAY NOW

Women Everywhere! Don't suffer unnecessarily when nature fails you. Do as other women do. Get a modern woman's praised remedy for gaining quick relief. My "Special Relief Compound" has been used by many thousands of women for relief of overdue (delayed), late appearing, suppressed periods and similar abnormal menstrual irregularities. QUICKER IN ACTION THAN PILLS OR TABLETS. Only a woman knows how another woman can suffer at times, so if you are troubled with delays read every word of this message from another woman who wants to help women everywhere. My relief compound is made of time tested vegetable ingredients used by physicians and nurses for OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY because of their reputed power to relieve pain and aid in restoring normal functions. Safe. Harmless. Does not contain any narcotics, habit forming or harsh mineral drugs, only pure laboratory tested vegetable extracts used for their effectiveness in functional menstrual disturbances. I firmly believe my compound is one of the very best obtainable. It costs several times as much to make as many pill or tablet type of "regulators" but costs you no more. Women report relief, often in a few days without pain or inconvenience. Some say they used several other preparations and got no relief until they tried my compound—others say they are glad they found out about my compound and will use no other. These are possibly some of the reasons why I receive such wonderful letters of praise.

EVERY MONTH											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31						

Compound. I have used it before and find it very good." J. J. "I have used one-half box of Formula No. 2 and it took effect this morning." W. L. "I can never praise your compound high enough. I am feeling fine." E. K. "Your compound proved highly satisfactory. After two and a half weeks delay functions appeared again in regular form." E. C. "After taking your compound for 5 days I was relieved with no pain or inconvenience whatever."

SEND NO MONEY

Don't let disorders persist. Send for my special remedy today. I don't believe you will find another exactly like it. You don't have to send any money with your order. I am glad to mail it C. O. D. Pay the Postman on arrival. If this would cause any embarrassment, and you wish FAST SERVICE and also to save the Post Office collection charges, I suggest you send remittance with order. Nearly every woman orders this way. You can rely absolutely on your order being sent by return mail, in a plain sealed package. Regular package, \$3.00. Special Formula No. 3 for chronic conditions, \$3.00 Two for \$5.00. Remember my compound must be good or women would not write me such pleasant letters of their own free will after using it. Literature FREE.

JUST MAIL THIS COUPON — NO LETTER NECESSARY

MARTHA BEASLEY,

Box 22 Northwinds Station, Dept. 263, Detroit, Mich.
Send me your private talk, "Do as Other Women Do," and other helpful literature. Also mail relief compound as marked. Remittance attached.

- 1 Box Regular Formula No. 1, \$2.00.
 1 Box Special Formula No. 2, \$3.00.
 2 Boxes Special Formula No. 3, \$5.00.
 1 Box Extra Special Formula No. 5, \$5.00.

Name
Address
Town State

WORDS FROM FRIENDLY USERS

Friendly testimonials like these reach me from women the country over. C. W. "I was delayed for nine weeks. Had a natural relief in 8 days." D. C. "I was about 6 weeks past, in 5 days I was O. K. It is wonderful being odorless, tasteless and pleasant to take." E. U. "Delayed 3 weeks. Produced results on 4th day. Simple as A. B. C. to take." G. V. "I was two months over-time—remedy effective on 5th day." J. McC. "I have just finished one box of your compound and found relief after being 6 weeks overdue." W. T. H. "I have had splendid relief after using Compound No. 2; being relieved of about two months delay. Have told many friends." H. M. Y. "I can truthfully say your Formula No. 3 is a blessing to women. After being irregular five weeks I took one box and in five days I got relief." A. B. "Please send me your Relief

Learn ELECTRICITY



STUDENTS BUSY AT WORK IN GREAT COYNE SHOPS

Pay For Your Training After You Graduate

Yes sir! I mean just what I say. There are no strings to this offer. I'll train you in 90 days! Right here in the Great Coyne Shops—NOT BY CORRESPONDENCE—but by real electrical work on real electrical machinery. And you won't have to start paying your tuition until two months after you graduate, and even then you'll have over a year to complete your payments.

This Is the Greatest Offer Ever Made by Any School

THERE are absolutely no conditions attached to this offer. I MEAN EXACTLY WHAT I SAY. You get the full and complete training of the world's oldest and largest Practical Electrical School—AND YOU DON'T START PAYING YOUR TUITION UNTIL 2 MONTHS AFTER YOU GRADUATE! How can I do it? Because I really run no risk. The type of fellow who is ambitious enough to make a little effort to get ahead, is honest. IF YOU ARE AMBITIOUS ENOUGH TO SEND IN THE COUPON TO THIS AD, and then SPEND JUST THREE MONTHS IN LEARNING ELECTRICITY, I'LL TRUST YOU for the TUITION.

Learn By Doing In 90 Days

Lack of experience—age of advanced education—bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an airbrake—I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of them at Coyne have no more money than you have. That's why I have worked out my offers.

MANY EARN WHILE LEARNING

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses and will tell me your problems I may be able to help you as I have thousands of others. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained . . . on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, auto, switchboards, transmitting stations . . . everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting . . . full-sized . . . in full operation every day!

TRAINING

By Actual Work

No dull books, no learning charts, no shows, you get individual training . . . all real actual work with only the theory you will need. Nothing real but the . . .



Prepare for Jobs Like These
Here are a few of hundreds of positions in the electrical field. Our free employment bureau gives you a lifetime employment service.
ARMATURE EXPERT
SUBSTATION OPERATOR
AUTO ELECTRICIAN
INVENTOR
MAINTENANCE ENGINEER
SERVICE STATION OWNER
RADIO EXPERT



ture, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc. That's a glimpse of how we help to make you a master electrician, and fit you to qualify for jobs leading to the highest pay.

Jobs—Pay—Future

"Two weeks after graduation I received a splendid job. The main consideration given my application was that I was a Coyne Trained man," reports Harold Eason of Illinois. "I wish to thank your employment bureau for securing this position for me," writes Albert Yevon. "I went me out to this Company the first day and I was employed there immediately." And I could go on quoting from hundreds of letters of successful Coyne Trained Men. What they have done, you should be able to do!

Electric Refrigeration

Right now I'm teaching my big new Electric Refrigeration course at no extra cost.

GET THE FACTS

Coyne is your one greatest chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. The school is 90 years old—Coyne training is tested—proven beyond all doubts—endorsed by many large electrical concerns. You can feel just every thing at once. Just send in the coupon and let us send you the big, free Coyne book of job photographs . . . facts . . . job descriptions . . . experience. Tell us how many days between while training and how we send our graduates to the field. This does not oblige you. Be out of our . . . just mail coupon.

Get This **FREE** Book



New In Our New House

This is our new five-story modern home wherein is installed thousands of dollars' worth of electrical equipment of all kinds. Every condition residence has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

H. C. LEWIS, President
Coyne Electrical School, Dept. 45-84
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis:— Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service and your new Electric Refrigeration course, also tell me all about your "Pay After Graduation Offer."

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COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. LEWIS, President
FOUNDED 1899
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 45-84, Chicago

Swishing Swords and Smashing Fists at a

*A Complete
Novel*



HELL'S

CHAPTER I

Strange Lands

FOR five ghastly days the little band of Americans, led by Sherman Clive, soldier of fortune, had trekked into the heart of the desert. They had long since left the jungles, streams and game behind them. Even Clive did not know where they were. He believed

that they had pushed into the Sahara, but he could not be sure.

The sun was a blazing ball in the sky which burned into their brains. The sand under their feet was a furnace which scorched them through their heavy shoes.

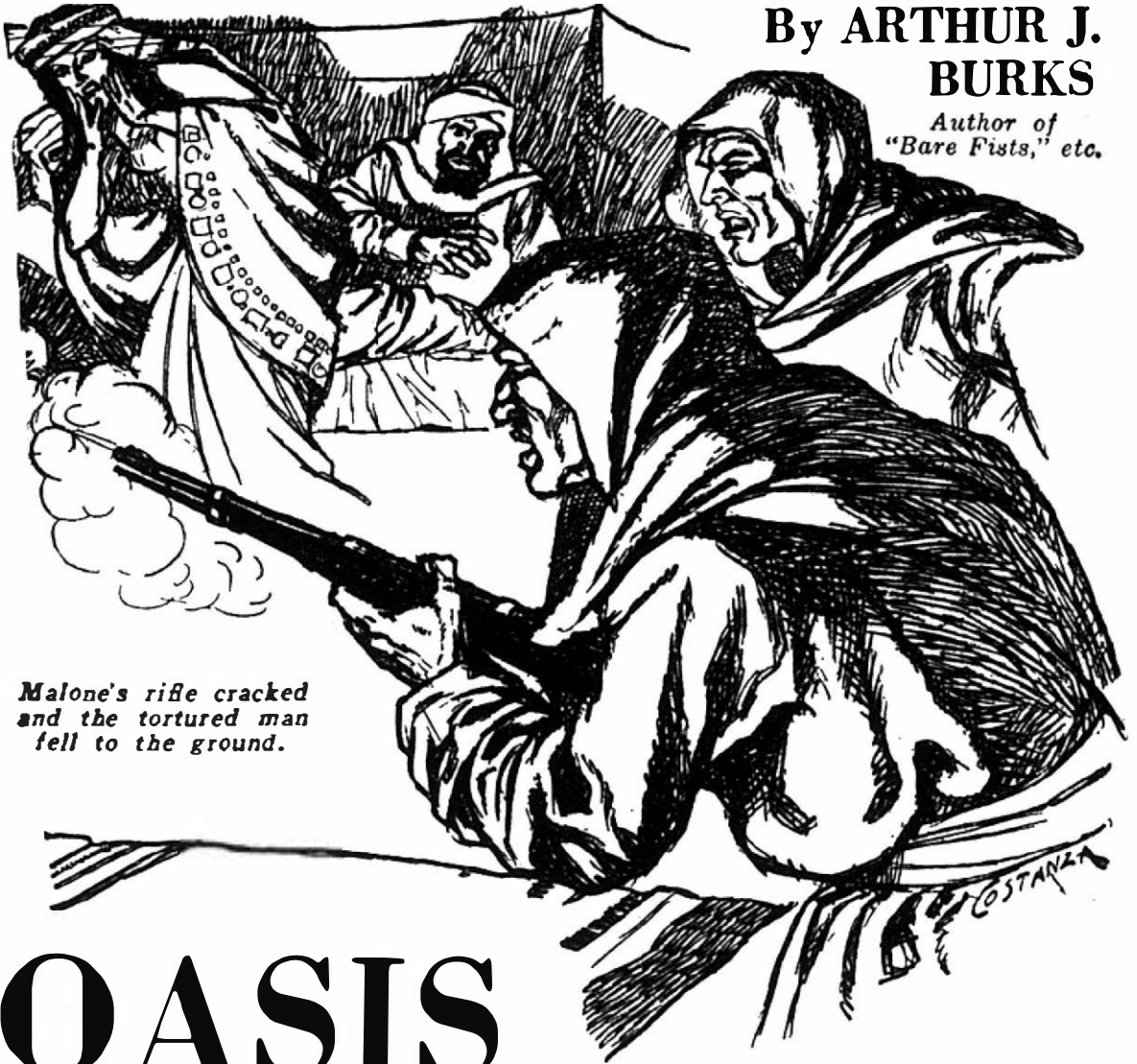
Only Sherman Clive himself, hard as nails, with the brown of many suns burned into his face, seemed human. The rest, to the number of

A Soldier of Fortune Faces Desperate

Forgotten Outpost of the African Desert!

By **ARTHUR J. BURKS**

Author of
"Bare Fists," etc.



*Malone's rifle cracked
and the tortured man
fell to the ground.*

OASIS

eight, were mere automatons who fought on through the clinging sand as though they had no will of their own, but were merely driven by that first law of mankind—self-preservation.

Here and there were scrubby shrubs which lived by some miracle in the hearts of the awful wastes. They seemed to cast no shadow because the sun was always overhead,

always at its hottest. They did not sweat because the sun had absorbed all the moisture out of them.

"Water!"

The one word came in a moan from the rearmost of the marchers. It was a mumbled word of utter agony.

Sherman Clive whirled on the speaker, would have knocked him down. Talk of water, when their canteens had long since been left

Enemies in the Land of M'Tab!



Sherman Clive

behind because they had contained not one drop among them, might drive the others mad.

But Clive paused with his hand raised. No need to think of this man driving the others mad. He was mad himself. Clive knew that his death was a matter of hours, almost, perhaps, of minutes. His heart was like stone in his breast, for during the past twenty-four hours six of his men had stumbled a last time in the sand and had risen no more. They had been left, bundles in the sand, that the winds might bury them, or the wind-driven sand rip the flesh from their bones.

Even as Clive looked into the mad eyes of the man who had spoken, the man saw the unspoken answer on the face of his commander.

There was no water. A wild scream, horrible in its meaning, broke through the heat waves which swept like hot miasmas through the shimmering awfulness.

And Nash, the man who had

screamed, took the easy way out. He took it before Clive could put forth a hand to prevent.

Nash's automatic leaped to his right hand. He swung the muzzle to his temple. The trigger finger closed convulsively. The explosion of the pistol sounded dead and flat in the heat, as though the very flame of the sun had erased it, smothered it.

And Nash spilled into the sand, rubbed his face in it, and where his blasted temple touched the hot surface of the desert, there was a pool of crimson.

None could have guessed what the effect of the suicide of Nash would have done to the men if at that moment another shout hadn't broken out from one of the others—Silas Mar-daut.

"Look! Trees!" he cried.

Sherman Clive's bleared grey eyes stared into the shimmering haze ahead, where the horizon was the top of a stove blotting out whatever vast world might lie beyond the curve of the earth. Was this a mirage? He believed it was. It was difficult to figure depressions here, difficult to figure anything—except that heat blistered them, and thirst drove them mad.

BUT there was, he felt certain, a marching host of palm trees dead ahead. They had come swimming out of the haze the very moment Nash had blown half the top of his head off.

Had he waited a few seconds more, he might have lived on.

But later Clive was to envy the man who had taken the threads of destiny into his own fingers.

For the trees were real. They were only two miles ahead. And soon Clive understood why he hadn't seen them before. The little party had topped a rise—level though the snowy waste of sand had seemed

a moment before—and were looking down into a valley of sand, to a grim, hot oasis.

The tops of the palms bowed and bent in a breeze they could not feel, as though the winds had hidden in the valley from the heat, as the trees had hidden.

The valley was not a valley, actually, but a big depression in the heart of the sands.

IT was too good to be true. So clear was the air now, that they moved closer to the oasis. They could see figures moving among the dunes, among the trees.

And there were houses! They were as gaunt and grim as the desert itself. They seemed, as they materialized out of the sand, like hummocks of grey stone wrought from the sand itself. They were like fortresses.

Clive had a qualm of doubt as he thought of them as fortresses. There was something antagonistic about them, even now.

But trees meant water, and houses meant food. And they would die without them!

Each of the eight men carried rifles and knapsacks. The knapsacks were heavy because each one of them was loaded with gold and precious jewels. For four days, the last one waterless and foodless, they had marched into the wastes with enough loot to have lived in comfort for many years, and yet they were dying because they could not feed themselves.

It was a grim, ironic touch.

They had found the gold and jewels buried in lost mines of Ophir far back in the mountains. Now they had been trekking over the desert for five days, and their food and water had gradually diminished until their supply had become completely exhausted.

It was small wonder that some of



Gloria Drake

the men had almost gone mad. Yet the gold and precious stones had saved their lives so far, for it had kept them going with dreams of what it would buy for them once they reached civilization.

NATIVES had driven them out of the mountains, into the desert. A trail of blood stretched away behind them. The knapsacks of those who had fallen had not been emptied, but had been left on their lifeless scorched bodies—as though to buy passage into the Hereafter. The others had no need of this surplus wealth and those loaded knapsacks would only prove to be an added burden.

"We'll buy the place with gold," Clive told himself, as he headed down into the lost oasis, "if they won't feed us, give us water, and show us a place to sleep!"

Out of the waving palms came a strange sound. The little band stopped to listen to it. They panted like spent runners, the tips of their



A M'Tabite

tongues protruding from their blackened, cracked lips. The sound they heard was a blaring blast from some strange trumpet. Clive had heard it before, several times in his life, among the lost tribes of Africa's interior.

It was like a trumpet of a ram's horn.

It made one think of long-haired patriarchs.

NOW it was a warning. It called a tribe together, to take counsel against the newcomers. It was a blast of menace, for Clive could see men running. There were eyes in the houses which he knew to be doors. And as the trumpet sounded its strange and eerie message across the hot sands, the eyes closed. The doors had been slammed. He knew they had been bolted from inside, that the houses had indeed become fortresses.

And then—utter silence, relieved only by the whispering of a rising wind across the sand, wind which

lifted the sand's surface in little scurrying, lacy mantles of silt which stung the nostrils, blurred the eyes, and whispered into the ears of terror to come. In an hour the desert would be a raging Hell of flying sand in which nothing could live. The little band had reached the oasis just in time.

"Unslung your rifles!" ordered Clive hoarsely. "I don't know what we're running into. They don't seem to like us."

Then he deployed his seven remaining men, eight including himself, and ordered the advance. His men were like figures on some strange mad frieze as they moved down the whispering slope into the oasis.

THE oasis grew as they advanced. Its extent was far greater than it had seemed to be at first. Trees seemed to rise out of folds in the depression floor.

Houses materialized out of other houses, as though some had been hiding behind others.

And then, across the waste, came the thin barking of a rifle. But before the sound had reached them, Orra Rubin, the hardest of Clive's followers, had plunged, rubber-legged, into the sand, burying his face in it as Nash had done.

His skull was a gory mess—and Clive knew that he was dealing with perfect marksmen. What was he to do?

If he retreated, his men would die in the sand. If he went on, they would be sniped off one by one by these people who didn't bother to ask why they came.

He came to a swift decision and spoke tersely:

"Scatter as you advance. Run a zigzag course. Fire from the hip as you go. Maybe it'll make them keep their heads down until we can reach some sort of shelter."

Even as he spoke, Sherman Clive ducked.

He had caught the glint of the sun on a rifle barrel. He ducked just in time.

He heard a bullet crack as it sped past his ears. Had he not moved he would certainly have died as did the others.

Now the little band was running. Men that were half dead on their feet, and nearly insane from lack of water and food, were forcing themselves to make their bodies move because life depended on their running. And the thin crackling of rifles spat across the narrowing waste between the band and the hidden oasis.

Clive looked back. The horizon had crept down close to the sand so that he could not see how deep the depression was by the height of the sand walls they were descending. No wonder this place was hidden from the world. Men might hunt for it, even in airplanes, for days and weeks on end, and never find it.

He had heard of lost oases of the desert such as this. Places inhabited by warlike tribesmen who guarded their secret dwellings from the eyes of the world. To approach within miles was dangerous, for usually the fierce tribes dealt swiftly and ruthlessly with strangers. Yet secretly these people retained their contacts with the outside world.

OFTEN camel caravans trekked across the Sahara carrying food and supplies for an unnamed destination, finally to vanish. Only the tall dark-faced men with such caravans knew that they would eventually reach a lost oasis.

Luck was with Clive and his men that they had found this lost oasis, but whether they could get what they wanted there, namely water, depended entirely upon themselves. It was a mad thing they tried, but



Clark Malone

it would have been madder not to have dared it.

MARK JONAS went down the next moment with a slug in his throat. Clive tried to analyze the make of the enemy rifles by the sound. He decided that they were Mannlichers, savage weapons which would knock a man down at an unbelievable range. He gritted his teeth, shouted again to his men to zigzag. He refused to look at Jonas, and the spurting crimson which gushed from his throat.

Bullets came thick and fast now. The rifles of the six who still lived to charge, grew hotter under their hands, though they were already like the tops of stoves from the blasting heat of the sun.

They gained the first of the trees, under which rose the stone ramparts of a well. They gathered behind the rampart of stone. Clive lifted his head to peer in. Even as he did so, a slab of stone slid out the side of the well, several fell down, and shut

out his view of the life-saving water that he had glimpsed far below. And for a moment he almost went mad.

CHAPTER II

Grim M'Tab



HERE was water, almost within reach, yet it might as well have been as far away as the moon. Clive understood the reason for the slab of stone. At

times, often several times weekly, the air became so filled with flying sand, as the wind whipped savagely across the wastes, that oases became mere spots of color through the murk, and wells were filled with sand as though they were containers for the flying sand. This, then, was the answer of the people of this grim town to the sands of the desert.

They closed the top parts of their wells, and after the sandstorms had passed, all they had to do was remove the sand from inside the well tops.

"That means," said Clive to himself, "that there are passageways below ground by which the natives reach the wells during the storms. What fortresses these houses are!"

He stared away to the grim fronts of the houses. A rifle cracked. Stone dust, acrid as gunpowder in his nostrils, splashed in his face from the rock rampart, where the bullet had struck. It went whining off into the desert. Clive sat back. He stared at his men.

"Keep down," he said. "I don't see any way just now to reach the houses or the water in the wells, certainly not by daylight. We'll wait for darkness, hope that there is no moon, and make a try for it."

Up spoke one, Michael Strawn.

"I'm dying of thirst," he said, his voice a harsh babble. "I'm going to

make a run for it. If I get shot it's better than another day under the burning sun. I'll get close enough, maybe, to beg for mercy for the others, for a drop of water—"

Clive had no chance to dissuade the man, for he was gone even before he had finished speaking. His words had sounded as though his voice had been a busy rasp.

Sherman Clive and his men watched the man go, running, his rifle against his hip. Bullets began to come out of the grim houses, kicking up the sand at his feet, as though the marksmen made sport of the running man. He shouted as he ran:

"Water, for the love of God!"

It was a prayer that was strangely answered. A dozen bullets must have smashed into Strawn's charging body. Clive could feel each one of them as it struck, against his own heart. He had been through much with these men. And the natives behind their fortress-like houses did not finish when they had killed the man. They sent bullets into his body, so that it jumped and jerked with them.

CLIVE caught the glint of a rifle barrel, spotted a loophole high up on one of the buildings. He had never aimed faster in his life, but had never been more careful with his aiming. He knew that his bullet sped through that tiny hole, a shot he could not have made in other circumstances.

Two feet of a rifle barrel suddenly shot through the hole. The muzzle of the piece tipped upward, as though the man at its other end had released his grip on the heavy stock, and its weight had pressed the butt downward. A thin cheer rose from the five men left with Clive.

It had been a good shot.

Now there came a sortie. A score of men in white garments which made them look like women, save

Instantly the white men hurled themselves at the knees of the enemy



that their faces were bearded blackly, came out of a thin alley between two houses, spreading out as they came. Their rifles, at their hips, spoke savagely. Their bullets smashed against the rampart of the well.

"Aim carefully," said Sherman Clive, his grey eyes narrowed intently. "Make each shot count."

The rifles of the beleaguered spoke. Four men crashed whitely into the sand, seemed to mingle with it, and lay still. The others came on. The rifles spoke again. Four more went down. The others yelled savage defiance, turned and ran. Calmly, Clive drove a bullet into one just as he would have turned a corner and vanished.

It was a good shot, too. The man

fell backward, hurling his rifle over his head, and his torso showed from around the corner of a building. His black beard moved in the wind which crept over the wastes and bowled down into the sandy depression.

"They won't," said Clive, "try that again soon."

"Think not?" said short, stumpy Clark Malone, bravest of those who were left with Clive. "They have plenty, and with each charge, though they lose five men, they kill one of

us. In five charges they will have us all."

Clive was thoughtful for a moment.

"I'll ask for a parley," he said at last.

He took a dirty handkerchief from his pocket, lifted it above the well. Firing ceased. Someone in authority had seen the signal. There was a long hush, pregnant with suspense. Then a door was opened.

Malone flung up his rifle, cuddling the stock against his cheek. Clive pushed the rifle aside. "Don't," he said. It's the emissary."

The white-garbed man came stalking proudly across the sand, straight for the well. He carried a white cloth on a stick. He was immune to bullets as long as he carried it. Clive watched him come, his eyes alight for treachery, roaming over the faces of the walls. He wouldn't rise to meet the messenger. A bullet would cut him down, of that he was sure.

The man circled the rampart, squatted among them. His black eyes took note of their number and condition. Clive addressed him in Arabic.

"What hospitality is this?" he demanded. "We come out of the desert asking for water, and are met with bullets. We can buy what we wish. Sell to us and we shall go on our way."

"You have money?"

CLIVE hesitated. If he showed his hand, they might never allow him to buy anything. Why should they, when all they had to do was slay and take what they wished? Then he shrugged. What good was all this wealth if they died?

He opened the top of his own knapsack. It was crammed with implements of pure gold, with precious stones spilling out of the tops of vases. The man licked his lips.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"From storehouses of wealth no man has ever, before us, been able to penetrate—from the lost mines of Ophir. It is worth a fabulous amount in the marts of the world. This is what is left of my band, which I gathered together in Cairo for the trek to Ophir. See, we have riches enough to purchase all that you have in—what is the name of this place?"

"Know you not that this is M'Tab?"

"I KNOW of no such place. I have heard of a lost oasis peopled by the descendants of fanatical thieves of centuries ago, driven into the desert from Alexandria. Perhaps they founded M'Tab? I did not know of it. I did not seek this place, but only water, and food—"

"And you did not come to rescue the daughter of Cory Drake?"

Clive's mouth hung open. The color drained out of his cheeks. His eyes were wide with horror. His hands clenched suddenly, until the nails bit into his palms.

"What did you say? The daughter of Cory Drake? Is her given name Gloria?" Clive felt that it was all part of a mad dream. To even hear the name of Cory Drake here was impossible—and as for the girl—that just couldn't be. And yet he had to know.

"Is her name Gloria?" he croaked again.

The face of the M'Tabite became suddenly a mask of cunning. His red lips writhed into a smile.

"You know of her, then? How can you know of her and not come to her rescue if you be of her race?"

Clive's face hardened.

"I know nothing of her," he said grimly. "But I have seen the name in the papers of my country. I did not know she was here. I come with my men merely for water. Go and tell the one who sent you that we have gold enough to purchase all

we need—that we will forget those whom he has slain, and go on about our business, because we have slain enough to balance the account.”

The man grinned. His black eyes darted from knapsack to knapsack. As he stared at each one, and saw how tightly filled it was, his eyes grew brighter still, and he licked his lips each time. Then he grasped his flag of truce and went stalking back over the sand to the nearest door, the one by which he had come forth to speak with them.

For many moments after he had vanished there came no sound from the grim houses of M'Tab. The dying men held their breaths, awaiting the decisions of the elders of M'Tab. The answer, when it came, was what Sherman Clive had expected.

The parley had merely helped to pass a little time. Bullets came out of many portholes again, to whang against the stones and go ricocheting off into space. The little band was panting, its tongues still hanging out. Their eyes were red rimmed and bleary.

“For God's sake, Clive,” said Malone, “let's charge and get it over with. I can't stand much more. I can't wait until darkness, when we won't have much more chance of reaching the houses. And even if we do, how are we to enter? If they can close their wells, they can close their houses, too, so that not even a battering ram could get past them.”

CLIVE'S voice was hoarse and harsh as he answered. “Wait!”

“I'm going to make a try,” Malone persisted.

“Try,” whispered Clive, “and I'll shoot you down with my own hand!”

Malone cursed and sat back. The others sprawled on the sand. The wind was not high, but in a few minutes it had covered their reclining bodies with a thin layer of dust. In two days it would bury them from

sight, as many people had been buried beneath the desert sands.

The sun crawled into the afternoon sky, and was as brazen and cruel as ever. Clive was thinking. Some of his men had their eyes closed, as though they hoped thus to await the passing of time with greater comfort.

Clive resolved to make another try at the well. Now and again overhead passing bullets served as simple warnings to the suffering ones to keep their heads down. Clive wondered if he could get into the well curb without being hit.

ON the point of trying it, he heard a thumping sound, of rock against rock. It came out of the well!

With a leap, regardless of consequences, Clive rose, plunged into the circular cup of rock, landing on the flat slab which was just below the normal level of the land about the well. His feet told him that the rock was several inches thick, would have held many times his weight. He removed his pistol, tapped on the rock with its muzzle.

The thumping of rock against rock, below, ceased at the sound—and a voice that was surprisingly clear came up, around the rock.

“Who are you?”

It was a voice he would never forget this side of the grave! It was the voice he loved, the voice of the woman whose father's refusal to accept him had sent him, desperate, on the mission to Ophir—the voice of Gloria Drake!

Gloria's voice—and yet he could not believe it. It was some weird trick of the imagination. Even since he had talked to the messenger from the M'Tabite he had refused to believe that their holding this girl of all girls in the world was actually possible. It just could not be!

Still, he had recognized the voice, that voice that he knew better than

all others. But how could Gloria Drake be here in this lost oasis far out in the desert?

"Gloria!" he shouted half-fearfully. "Gloria Drake!"

"Yes—that's my name," came back across the rock. "Who are you?"

"Sherman Clive!" he shouted, his voice cracking because he had been so long without water. "It's Sherman, Gloria!"

"Oh, thank God!" she called.

CHAPTER III

Devil and the Deep



IN that instant Sherman Clive forgot all that had happened to him since this girl's father, a snobbish, ambitious governor of a great state, had told him he didn't amount to much, certainly not enough to marry his daughter, whose social position must be considered. Clive didn't know that he blamed the governor, for it was whispered in political circles that he was in line for the Presidency of the United States, and men of such importance must take thought for the future of their children.

But why was she here?

He shouted down to her, asking the question.

"I ran away," she replied. "I couldn't stand the man father wanted me to marry, so I booked passage on a world cruise. When the ship reached Algiers I came ashore with some of the party. A guide took us to a lonely spot on the outskirts of the city. They must have learned that I was the daughter of a rich man—for I became separated from the others—then kidnaped and brought here by these M'Tabites, who had been disguised as Tauregs."

So! Thus had Gloria's flight to freedom ended. But what a strange

way to encounter him, here in this land the world had forgotten for centuries—this land which the world fed without knowing that it did.

And here and now he and Gloria were as far apart as the width of a desert—though three inches of stone were all that separated them—as far apart as the distance between the cradle and the grave.

"What have they done to you?" Clive shouted down at her.

"Nothing. I have the run of the houses, because they don't believe I'm strong enough to escape across the desert. But, Sherm—"

"Yes," he called, when she seemed hesitant to continue.

"If my father does not answer immediately, if there is any delay beyond a certain date they have set, I am to be given to the Ouled Nails—"

His heart thudded into his boots. Well he knew the fate of a woman cast among the Ouled Nails, that queer sect of women which lived somewhere outside the gates of M'Tab. If any Ouled Nail pleased any guest of the M'Tabs, that guest might buy her out of M'Tab as a slave—and then she would vanish off the face of the earth.

His heart was suddenly cold in his breast. He sat back against the rocky curb.

BULLETS smashed across the well-top in a steady stream. The M'Tabites had seen him dive into the well, but not soon enough to splatter him with bullets. But when he tried to get out again—!

The thickness of the curb separated him from his men. He didn't know what they would do without his counsel. They were already madmen. With his loss they might all race into the storm of bullets and die.

He could hear them swearing hoarsely. He had a duty to them. He had a duty to the girl whose

voice had come out of the pit to him.

He was separated from both, from one by bullets, from the other by the stone lid of the well.

Then he heard a scream come shrilling out of the pit.

"Sherm! Sherm! Get out! They've caught me. You'll be dropped into the well!"

Her voice died away. Brutal laughter, coming from below, almost drove him mad with anxiety. It sounded, as they dragged her away, as though they were raining blows upon her. His teeth grated savagely as he realized his helplessness.

And then—

The stone under him began slowly to move! It slid back into the niche from which it had first slipped out to cover the well, and beneath him, far down, he could see the black surface of the precious water, like a winking eye of ebony. It was far, far down.

The laughter showed him the desperation of his situation. If he remained where he was until the rock slid entirely into its niche, he would fall into the well. The depth was enough to kill him unless he fell straight, without touching the sides. But what then? He would die in the water. He would have enough of water, but it was too much to hope that the M'Tabites would spare him.

HE thought of grasping the edge of the stone and swinging himself down under it, into the passage he knew must lead from the houses to the well. But they would be thinking of that—and their bullets would riddle his body as he swung, or he would swing against the myriad blades of their knives.

Bullets crackled over his head with added intensity. The enemy knew, of course, that if he chanced a dive out of the well pit, their bullets would get him; that if he stayed

where he was he would die in the well, by bullets, or by the knife.

The rock ledge on which he crouched was narrower now. They were moving it with torturing slowness. They appreciated the situation in which he had placed himself. And how did Gloria feel, since she must surely know that but for her signals to him he would never have considered making himself a prisoner in the well pit?

THE situation was grim enough for anyone—to say nothing of a man already half dead from lack of water. The odor of water came up to him now, and his whole soul cried out for it. Why not, he asked himself, drop into the well? At least he would have water. Let death come afterward, and he would meet it happily. And, but for his men, he might have done just that. But he couldn't leave his men—and he couldn't desert Gloria Drake.

What would Governor Drake do? The stern old man would probably contact someone in Cairo or Alexandria, demanding investigations, punitive expeditions. What if he refused to pay ransom, or doubted the authenticity of the demand and delayed too long? Clive knew very well what that would mean—and several times during his sojourn in this land he had heard of the Ouled Nails—for there were Ouled Nails among other tribes which the world knew.

There were other things about them he knew. They were loyal to their masters. Often those masters gave them prisoners to be tortured. They were women who knew how to use the blades of knives under men's fingernails, how to work the greatest agony with fire, how to mutilate men until they cried aloud to their gods for death to relieve them of their suffering.

More and more he thought of the horror of the Ouled Nails—and the

stone ledge now was scarcely wide enough for him to stand on, his head bent over so that it wouldn't show above the well curb. Bullets were still clearing the top of the curb, a literal roof of them, each one potent enough to smash off the top of a man's head. Now and again one hit the side of the curb opposite where Clive stood, and ricocheted down into the well, caroming back and forth from side to side. If one of those bullets ever hit him it would rip him apart.

And now the M'Tabites' sense of cruelty gave them a new thought, something else by which to torture him. Bullets came out of the passage, slanting upward at an angle, to strike against the side of the well across from him, up through the aperture between the edge of the slab of stone and the wall of the well.

"They're bound to get me," he told himself, for their intention was all too plain. "I've got to take a chance. There isn't any chance to go down. I've got, somehow, to go up!"

NOW the ledge of stone was just wide enough for his feet. Soon his toes would project over it, and he would then be a direct target for their bullets. And the ricochets from the opposite side of the well were coming all too close. One splattered piece of lead fell between his feet. He had to spread his toes apart, heels together, to keep them from showing—and becoming targets for bullets. He could no longer lean over to keep his head from showing above the curb, for he would over-balance and go plummeting down to the far water below.

"I'll be hanged if I'll let them have the last laugh," he assured himself.

But there was no cessation in the firing. Something had to be done in the next few seconds. The stone ledge moved again. It moved just a

little. The M'Tabites were toying with him as a cat plays with a mouse. They were enjoying his desperation. All the cards were in their hands. Soon there would be so little left of the ledge that he would not be able to leap from it.

But to leap—and be struck by a score of bullets—what would happen to Gloria then?

HE closed his eyes. He almost prayed, not for himself, but for his men, and for the woman who was prisoner of the M'Tabites, somewhere among their well-tunnels and their houses which were grim and terrible fortresses. Even as he prayed he fancied he could hear, over beyond the houses of M'Tab the brittle laughter of the Ouled Nails. In fancy he could see knives tucked in their gaudy dresses, awaiting their grim tasks of torture for prisoners taken alive.

Sherman Clive stooped as far as he dared. His eyes now were fixed on the opposite side of the rampart. He straightened. He put all his waning strength into the leap. He felt bullets snick through his garments. He felt a bullet strike the heel of one of his heavy boots. It almost numbed his foot. But he was curling over the edge of the well. Bullets seemed to be tearing past him to the left, to the right, and over him. It seemed incredible that some did not strike him—for a dozen at least had gone through his clothing.

But he struck the sand, rolled to a sitting position, and stared stupidly at his men. They were sprawled as he had left them. Their plight, with their black tongues and cracked lips, their heat-crazed eyes, reminded him of his own torture for lack of water.

"Quickly," he said, "all your knapsack straps. Fasten them together. Give me the largest knapsack!"

They worked savagely, with fingers which trembled as with ague. Soon

he had a strap a hundred feet long. Unloosed knapsacks spilled some of their treasures in the sand, so that it glistened in the sun. Clive hurled the one knapsack over the curb, paid out the strap at top speed. He felt the knapsack strike the water, far below.

He raised and lowered it twice—then all hands grasped the strap, pulled lustily, upwards. Clive held his breath. The knapsack, which wouldn't hold water, would hold enough moisture to wet the lips of them all, give them a new lease on life.

Then he heard the slab of stone slide again into place. The strap had caught. He knew that the slab had closed, imprisoning the life-giving knapsack below it—as inaccessible as the water in the well.

CHAPTER IV

The Ouled Nails



BUT there was moisture in some of the strap which had been dragged over the lip of the well. Clive felt pity for his men as they fell upon the strap as

though they were starving dogs, in search of a bone. They licked at it with dry tongues. They moaned over the drops of moisture which clung to it.

And out of the pit came the laughter of the M'Tabites, as though they had been able to see everything. What a place of horror was M'Tab!

Clive was beginning to think that it would have been better for them all, had they died without ever seeing the ghastly place—out in the desert. But then, what would have happened to Gloria Drake? Of course, had he died before reaching M'Tab, he would never have known that she had come to Africa, stum-

bled by chance into M'Tab, to a strange meeting with the one man who, of all the world, wanted most to see her—but never in such ghastly surroundings as this!

THE blistering sun was now sinking behind the mountain of sand to the west. That mountain's shadow was crawling like some evil black monster out across the lost oasis, as though it moved forward to spring upon the unfortunate ones at the well.

Clive watched it come. When darkness settled finally over M'Tab they must make their bid for safety.

The M'Tabites knew what they were planning. They could not have helped it. They made no more sorties, did not ask for parleys, but they kept bullets humming over and past the position of Clive and his men, bidding them keep their heads down. For five hours, at least, Clive had not answered their shots, nor had he permitted his men to do so.

The shadow came closer. The sun had left a blazing shimmer of light at the crest of the mountainous dune. And then, in a flash, as an electric light is snicked off, day had vanished and night had settled over the desert, had swallowed up M'Tab.

"It will happen soon," said Clive.

The others stirred, answered him, each in his fashion. One swore softly at length, for ten minutes, without repeating himself. One prayed. Another laughed immoderately. Clive clapped his hand over the mouth of this one, to still his laughter. In the clear air his laughter would travel far. They had not shown themselves, or fired their rifles, for there was a bare possibility that the M'Tabites thought them dead.

"They're coming," said Malone. "Look, see their white clothing against the sand. They're crawling out to us."

With their stomachs against the

sand Clive's men watched the approach of the scouting party. There were seven in the party, they noticed. They crawled through the sand like so many snakes, blending with it so perfectly that only the keen eyes of Malone had been able to pick them out—and they were halfway to the well before even Malone had seen them.

Clive, with his heart in his mouth, watched them come.

When they were close, he whispered to his men.

"Sprawl out, pretend to be dead. When they look down at us, each of you pick your man and down him!"

It seemed a forlorn hope. They watched their attackers come on. Now and again the M'Tabites paused, listening. They lifted their heads, but kept their faces down to hide their swart cheeks and black beards. Then they came on. No bullets had been fired. So tense were those who waited, they had forgotten, almost, their suffering. On came the M'Tabites.

Now one of them dared greatly—he rose to his feet. His left hand grasped a rifle. With his right hand he beckoned to the others, when, after a proper interval, no shots came from behind the well. The seven rose. Still Clive and his men did not fire. The seven came on.

THE white men sprawled out, but Clive could feel them, tense in every muscle as they waited for the storm to break.

"Remember," he whispered, "get their throats first, before they can possibly cry out. And you mustn't miss. Use your knives. Stab to the heart with everything you've got. We should get three in the first scrimmage. Then drag the others down and kill them behind the curb. Don't dare miss!"

Clive himself sprawled on his back. The first of the M'Tabites stood and

looked down at them. He prodded Malone with the butt of his rifle, then kicked him in the side. And Malone grunted with the pain! Instantly the white men hurled themselves at the knees of the enemy. Knives rose and fell.

Three figures, four, sprawled out in the sand. Then the others were dragged down before even one could cry out—and savage, ruthless hands darted to their throats. It was all over in a moment.

"**N**OW," said Clive hoarsely, "their burnouses, or whatever those white clothes are. Wrap 'em around you, even to your heads, but keep your rifles in your hands. They may notice that only six of us come from behind the well, when there were seven who came around it."

Quickly the desperate men complied.

"Now," said Clive, "rise and shine. We'll march straight for the nearest building, understand? They may suspect us, but they won't fire on us for fear they may be wrong. Ready?"

The answers, eager, hopeful, were in the affirmative. The six men rose from behind the well.

"Don't stagger," said Clive, "or they'll be sure to know. And those of us who don't speak Arabic will have to keep our mouths shut should they challenge us."

Clive started across the sand toward the nearest building as he spoke. No bullets were fired at them, but the walls of the houses were like frowning faces in the dim moonlight—moonlight which was dim only because a night wind had sprinkled the sky above the oasis with fine sand. The six marched straight across.

They were halfway to the first house, which Clive speculated must surely be the house connecting with the well behind whose curb they had spent the most terrible hours of their lives—when a thin cry, as of a man

in mortal terror, rose from somewhere beyond the houses. Clive's men swore, then choked their words short. Malone moved close against Clive.

"It's the Ouled Nails," he whispered. "They're torturing somebody."

Clive stiffened. There had been something familiar in the scream of the unknown. Muffled of voice, as though the man had screamed through clenched teeth, Clive had been almost sure of the one word that had seemed intelligible in the scream:

"God!"

The M'Tabites might believe in God, but they did not call Him by that Name. And now came another sound—the strange purling sound of tired camels, and Clive knew that some caravan or other had come into M'Tab from beyond the houses. He spoke softly to Malone.

"We'll circle the building, unless we're fired on," he said. "I want to know what that is—and the Ouled Nails must have food and water. With food and drink we can go ahead, do anything."

They were not challenged, though they could feel hostile, suspicious eyes probing through them, following their every movement. They reached the building. Clive sighed with relief.

IT was doubtful if the loopholes in the buildings were such that men inside could fire directly down at them. Without being furtive, they kept close to the grim grey walls, reached the alley out of which, that midday, the sortie had come and been driven back. Into the alley they stepped, marching toward a rectangle of light at the other end.

Then they understood something that had perplexed them before. They had been puzzled over the fact that M'Tab ordinarily a walled city, had given them no walls to scale. And now the reason became apparent.

The wall on the side by which

they had approached M'Tab was imbedded in the sand. The Ouled Nails, Clive reflected as he tried to recall what he knew of them, were kept outside the walls. And now he could hear laughter, cruel, diabolic laughter, beyond the walls ahead.

THE six strode to that wall, unchallenged. They had a break. For only the men in the house directly opposite the well had stayed awake to keep an eye on them. The rest of M'Tab had retired to its rest. They looked over the wall—and into a tent of pagans!

In one vast tent which faced M'Tab, around a fire, were a dozen women. They wore spangles on their ankles and wrists, strange pieces of cloth about their heads. They were brown of skin—girls who would have been beautiful, perhaps, in other surroundings. But now they were imps of Satan, if ever the imps of Satan were women.

For after the manner of their kind they were entertaining M'Tabites who must have reached the city on the half-dozen camels which purred in the shadows beyond the tent.

And what a mode of entertainment! Bound, with his back to the center pole of the tent, was a gaunt white man, his body bare to the waist. Around him, laughing their brittle laughter, in which a dozen squatting M'Tabites joined, swayed the Ouled Nails. One carried a shining dagger in her hand. One carried a burning brand from the fire.

The one with the dagger stepped in. The man screamed as the point of the weapon touched the left side of his abdomen, slid across to the right. And down from the wound in his stomach, in plain view of Clive and his men, dropped the red of his life blood!

The Ouled Nails laughed. The M'Tabites laughed. Certainly this was a place of horror. M'Tabites in

the town did not even lose sleep when some prisoner was tortured, did not even mind his screams! Only these dozen who had come from outside, and sought to forget their fatigue by watching a stranger put to the torture.

And now the girl with the burning brand stepped up to the man. She thrust her hand forward—held the flaming torch close under his eyes. His head went back, cracking audibly against the pole.

And then, right beside Clive, a rifle cracked. He whirled on Malone.

"Malone," he said, "you don't shoot women, even that kind!"

"I know," said Malone quietly. "I merely shot the torch out of her hand. It is lucky for the man being tortured that he was in the line of fire! What man would want to live without eyes, even if he could have lived had we been able to rescue him? And now, I suppose, we are in for it!"

"I suppose," said Clive grimly, "we are!"

Suddenly, with shouts of surprise and anger, the men in the tents, the Ouled Nails, and the M'Tabites in the silent-walled town, came to life in the night—filling the darkness with a bedlam of sound dominated by the strange obscene *burblings* of the evil-tempered camels.

CHAPTER V

Every Man for Himself



SHERMAN CLIVE spoke quickly to his men.

"It's every man for himself. They'll scatter, hunting us. Their doors will be open. Get into the

first houses you can. Keep away from lights. Three hours from now we'll meet behind the tent of the Ouled Nails. Find some way to reach the

water in the wells. Get food wherever you can. Kill only to save your lives. Do the best you can for yourselves. Scatter now!"

His men vanished like white wraiths into the darkness which possessed M'Tab. Clive felt very much alone. He slid easily over the wall. In all this confusion of noise and movement he had no fear that he would be picked out immediately. He carried his rifle under his bur-noose, straight up and down against his right leg, so that its shape would not show against the cloth.

HE was curious to see what the Ouled Nails had done to the white man Malone had mercifully slain. He was a little sorry that the Ouled Nails directly responsible had not been killed. But they merely did what they were supposed to do. They could not be blamed for acting as they did.

His men were gone. Their fate now was in the lap of the gods. His feet slogged through the sand. He had selected the garments of a tall man, so that the flowing robe hid his foreign boots. His main task, after making sure of the fate of the white man who had undergone torture, was to find Gloria Drake.

His heart was heavy. The girl was somewhere among the grim houses of M'Tab. And by tomorrow, or the next day at the very latest, news would come from Drake, in answer to the demand for ransom. Clive thought he knew what it would be. Drake, would never be able to realize the plight his daughter was in. He would think it some situation out of a story book.

And the fate of Gloria would be sealed.

White robed figures were gathering about the tent of the Ouled Nails, whose flap had been lowered. But there was light against the cloth of the tent still—and even as he

noted this the light went out. Out of the tent came the startled screams of the Ouled Nails. If a man were to be lost among them now his tortures would be ghastly.

Clive hurried away from the tent and ducked into the shadows. It was easy, so far, but he knew that a glimpse of his foreign boots, or a sight of his white face, would betray him to the M'Tabites and the dreadful ministrations of the Ouled Nails.

He strode back toward M'Tab. Many of the strange people passed him. They didn't notice him, though one spoke, asking him a question. But he did not have to answer, for the man's fellows bore him along in their midst so that he could not wait—and to the man the whole thing seemed natural enough.

"Now for the shack where Gloria is," thought Clive.

He traveled down the alley by which they had reached the wall, the alley from which the sortie had come this morning—and stepped out into the open just as the moon shone brightly upon M'Tab. Again luck was with him, for the whole open space was empty of a living soul. Nowhere could he see a figure that looked even remotely like one of his own men.

THE door of the house in which he knew he had killed one man was open. He made for it. He stepped inside as though the place belonged to him. Far back in the building he saw a light surrounded only by women. He knew what that meant. No M'Tabite man must ever look upon the face of another man's wife. If he were caught watching them now he would be torn limb from limb.

He ducked into the shadows, circling the wall of the room, toward the spot where he knew there must be a way leading to the well-tunnel. He had not been heard. The M'Ta-

bite women were clucking among themselves like startled chickens. But he knew the power of these women for destruction. They would tear him apart if they discovered him.

Now he came to a door. It was set in the face of the wall at an angle, the top tilted back into the wall. Clive studied it. The tunnel must lead downward at an angle. He fumbled for the lock of the door. It was an iron hasp. He found it, tried to ease it open without making a noise.

HE managed the lock, but the door squeaked audibly when he swung it back. Startled exclamations came from the women. He could hear them running toward the source of the sound, which must be as familiar to them as the sound of the voices of their own families. He entered quickly, knowing that he jeopardized his life, for when they saw the swinging hasp they would know that someone was in the tunnel.

But inside, in total pitch darkness, he hurled himself forward. He estimated the distance, knowing he might step into the well before he discovered exactly where it was. Then, when he knew he had but a few feet to go, he dropped to his knees and inched forward, feeling his way with his hands. Then he was aware that his rifle was missing.

Behind him sounded the chattering of the women, who appeared to be in mad pursuit. Now his fingers touched the edge of the well. He fumbled around him. He found a bucket, to which a rope was attached. He lowered it swiftly over the side.

"I'll drink with all their fingers at my throat if I have to," he declared to himself grimly. "But drink I will!"

The rope paid out. He glanced upward, to see that the slab of stone had been slid back, that the way out was open. But he didn't know where to find the mechanism which worked

it. Perhaps the women would show him that.

The bucket came out of the well with savage, vicious jerks. The women were very close now.

He had the bucket in his hands. He darted deeper into the tunnel, pressed himself hard against its side, hoping that the women would pass him, unnoticed, for the tunnel was wide enough for four men to march along it abreast. He tilted the bucket and drank—and the water was like the nectar of the gods! He spilled it down his neck and cried out, silently, and deep inside him, for the very joy in the water's caress. He poured the remainder into his clothing, knowing that by this time his men must also have found water.

Then he hurled the bucket into the well, so that the women would hear it clatter against the rocks and think that he was somewhere there, pulling on it.

He had to outguess them if he were not to be captured and submitted to their fury.

Now the women dashed past him, headed for the well. There were four women. They stood close together, peering into the water. A splash had sounded there. He fervently hoped they would think he had fallen in. Then he saw a skinny arm upraised, and knew that the mechanism had been touched which closed the slab of stone.

THEN he acted. He threw himself forward. He grabbed at the women with both hands, pushing them aside to keep from hurling them into the well.

The cover was closing. While the women screamed he leaped outward, over the deep well, his palms turned backward to grasp at the edge of stone. His fingers caught and held, tenaciously. With the same movement he shot his legs upward—happy that water had given him re-

newed strength—and pulled himself onto the stone just in time. In another instant it would have closed on him, trapped him.

He had made it at exactly the right moment.

He wasted no time. He hurled himself out of the well-pit, onto the sands, where the seven M'Tabites he and his men had killed lay still.

The knapsacks of the white men were scattered on the sand. The M'Tabites had run toward the fray before the tent of the Ouled Nails. They had not yet come up to see what had happened behind the well. Quickly Sherman Clive gathered up the knapsacks, a heavy load for one man, and deliberately started back toward the houses of M'Tab.

SOMETHING had to be done about his treasures. It would be maddening to see them lost to the M'Tabites. Clive was determined that this should not happen.

Back into the alley he went, and over the wall, en route to the camels. And there, among the duffel which their owners had not yet had time to store in places of safety, he hid the knapsacks whose weight had almost wrenched his arms from their sockets.

Then someone saw him and screamed. He ran back toward the wall. Bullets whined over his head, but he gave them no heed.

His eyes were lifted to the roofs of the houses.

He reached the alley untouched. There were windows in the backs and sides of the houses. He leaped into the embrasure of the first, and from that, without pausing, into the second

From this, a mighty leap brought his fingers to the roof. He pulled himself over, panting—and knew that he was in forbidden territory, the roof where only women were permitted in M'Tab.

CHAPTER VI

Gloria

FROM out of the house below him, as he stood erect on the roof, invisible to anyone below because of the narrow coping which protected the roof, came the chattering of women. They were coming up to see what was happening. The house was like a hive of bees. Clive darted into the shadow of what seemed to be a chimney, fervently hoping that it hid him from possible detection, for if it did not, he would have to take a flying leap off the place to save himself.

A broken leg might result from that—and sure capture in the end. Three women came out of an opening onto the roof, moving directly to the coping to peer down at confused M'Tab. Down there rifles were banging, men were shouting. The women watched everything, and even on the roof, where men could not see them, their faces were covered.

But Clive would have known the form of Gloria Drake, even enrobed in a burnoose. Besides, he could see the hair of the women, and quite plainly now for the moon bathed the whole desert in its soothing lemonish glow. He noted the tilt of the head of each woman, the shape of her headdress, the way she moved her body, her hands. Gloria was not among these, nor had he seen her among the women in the room from where he had escaped into the tunnel.

He wondered for a moment what had happened to his men. He had heard no shouts in English. He was certain that they would have cried out warnings to their fellows if captured or fired upon. He felt he could assume that all were still free, and

that they had managed, as he had, to find water. If he could have been munching on anything resembling food now, his happiness would have been complete, for he was free to find the woman who had jeopardized her safety, perhaps even her life, to journey into the wastes.

He must look elsewhere for Gloria. The women seemed to be busy looking down into M'Tab. Clive, never taking his eyes off them, bent and removed his boots. Tomorrow, if he went into the sands, his feet would be burned to a crisp, but tonight footfalls of heavy boots might be fatal.

Now, barefooted, he ran across the roof behind the women—utterly without sound. Adjacent to this house was another roof. All roofs were masked from view by high walls across the fronts of the houses of M'Tab. There was danger of discovery from that direction. Every roof seemed to be filled with women. Clive did a mad, desperate thing. He ran along the top of the next roof. The women did not look back, for centuries their roofs had been inviolate—and they did not even conjecture that men would dare invade their ancient privacy.

CLIVE, as he ran, studied the backs of the women, seeking Gloria. The second roof was negotiated without mishap, and the third. Then—standing slightly back from the wall, over which several women were leaning, he saw her.

His lips shaped her name:

"Gloria!"

It was almost as though she had heard his whisper, for she turned as though she listened and he saw the contour of her face against the moon. There was no doubt now. He started toward her, moving like a cat. She turned, saw him. Her eyes widened. He put his finger to his lips. She covered her mouth with her hand to

keep from crying out. Then she came swiftly forward to meet him.

They clasped hands. Clive drew her into the black door by which the women had exited to the roof. There, safe for the moment, they stopped and each breathed the name of the other:

"Sherm!"

"Gloria!"

Her arms went around him, his around her.

"I've got to get you out somehow. We could escape with the camels, but I don't know how to manage them—and right at the moment I don't know where Malone is. What do you think your father will do?"

"Tell me where to get off at! He's like that, and away off in America, being captured by M'Tabites will be so unreal he may not even take it seriously. But he'll send the money if he believes the message."

"But if he does not believe the message?"

"Then, my dear Sherm, I shall die."

Convulsively he clutched her to him. Almost under his breath he said:

"NEVER, as long as I live, as long as my men live."

"That won't be long, when they begin searching," she said. "When morning comes they'll muster the men of M'Tab and count noses—and then they'll order the women to search the houses. You can guess what that will mean if any of you are found in the houses. Their women—well, men die who even see the faces of other men's women. The only other alternative is the desert—afoot, and they'd capture you before you had gone two miles. We must find another way."

"Then we're starting now. It has to be the camels."

They clasped hands, started down the steps. But they didn't get far,

for the women on the roof had missed their beautiful prisoner. Their screams went rocketing over M'Tab, and they raced to the stairs. Clive and Gloria fled into the darkness. The women came quickly behind them.

Men hammered savagely against the outer door of the place.

But the women reached them first. Clive had no defense against them. He tried to push the women back. They ripped and tore at him. A cry of despair rose from Gloria:

"GET away, dear. I'll try to meet you among the camels within an hour, somehow. If I don't, wait for me."

There was nothing else to be done. It was horrible to find her, only to lose her. The women wouldn't kill her, not until M'Tab had had an answer to its demand for ransom. But they had no scruples about men who prowled through their houses. Clive bowled them over right and left as he raced back for the steps. Two women clung to him, screaming. One hastened to the door to admit the men who sought the white fugitives.

Clive pushed the women from him, leaped up the stairs. Other women were coming down. He barged into them at full speed, brushing them aside, disregarding their wild screams, as he raced for the roof again.

Someone below was yelling at the women. He didn't understand, but he got the idea when the women vanished as if by magic from the roofs. They were being ordered to get under cover.

The moment they had done so bullets began to crash into the walls before which he sped. Clive dropped to his stomach, inched his way to the coping which served as a sort of fort, protecting himself from the bullets.

Then, the bullets ceased—and he

instantly saw the reason. Men were boiling onto the roof behind him, discharging with violence from the black door which for ages must have allowed admittance only to women. How well he knew the price for his sacrilege. He hurled himself into the thick of the M'Tabites. And, as though they knew exactly what was happening, women came crowding out again onto the other roofs. Two roofs distant he saw Gloria in the midst of the women. She was screaming something. As he fought against vicious, stabbing knives, ducked the savage, murderous blows of curved short swords, he tried to make out what she was saying. A blow struck him on the head, but he had understood her strange shout. It was:

"Jeres is the boss of M'Tab!"

She meant, of course, that he was the man with whom to deal, that he was the patriarch of the elders, the man who issued commands the others must obey. Jeres! How could Clive find him in that big place, which was so much like a catacomb, or like the cave dwellings of troglodytes? Yet find him he must, somehow force him to let them go free—give him all their treasures if need be. But why, the man would ask, accept treasures they could have merely for the taking?

HAVING seen so many of the M'Tabites, it was easy for Clive to visualize old Jeres. He *would* be old, a patriarch of the lost tribe which contacted the world in the guise of other tribes, struck in battle and vanished into the wastes—even contacted the outside world by cable and telegraph, by visiting cities in disguise—cities where Arabic was the *lingua franca* of countless tribes. Clive could see the old man, fierce of eye, hawk-like of mien, with a long grey beard to make him look more the bird of prey.

His word must be the law of

M'Tab, which must have a ruler to survive. Jeres must be a man without mercy, a fanatic in what he ordered his people to do to those who violated the isolation of M'Tab. Clive could understand the resentment of M'Tabites to everything from the outside world they appeared to have forsworn.

But Jeres, whatever he was, was a man. He must have a wife and children, know something of human kindness, of mercy and understanding.

BUT only for the benefit of his own kind—that was plainly evident! Clive could see old Jere as surely as though he had faced him and exchanged words of war with the leading Elder of M'Tab.

Jeres, then, was the enemy. The rest of M'Tab merely were his retainers.

It seemed hopeless, but that didn't deter Clive from fighting like a fiend, nor from answering Gloria in a wild shout of understanding:

"I'll find him!"

Clive grasped one of the enemy about the waist, lifted him high, hurled him straight into the faces of two who were barging in. The man's body, flying horizontal, struck them on the chest, bearing them back.

The coping of the roof caught them above the ankles. They flung their arms high. A rifle clattered to the roof. The two men went over the roof, screaming as their white-clothed bodies whirled down to the ground. And Clive hoped grimly as he picked up the rifle, that the ground under the roof would be hard enough to break their skulls—for they had fallen head downward.

Now he clubbed the rifle, hurled himself against the others. They didn't retreat. They were shouting something, and at their shouts other men were pouring onto the roof;

there were some twenty of them.

They were determined on catching him, making him a prisoner. The butt of the weapon he held crashed against cowed skull. He knew by the feel that the skull had cracked like an eggshell. The man went down and his fellows stumbled over him. They didn't seem to mind death in the least.

Death! What was it he remembered about these people? They were exceedingly superstitious. They made charms to ward off sickness, or to cause the sickness and death of enemies, from things they dug up out of their own cemeteries. Their rites in this respect were more grim, gruesome and terrible than the Black Mass of the Middle Ages. Nash had told him this, he now remembered.

How could this be turned to account?

Time would have to tell that.

And the M'Tabites were pushing him back and back. Damn it, would he never have a chance to rest? He couldn't fight on forever, without food or sleep. Something had to give. Where were his men? Now, all at once, he had the answer. It came in a crackling of rifle fire, from somewhere to the west.

OUT there, under the trees beyond the walls, were the vast burial grounds of the M'Tabites. And out of them were coming the bullets which were smashing into Clive's attackers. Clive shouted with excitement.

His men were doing a strange long-distance rescue.

What had they learned? He must find out, he must take a chance. Suddenly he turned his back on the M'Tabites, whirled to the coping, bent, hooked his palms over it, spun over and down. When his back struck against the wall, he released his hold and dropped. He was running when he hit. He hit

the body of one man who, of the three who had gone over, had died in the fall. He was running, with the bullets of the M'Tabites whipping him forward.

He shouted to his men to fire high in order to cover his retreat.

CHAPTER VII

Wilderness or Death



SHERMAN CLIVE ran as he never had before, despising himself because he left Gloria Drake behind him. But he could do nothing for her by staying, and might endanger her life further. If he ran he might come back for her later. He knew, at least, that she was still alive, which was something—something to keep hope alive.

Now, as his men sank bullets into the houses of M'Tab, serving notice on her men to keep their heads down, Clive shouted to his followers: "Keep it up! I'm cutting in toward you. Show a head or a hand to let me know where to go."

And Malone himself, gaunt in the moonlight under the trees which masked the wilderness of graves—so many graves that it seemed all the generations had been saved in death—stood erect, in plain sight. No bullets struck at him, though he must have been seen by scores of men in M'Tab.

Clive wondered.

And when he cut in toward Malone, and the graves were in line ahead of him, with the people of M'Tab, their firing ceased as by a miracle. What did it mean?

Now he was in among the graves, everyone of which seemed to be well-cared for, and raced for Malone. His men had stopped firing. He flung himself, panting, down among them. Malone chuckled.

"You didn't get the dame?" he asked.

"How did you know anything about her?"

"You forget I've spent plenty of time in this place. I know Arabic. I listened to what they said, before we gathered together and came in here."

"No, I didn't get her," Clive reverted. "I had to run away. Thanks for the help. But I'm afraid of what they'll do to her now."

Malone chuckled again:

"That puts us in a fine spot, Sherman lad. I'll give you the lowdown now. They won't do anything to this Gloria person unless her dad turns her down, for she insisted on one condition—that her dad's representatives from Cairo, bringing the money, must meet her and representatives of Jeres, forty miles from here across the desert, and that she must be turned over to them, absolutely unharmed in any way, before Jeres will get the money.

"They'll protect her, for that money, as they would protect themselves—maybe better!"

"But you say we're in a swell spot—I don't see."

"WELL, take a look around you at all these graves. The M'Tabites are not ancestor worshipers exactly, but they do regard their dead with reverence. It's all mixed up with religion, with charms and with spells. They keep their graves nicely cared for. There are graves here dating back to the time the first M'Tabite settled in M'Tab. There always will be.

"They fear their dead, too. They believe in ghosts, and the vengeance of dead who are disturbed. We did some listening, and pooled our knowledge, which I've just given you. Understand?"

"I confess I don't."

"Well, you note they didn't fire on

us? And they quit firing at you as soon as you came into line with the graves?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's to keep from sending bullets into the graves and angering the dead, so that the dead may rise from the graves and fill M'Tab with pestilence, or march against the town and slay every soul in it. They would no more shoot into this cemetery than they would try to fly to the moon. Know what that means?"

"No, not yet at least."

"THAT we can stay here until Hell freezes over without being afraid of bullets. That we can pick off M'Tabites as long as we have any bullets left. If they attack us they must come barchanded or with knives—and they won't even dare kill us among the graves!"

"But they wouldn't. It would mean great loss of life on their own part, to attack us without a covering fire from rifles."

"But what glory it would be for the dying to know they had died to punish our irreverence toward their dead!"

"You mean they—we—"

"Exactly. You, we, all of us, have violated their houses by entering the parts reserved for women. For that the punishment is death after torture at the hands of the Ouled Nails. And now we've done the unforgivable, the unbelievably horrible—we've wakened the very dead with sacrilegious rifle fire right, as it were, in their ears. And for that—"

"Don't tell me," said Clive shuddering a little in spite of himself. "The Chinese death of a thousand cuts would be nothing compared to what they'll do with us if they catch us now."

"You've got the idea. Now, if you don't mind graves all around you, have something to eat. I don't know what it is, but it hasn't killed the

rest of us, so feed your face, and don't worry about the dame—"

"She isn't a dame, she's a—"

"I know. I've read newspapers in my time. She's a daughter of some United States state governor. You're her neavy heart-throb—on, forget it, Sherman, isn't it better to laugh over it? We've had little enough to laugh at here lately, and every last one of us is with you to the last ditch. And say, didn't we go through M'Tab after we left you? We've got water enough to last all day tomorrow, and we've got most of the food in the place. And say, we've lost Corcoran."

"How?" Clive looked about him, noting with a sinking heart that only four of his men were still alive.

"The Ouled Nails got him. We tried to catch them, tried to get him back. But he fooled the torturers. Maybe you heard the firing? Corcoran shot himself with his pistol. It was a smart stunt, and he doesn't have to worry about getting out of here. Wasn't there plenty of shooting, though? The M'Tabites killed one another right and left, thinking they were pouring the lead at us.

"When I yelled out in English nobody understood me except our own men. I yelled for 'em to make for these graves, and here we are. Now, feed your face!"

A GRIM silence had fallen over M'Tab. Clive stared at the eerie, wild place, as he put food to his mouth, chewed slowly, thoughtfully. Hungry as he was he didn't even taste the food, scarcely realized that he ate anything at all. He looked at the houses of M'Tab which hid the woman who had dared so much for him. How would they use her, what would they do to her if old Drake would not listen to reason?

One guess was as good as another.

Clive then thought of all the men he had lost. They would always weigh on his soul, despite the fact

that every last one of them had known, when he had joined Clive on the trek to Ophir, what he faced. Each man had laughingly "written himself off the books" when he had taken service with Clive—for all knew that few had ever reached Ophir and returned. They died. They had expected to die. Nevertheless it would be a long time before Clive would forget the hardships most of them had suffered, or forget the bundles in the sand, which had been men—the men who had fallen before M'Tab had been sighted. It had been a grim, terrible business.

NOW there were no lights in M'Tab. No sentries had been thrown out to keep the white men from escaping in the night. The M'Tabites knew their land. If the whites raced into the desert they could be run down with ease. Besides, this Elder Jeres was a clever man. He would know that these men never would leave M'Tab without the woman.

The emmissary Jeres had sent had hinted that M'Tab believed they were a rescue party sworn to die to get her out of the hands of the M'Tabites. The M'Tabites had lost too many men now to let them go, ever, no matter what might happen.

Clive had the feeling that they were all doomed. They would die as Corcoran had died as Jonas had, and Nash. But the food which went into his stomach, and the water he drank from the buckets his men had managed somehow to bring with them into the wilderness of graves, revived his courage and his hope.

Other men before him had fought their way out of tighter places than this. They would do so again. Why could not he and his men?

"By the Lord Harry we will!" exploded Clive suddenly.

"Will what?" asked Malone, startled.

"Get out of this, and take Gloria with us," answered Clive with conviction.

"Of course, but how? We can't do it with rifles, for they've got so many they'll keep us pinned to the ground. There's no other way, unless we take to the desert now—never mind, we aren't even thinking of running out on your Gloria! So what's left? Strategy, that's what. You've got to outsmart not only Jeres, but all of M'Tab. That should give you something to think about until morning.

"Speaking for myself, I'm getting some shuteye. The rest of you guys take turns watching, while Sherm figures out how five men can capture a city, kill everybody in it, save our treasure, rescue the fair lady, and get across half of the Sahara to civilization again. It's beyond me. And if anybody else has any ideas, he'd probably be glad to have them!"

Clive did not answer. One man sat up, keeping his eyes on M'Tab.

Clive spoke to him.

"Sleep, if you don't mind a grave for a pillow. I'll keep watch. Keep your rifles beside you. I hope there is plenty of ammunition."

"About two hundred rounds among us!" said Malone grimly.

IN ten minutes the four men were snoring. Little wonder, for they hadn't slept for what seemed like centuries. Clive's eyes wandered over the graves, a wilderness of grim headstones which seemed to reach to infinity westward. Overhead the wind whispered through the palm-trees, a thin, ghostly whispering. The enemy might well sneak up on them, darting from tree to tree, but not very soon. And he would see them when they left M'Tab.

It was all silent, grim, terrible. It was weird, fantastic, unbelievable. He almost had to pinch himself to make sure he was not dreaming.

And then the darkness of just before dawn began to creep over the depression which hid M'Tab. Clive knew that the shadows might hide advancing men, and his men had slept for three hours. He shook Malone awake, then the others. All watched until the blazing sun came out again.

Then all eyes were turned on M'Tab.

And out of M'Tab came a column of men in single file. They formed in a vast thin line whose members faced the cemetery. They carried no rifles. A command barked out. Knives flashed in the hot sun, like burnished silver.

Wind whipped the white garments of the men of M'Tab.

"Well," said Clive grimly, "I guess here they come! Make each shot count."

CHAPTER VIII

Knives in the Sun



THERE was something rather magnificent about the advance of the M'Tabites. They knew with grim certainty that their opponents were all armed, that they would not stop firing—and hitting their living targets—until the last man of them was dead.

"Don't fire until they are close," said Clive quietly.

Now that the crisis had come there was no trace of fear in the hearts of any of them.

They believed they were going to die. They were ready to die. That was the end of it. They were not hopeful that any compromise could be arrived at, for this was M'Tab, and it belonged to its people. They, Clive and his followers, had violated many of the tenets of M'Tabite faith. For

each violation the punishment was death. The M'Tabites started around the vast palm tree in a circling movement.

"If they get in among the trees," said Clive, "they can come quite close to us, and if there are enough of them they can overwhelm us in one stiff charge."

"But we may miss if we fire now," said Malone.

"Right! Make sure of each shot before you let it go."

And so, instead of nailing the men at the far flanks of the line which was curling in upon itself, so that its final formation would encompass the grove and the graves on three sides, they remained quietly and allowed the M'Tabites to make their own dispositions, without molestation.

The M'Tabites directly opposite the position of the whites would have to march straight into the muzzles of their rifles, across an open space of burning sand. They came on without sound, knives in their hands. They all knew that many of them would die. Some had to die to wipe out the anger of the spirits of dead and gone M'Tabites whose resting places had been disturbed by invaders whom the M'Tabites should have kept out of the cemetery.

THE M'Tabites were now within a hundred yards of their position. The five men were behind two graves, protected front and rear.

"I hate to fire on men who can't fire back," said Clive.

"Yeah," said Malone, "and I hate to have my insides cut out and my eyes burned white by the Ouled Nails, too. I don't like the look of those knives. And at a quick count I'd say there were two hundred M'Tabites against us. I wouldn't be too squeamish if I were you."

"Right," agreed Clive. "Align your sights, men. Pick out your men. Malone, you take the tall man di-

rectly ahead. I'll take the second man to his left. Mitchel, you take the man with the yellow band around his waist. Jameson, you take the second man to his left—"

And so, quietly and calmly, he gave each man his target, so that no bullets would be wasted by more than one man firing at the same enemy. "Let them have it when you're ready," said Clive softly.

MALONE'S rifle was the first to speak. The man whom Clive had selected for him plunged to his face in the sand.

"He got it through the skull," said Malone, matter-of-factly.

"Shouldn't you aim at the chest? It's a bigger target," said Clive.

"Big or little, and with my stomach filled with water and grub, I can hit anything I can see—and they're deader if it smacks into their brains," retorted Malone.

"My error," said Clive.

Then his own rifle spoke.

But he aimed for the heart. His victim dropped his knife, placed both hands over his heart. His head went back as though he straightened his throat to fight for breath. Then the man fell. The three other rifles barked savagely.

Three more men fell. With their first round of shots, each marksman had unerringly planted his man in the sand. Clive studied the reactions of the others. His heart felt numb, a little cold, when he saw how they took it. As far as he could tell not a M'Tabite hesitated, looked toward the fallen, or faltered the slightest.

But now a sharp command broke from someone in authority. The voice came clearly across to Clive and his men.

"What did he say?" asked Clive. "I couldn't quite hear it."

"He said to advance at a swift walk, to be ready to charge."

"Men," said Clive instantly. "Have

your cartridges where you can get them fast. And make sure of every shot."

By this time the flanks of the advancing force, which had come forward on the run, had vanished, and Clive knew that its members were advancing through the trees to the right and left of their position. He took a swift look to right and left. The flanks were not yet visible.

But the trap of the M'Tabites was closing on them with the inexorable finality of sure death.

Clive shook off thoughts of Gloria. His first duty was to fight off this attack, to save his own men and his own life. He would be of no use to her without fulfilling that.

NOW the rifles spoke again. The M'Tabites were coming on, their pace increasing. Now it was a swift trot. The rifles spoke faster. Now Clive could see the faces of the charging men. They were alight with a kind of transfiguration—as though they gloried in this opportunity to fight for the spirits of their honored dead. Fanaticism drove men to the muzzles of cannon, even though they knew they would be blown to bits. Fanatic Moslems believed that they went faster to Heaven when they died in battle against infidels. Clive was familiar with such fanaticism, and knew that not even bullets were proof against it.

The rifles spoke steadily now. The men said nothing. The working of their rifle bolts was a rhythmic, musical sound. Behind the advancing M'Tabites the number of white robed figures which had fallen to rise no more was appalling. Clive had noticed the fallen, in an abstracted sort of way, and not one of them had moved after he had crashed down to the sand. The bullets of the besieged were deadly. They never missed.

Clive fire again, and again—and each time a M'Tabite went down.

"They'll rush us in a minute," said Clive. "When they get close enough to use their knives, we'll stand with our backs toward one another, in a tight semi-circle. But we'll drive them back if we can."

The whining of the rifles rose to a high crescendo. It was impossible at this shortened range to miss. They didn't miss. The M'Tabites fell like flies. It was inhuman to withstand such slaughter as calmly as the M'Tabites were taking it.

And the rooftops of M'Tab were dotted thick with women who were watching the advance, watching the slaughter of their husbands, sons and lovers. Now the women themselves helped the beleaguered, for suddenly a long wail of anguish rose from the rooftops behind the charging men. Others picked it up, in a wild eerie ululation. The women were sorrowing for the fallen, and for others yet to fall. They probably could pick out their own among the advancing men, among the fallen.

Clive fired again.

"And there goes some one else's father or husband or lover," he thought. "This is tough on the women, but I don't remember that any of them tried to save my life. If they'd only handed us food and water when we came none of this would have happened."

NOW the M'Tabites were very close. The beleaguered were reloading and firing as fast as they could work their rifles. Clive's face was streaming with sweat. So were the faces of the others. The strain was taking its toll. The knives were now so close they could see the shapes of the blades.

"We'll have to stand in a second," said Clive. "Give 'em everything you've got. Perhaps we'd each better save a bullet for ourselves."

"I'm not going out that way unless I have to to keep out of the hands

of the Ouled Nails," said Malone. "I'm not going to kill myself and then be sorry for it afterward—if dead guys are sorry about anything—because if I'd waited I could have saved my life. Not me!"

Clive chuckled. His eyes searched the women on the rooftop. He saw one whose face was not covered—one with golden hair—and knew that the prayers of Gloria Drake were with him. It gave him new courage. She it was who really bore the brunt of all hardship. If the men died, they died like men, in open battle. But for a woman—he refused to contemplate what it might mean to her if her father didn't fulfill her request. The money was a slight matter to old Drake. But with him it was always "the principle of the thing."

THE rifles cracked. Bullets sped through muzzles so fast that the men's hands were blistered by the heat. But still the M'Tabites came on, though they wavered a little.

"Stand up," said Clive, "and give them a last volley. Then club your rifles."

The chattering of the rifles sounded as though a score of men were firing instead of only five. The M'Tabites fell in groups. They were now so tightly packed that it was impossible to miss.

But still they came on. They could have thrown their knives, now, and that they didn't was an ominous circumstance. At close quarters they could be surer—and to be surer carried ghastly alternatives, for Malone had said that they would not slay them amidst the graves. That meant mutilation to the point of death to make the five captures.

But the M'Tabites, with the redoubled fire, and seeing the five savage, desperate figures rise in their faces to pour in that murderous fire, could stand it no longer. They turned their backs—and their eyes

saw, perhaps for the first time, the bundles of white—a ghastly number of them—on the ground over which they had passed. Perhaps it was thus for the first time that they realized the price they were paying for the honor of their dead.

They broke, and the five whipped them forward with hails of lead.

A thin cheer broke from Clive and his men as the attack became a rout. But they had almost forgotten the men on the flanks. Now Malone yelled a warning. The flanks were closing in, and it became a sort of squirrel-shooting defense, for the M'Tabites were jumping from tree to tree like Indians, closing in.

"Careful with your fire," said Clive. "It's easy to miss, now. They will be all around us in a second."

Malone's rifle cracked. A man who had been showing only the top of his head around a tree plunged out into the open.

"I never miss," said Malone quietly. "Look, Clive, maybe there's news. There comes a fast-stepping mob of camels from the northwest. I'll bet it's news from Gloria's old man!"

CHAPTER IX

Grim Ultimatum



BUT for the moment there was no time to think about the racing caravan, which traveled as though it came on urgent business which could not wait. Clive's heart hammered until it almost suffocated him. He knew that the climax would be reached almost at once—and the desperate hope came to him to want to live until he should know what would occur.

His rifle had never been more true. Let a M'Tabite show so much as his face and his bullets went full and unerringly to their marks. The five

now sprawled on their backs, throwing intermittent glances at the forefront of the attackers who were in full retreat. Their eyes searched the palm trees, watching the almost ghostly advance of the men who had cut in from the flanks, and who hadn't so far felt the weight of the white men's fire.

They came on as determinedly as the first rank had—and they died as silently, surely and inevitably.

"Pick your targets," said Clive grimly. Don't let 'em get too close. And be careful you don't shoot one another."

Their rifles were moving in short arcs, to catch their moving, almost elusive targets. It was like shooting clay pigeons from a trap. Now and again a white-robed figure sprang from behind a tree, hands clawing at throat or stomach as knives spilled into the sand—just ahead of the reeling bodies which were dead before they even started to fall.

The defenders were almost nauseated with the slaughter.

But their own lives were precious, and Clive would have destroyed all M'Tab—except its women—to save the life of Gloria.

THE rifles kept up the volley. The M'Tabites came on. Then the attack seemed to fade for a moment, and Clive whirled to watch the arrival of the caravan. There were six camels in it.

The camels slid to a stop in the sand behind the tents of the Ouled Nails. They knelt at command of their riders, and several men had dropped to the ground. The first of them raced toward the houses of M'Tab. The attackers came on again at this point, and Clive had to look to their defense.

The rifles cracked incessantly.

Now the dead about the position of the defenders were piled thick and white. It seemed impossible

for them to get beyond a certain point. They charged toward them and could not face the redoubled, frenzied fire of the white men.

"Sherm," said Malone.

"Yes?"

WE'VE got just enough cartridges to stall off a few more charges, if they aren't any worse than those we've had already."

"Let 'em come a bit closer," said Clive.

"But we hit with every bullet anyhow," Malone observed.

"Then we'll have to do as we planned—fire until the last bullet is gone and then stand ready to meet their charge."

"That'll be in about a minute," said Malone.

One minute left of life, for the M'Tabites must know now, too, that they had little ammunition left. A determined charge now would bring attackers and defenders together. It couldn't last forever. There were too many of the M'Tabites.

The rifles spoke more slowly—but with no better precision, because they had been firing coolly, deliberately, from the very beginning of the attack.

"Here they come!" said Malone softly. "They'll make it this time."

"Stand then, and let them have it!" ordered Clive.

He was conscious that a grim, strained silence had settled over M'Tab. The howling of the women ceased. They had been quieted, Clive felt, by whatever news had been brought from the northwest. Clive stared at the figure of Gloria, away through the brilliant sunlight—and saw the violent hands of women laid upon her, saw her dragged into one of the houses.

Then the M'Tabites made their last charge. It had to be the last charge whatever happened.

He knew that the news brought

by the caravan, then, had been evil news, and his heart welled with bitterness over old Drake. He wondered, if the old man could see M'Tab, whether it would have made any difference in his decision. Probably not. He was the stubborn sort. Well, so much for that.

“WE'RE down to about twenty-five rounds among us, five aimed shots each,” said Malone quietly.

“Make every one tell,” said Clive grimly. “Then use your rifle butts. Get the knives of the men you down. We may need them.”

It was a grim, savage business.

The M'Tabites were coming closer.

And then, all at once, a strange thing happened—it was a thin, wild cry from M'Tab, in intelligible words. The charging M'Tabites seemed to change entirely when they heard it. They started falling back through the trees, darting swiftly from boll to boll. Clive lowered his rifle, flinched the sweat from his eyes, and then looked at Malone.

“What's up?” he said. “What does it mean?”

“It means us no good, you can depend on that,” said Malone gravely. “That was old Jeres shouting, ordering them to fall back and return to M'Tab. He's got something up his sleeve, you can bet your bottom dollar.”

“In the meantime, we rest,” said Clive. “I wish to God we had some more bullets.”

“They wouldn't do us any good,” said Malone with an air of authority. “I think the camel train brought news that changes the whole thing. Your Gloria is mixed up in it somewhere, and we'll be knowing just how in a few moments.”

Clive's heart sank into his boots.

If she were to be used as a pawn against him—as she might well be now that she was patently no longer

of any use to M'Tab—he didn't know what the result would be.

He didn't have long to wait. They watched the remaining M'Tabites file back into their houses. And then a long silence ensued.

“There comes the bad news!” exclaimed Jameson, at last.

All eyes were turned on M'Tab. A tall, gaunt man had come to the coping of the house nearest them. He cupped his hands about his mouth and shouted in Arabic.

“What does he say?” said Clive to Malone, who spoke the language more fluently.

Malone's face was a pasty white. He licked his cracked lips with a dry tongue. Clive had never seen such horror in his face. Clive's own heart seemed for the moment to stop beating. It was bad news, sure enough. Malone looked at the others as though almost afraid to speak.

“Let her go, Malone,” said Jameson. “We know we have to take it in one form or another, so we might as well get it over with.”

“I'm with you myself, Sherm,” said Malone, “but this is a pretty tough decision for the other boys to make.”

“Well,” said Clive, impatiently, “spill it!”

“WE'VE played out our string,” said Malone sternly. “Anyway, what does it matter? Gloria's father failed to pay the ransom in time. She is no longer of any use to them, save as a pawn to use against us and is to be given to the Ouled Nails for torture. But she may be spared that, and sent out of M'Tab in safety, on one condition—”

The men all looked at one another, as though already they knew what that condition was.

“He said,” Malone finally went on, “that quite too many M'Tabites have already died trying to punish us for our desecration of their graves and of the sacred rooftops of M'Tab.

They will not attack us again—but they will allow Gloria to go free if all of us will surrender, throw down our arms, and turn ourselves over to the Ouled Nails, to stand the torture in the place of the woman.”

When Malone had finished there was a long silence. All eyes were on Sherman Clive.

“Ask him,” said Clive, desperately sparring for time in which to think, “whether she has been injured so far.”

Malone rose to his feet and shouted in a faltering rendition of Arabic.

“He says no.”

“Now ask him if he will take me in her place, together with all our treasure, and let you others go free.”

After a second the answer came. It was a terse negative.

“Ask him if he will take me and allow the rest of you to fight it out.”

The answer again was no.

“I can't ask any of you to do it,” said Sherm hoarsely. “The woman is nothing to you. She herself would not ask it of you. I'll wager she did her best to keep them from sending us that ultimatum. I can't ask you—” his voice broke off.

“**S**PEAKING for myself,” said Malone hoarsely, “I think it would be sort of swell to go out like that, for a lady, when we know we have to go anyhow. The torture can't last forever.”

Jameson rose, stretched elaborately, and yawned.

“Tell him we'll come in, one at a time,” he said. “I'll start first and get it over with faster.”

“Same here,” said Mitchel.

Clive's throat seemed to be filled with cork or cotton as he gazed into the eyes of his men who had already risked their lives so many times for him, and who were now volunteering so calmly to make the final sacrifice.

Malone did not hesitate, did not ask Clive what next to do. He

shouted across to old Jeres, who lifted his hand in acknowledgement, and then retired from the rooftop.

It was in that moment that Clive had his inspiration.

“**M**ALONE!” he snapped. “We'll go last. Listen, all of you. Once I knew a professional beggar, the best in the business. He often used to panhandle in a way that he called ‘working under wraps.’ He covered himself with bandages, smeared red stuff on them to look like blood, and played on the natural pity of his fellows. They always shelled out.

“Look, you bind me like that, with my right arm in a sling. In the bandage I'll carry my pistol. Maybe I'll get a chance to use it. It's our only chance. I got you into this. It will be my bid to get you out. Quickly, now!”

Their underwear, which they had ripped off swiftly, sufficed for bandages. Malone led off in the matter of blood by pricking his arm with the end of an empty cartridge. The bandage was saturated by it. Jameson dared not wait too long. He was already striding across the open space toward the tents of the Ouled Nails. Gloria, in the midst of a group of M'Tabites, was also en route to those tents. Too much delay on the part of the whites would make the M'Tabites suspicious. Mitchel went next. The others didn't even watch to see what happened to them, since all would meet among the female torturers in a matter of minutes.

Finally only Malone and Clive were left—and Clive looked as though he could scarcely stand. Who among the M'Tabites was to say that some of the others had not reached the whites in their last charge, and managed to wound him savagely with their knives?

Clive leaned heavily on Malone as the two started across the open space. Behind them reposed their

now useless rifles. Clive wondered if they would ever have need of them again.

"Will they see the pistol?" he asked.

"We have to take a chance," said Malone.

And then, they were among the M'Tabites, roughly seized. They were hustled into the tents of the Ouled Nails, where no other women were allowed. Gloria was already fastened to an upright pole.

M'Tabites were seated in a big circle around the pole. Clive shuddered, closed his eyes when Gloria looked at him, fearless, with her eyes wide.

The M'Tabites were binding the other whites. They said nothing, but their actions required no words. The M'Tabites hated these whites beyond all power, in words, to express their hatred.

CLIVE stumbled, to catch Gloria's attention.

His lips shaped a question.

"Which is Jeres?"

She got it. Her eyes shifted—and there was no chance of missing Jeres, for of them all, he held the seat of honor, a sort of dais directly ahead of the Ouled Nails, who were gleefully awaiting the opportunity to try their diabolic arts.

Clive stumbled again. He swayed away from Malone. There was no pity in the faces of any M'Tabites for this wounded white man, whom they could thus torture even more, by hurting his hurts. The Ouled Nails would attend to that.

Jeres spoke sharply in Arabic, and Malone answered him in the same language. Clive listened as Malone explained that Clive was gravely hurt, that he could not walk erectly.

"Now," whispered Clive to Malone, "push me with all your might, right at the old man. Shout something about me betraying you—"

"Listen!" said Malone. "He has something to say!"

As they listened, Jeres told them that now that he had them he saw no reason to let the girl escape. He said she had been too much trouble anyhow, and that her father was a fool.

"Hear that?" said Malone. "I rather expected they would welch on their promise."

"Now I'm sure of what I'm going to do," said Clive. "Push me, and yell out."

IT must have seemed to the M'Tabites that Malone had gone mad, or had suddenly become furious beyond words with his leader. He caught Clive by the shoulders, spun him around, shouted something at him which sounded like an execration of the vilest order—and shoved him with all his power, back toward old Jeres. Backward, apparently clawing to keep his feet, Clive stumbled toward Jeres. He cursed at Malone.

It was obvious he would fall on his back before ever he reached Jeres. He meant it to be obvious.

But he didn't fall. He started to stumble; then suddenly whirled to face Jeres. He ended his plunge with his body almost in the lap of the chief elder of M'Tab, while his bandaged right hand held the muzzle of his pistol squarely against the old man's heart. Deep silence fell, the silence of horror and dismay.

"You die if anything happens to the girl or my men and myself," snapped Clive to Jeres in Arabic, and then in English to Malone: "Tell them what I have just told their chief."

"Right."

Malone tersely told the M'Tabites what would happen to their leader.

"What else do you want?" demanded Jeres, who appeared to realize that he was defeated for the time being at least. "Perhaps it is

better that I die now—for the honor of M'Tab—than such shame as this!"

"Never mind that," said Clive. "You know that your people won't let you die—and you also know that I'll kill you if you don't do as I say."

"It shall be so," Jeres nodded.

"Tell them we want camels and camel-drivers," Clive called to Malone. "Tell them we must have everything belonging to Gloria Drake."

A few seconds passed as Malone did as he had been instructed.

"They agree," he said finally. "But we'd better work fast. For they may change their mind about protecting Jeres' life. What else?"

"Get our treasure loaded on fast camels—and have everything ready at once."

Minutes passed again, after several M'Tabites raced out of the tent, while utter disappointment showed on the faces of the Ouled Nails. The men returned shortly.

"The camels are ready," said Malone.

"Have Gloria and our men taken out!" ordered Clive. "You stay with me, Malone, for a moment."

"Now, Malone," said Clive grimly. "We're marching this old buzzard. I'm not letting go of him until we're twenty miles from here. And tell them not to follow. The walk back will do the old guy good. Maybe,

after he does that, he'll know better, next time, than to refuse water to men who are dying for lack of it."

"They'll come after him," said Malone, with much concern. "I'm afraid he won't take the walk."

"Maybe not, but he's going to have his lesson. He'll march!"

Malone consulted Jeres for a brief moment. He turned to Clive. "You're right—the old guy will march."

Jeres gave explicit orders to his group, ordering them to remain at a standstill. There was very little the old man could say, for Clive pushed him on. The aged Jeres marched, Clive and Malone following.

And that night the camels of Clive's enforced expedition were far from M'Tab. They had already sent Jeres on his lone march back to M'Tab, to suffer as they had.

Rifles of Clive's men kept the camel-drivers in hand. Clive and Gloria rode side by side. The moon rose bright in the sky as the camels raced on. "What," asked Gloria at last, "are you thinking about?"

"Nice things," smiled Clive, "to say to a certain governor who does not answer cablegrams on time!"

"Same here," commented Gloria. "By the way, I wonder how Jeres is getting along?"

"I hope," said Clive, "that he feels like hell. And I hope that he hasn't yet found the way back to M'Tab!"

Next Month's Novel: THE SCOURGE OF INDIA, by JAMES DUNCAN

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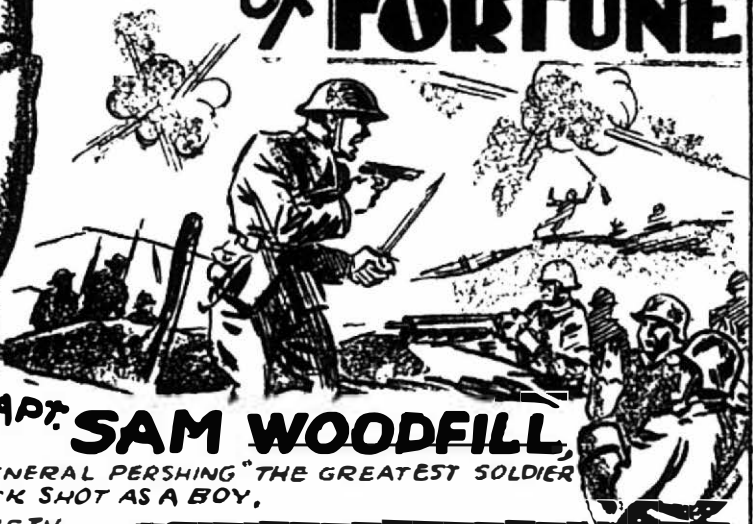
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WAS THE HERO IN THREE REVOLUTIONS.

HE TOOK PART IN THE AMERICAN (1776) REVOLT AND TWO OTHERS IN HIS NATIVE FRANCE - ONE IN 1789 AND ONE IN 1830



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NOTED ADVENTURER WHO HAS FOUGHT UNDER MANY FLAGS, LOST HIS ARM WHEN HE KNOCKED A BOMB FROM THE HAND OF A TURK WHO WAS ABOUT TO THROW IT INTO A BRITISH TRENCH AT GALLIPOLI. THE TURK WAS INSTANTLY KILLED. LATER SUTTON RECEIVED THE MILITARY CROSS FOR HIS BRAVERY.



GENERAL TSAI TING-KAI

THE CHINESE HERO WHOSE TRAVELS HAVE LED HIM THROUGH MANY ADVENTURES.

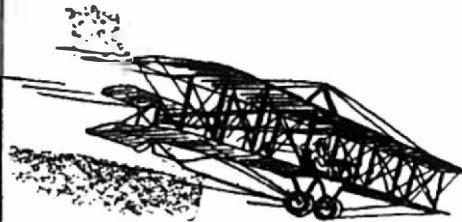


TSAI HAS BEEN MORE ACTIVE FIGHTING THAN PERHAPS ANY OTHER GENERAL IN THE WORLD AS HE IS A VETERAN OF 171 CAMPAIGNS. HIS STAND WITH THE CHINESE 19TH ROUTE ARMY WHEN FIGHTING THE JAPANESE IN 1932 WAS CALLED, BY MILITARY OBSERVERS—"A HEROIC WORK OF GENIUS FROM A TACTICAL POINT OF VIEW."



"SATAN"

WAS ONE OF THE MOST NOTED OF 16,000,000 ANIMALS — HORSES, DOGS, CAMELS, DONKEYS, CATS AND PIGEONS. — EMPLOYED DURING THE WORLD WAR. THIS SMALL DOG HERO WAS THE MASCOT OF ONE DIVISION OF THE FRENCH ARMY AND RECENTLY A MONUMENT WAS ERECTED IN MEMORY OF THE TIME THAT HIS BARKING AROUSED SOLDIERS AND SAVED VERDUN.



CAPT. C.F. CHANDLER,
AN AMERICAN, FLYING A WRIGHT BIPLANE, MAY, 7, 1912, AT COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND, FIRED THE FIRST MACHINE GUN FROM A PLANE.

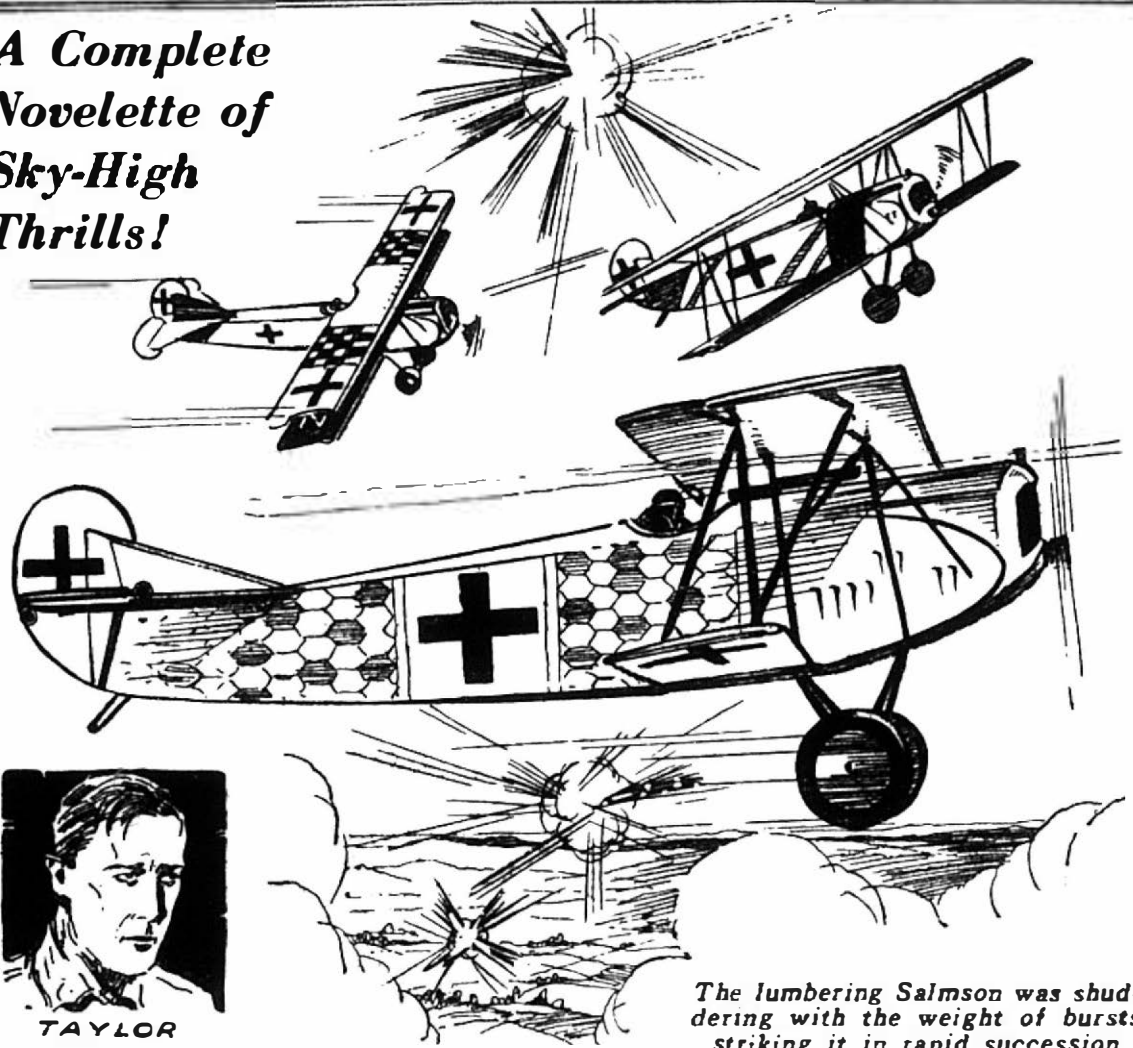


GREGORY MASON,

NOTED WORLD EXPLORER, WHO LED THE EXPEDITION THAT FOUND "THE LOST CITIES OF THE MAYAS" IN CENTRAL AMERICA; HAS VISITED OVER 36 COUNTRIES!



*A Complete
Novelette of
Sky-High
Thrills!*



The lumbering Salmson was shuddering with the weight of bursts striking it in rapid succession

FLIGHT *of the*

CHAPTER I

Secret Mission

MARTIN HANLEY stopped in the corridor before a plain pine door and stared at the lettered sign which identified it. There it was, in black, block letters: "C. O., D. M. I." Translated, it meant that behind that door was the office of the Commanding

Officer of the Division Military Intelligence.

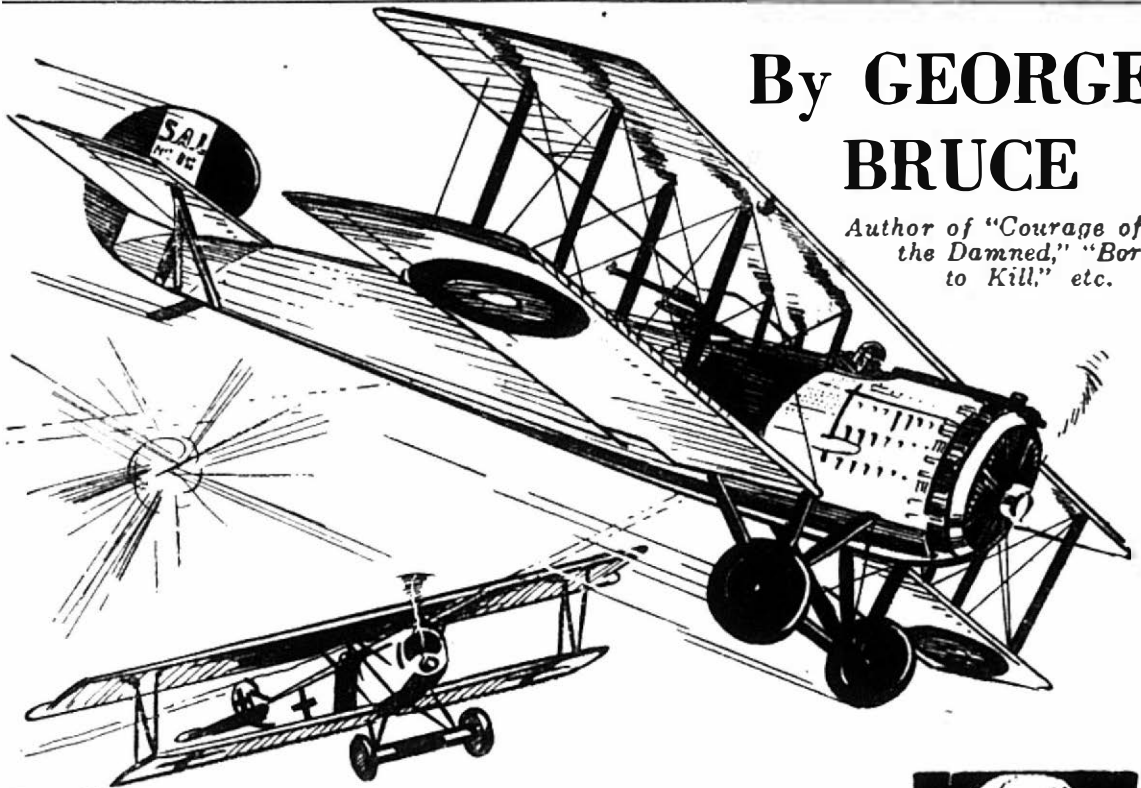
His heart was pounding a little. He could feel the pulses throb in his neck. This kind of stuff was out of his line. He was a combat pilot. That was a business of going out and getting his block knocked off, or of knocking off the other guy's block.

But this Intelligence thing. He'd

A Dauntless War Flyer Roars Over the

By **GEORGE
BRUCE**

Author of "Courage of
the Damned," "Born
to Kill," etc.



*Grim Horrors of
Life in an
Enemy Prison
Camp!*



LIVING DEAD

heard stories about the kind of a war they fought. Firing squads at dawn. People pussyfooting around. Dark—mysterious.

He knocked on the door.

"Come in, Lieutenant Hanley," called a voice from within.

He entered and found himself in a plain room. A man was sitting behind a desk. His eyes, probing through Marty Hanley, were like

gimlets boring holes in leather. The man had the gold leaves of a major on his shoulders.

"Ah," he said, after a minute filled with tension. "I'm glad you came so promptly. I've heard good reports about you, Lieutenant," he went on, without changing the expression of his face nor removing the scrutiny of his eyes. "That's why I sent for you. We can use

German Lines on a Perilous Mission of Doom!

none but men of unusual caliber—the exceptional.”

“Yes, sir,” said Hanley.

“You know our work? You know the job we are given to do?”

“Well, in a way, sir.”

He continued on as if Hanley had not spoken.

“It is our duty to find out everything possible concerning the enemy and to keep him from discovering anything about ourselves. It is not pleasant work. Most of it is done under cover.”

“Yes, sir.”

“We have requested permission to borrow you from your squadron for the carrying out of an assignment. This is a particularly hazardous bit of business. It requires a man with a record for nervelessness, a navigator, an expert pilot accustomed to making instant decisions under changing conditions.

“You have been picked for this assignment on the highest authority. That is why we were callous enough to break in on the first leave you have enjoyed, and ordered you to this Headquarters from Paris. I know that it was unpleasant, but after all, we are fighting a war.”

Hanley nodded. He remembered how he had stormed when that wire found him at the Claridge. The first leave he had known. The first time he could get up in the morning with an even break of living through the day.

ALL the way up on the train he had been in a black mood. It would not have been so bad, except that he had met Vera on the first day of his leave.

A picture of her grew up in front of him as he stared at the Intelligence officer. Hardly up to his shoulder she stood. Raven black hair. A body that seemed a human dynamo. Avid for fun. They had gone about. The Crillon, the Clar-

idge — everywhere that promised music and dancing and lights—and wine. Five glorious days and nights of it.

And then the telegram.

It hadn't been one of those things — meeting a girl on leave and going overboard for her, just because she was a woman. It was more than that. Both of them knew it.

He heard the major's voice speaking again.

“The job will be to drop one of our agents on the enemy side of the lines at a designated spot, without handing her over to the firing squad through a mistake in location. She is one of our most valuable agents, an agent vital to our plans.”

“Is that all?” grinned Hanley. “For a minute I thought you wanted me to go out and make a forced landing on the Kaiser's palace, talk him into a joy ride, and deliver him here. I can do that job with my eyes shut,” he said confidently.

“I HOPE so,” answered the major, unsmilingly. “I believe our German friends expect this agent, and are laying a trap for her. Unless she is delivered exactly on schedule, you will be her executioner.”

The door inside the office opened silently then closed. The major stood before his desk.

“Lieutenant Hanley,” he introduced formally, “Miss Corbin—Lieutenant Hanley.”

Hanley stared at the girl. There was a feeling within him as though he had been struck a stinging blow across the face. His larynx expanded until it blocked his throat.

She stood with her back against the door she had just closed. There was a faint smile on her face, but her eyes were bright, and her chin trembled a little.

“Hello, Marty,” she greeted him. “It was a rotten trick having you brought up here and breaking in on

your leave like that. But you see, it was my first leave, too."

"Vera!" said a hoarse voice in Hanley's throat.

"Of course, I knew the two of you know one another," said the major. For the first time he smiled. "Miss Corbin will be your—er—passenger," he told Hanley.

"This will make her fourth trip into Germany on espionage," he said matter-of-factly. "Without doubt, at the moment, Miss Corbin is our most valuable, and most trusted agent. She is worth more to us than an army division. If we gave decorations to women, as we give them to men for distinguished service, her breast would be covered with medals."

SHE moved across the room to Hanley. "Marty!" she said with a little tremble in her voice, "don't look at me that way. Please—try to understand—I have a job to do, just as you have."

"My God!" uttered Hanley miserably.

"I meant everything I said to you—every word. I meant every minute. It's been the most beautiful thing in my life. Perhaps it meant more to me—even—than to you. You see—I've had to do my job alone—away from everything and everybody I know. I've been solitary, not even daring to speak of myself to anyone, until you came along."

He was thinking. He was seeing pictures. Women—facing a firing squad. "Cavell—Mata Hari—Thompson—Miss Gordon." Names ringing in his ears. Names belonging to girls like Vera, who had been led out in the grey dawn of a morning to die, with soft bodies gashed and torn by rifle bullets. Both sides had executed women.

Women spies!

"You can get some one else for your infernal job!" he grated at the

major through thin lips. "I'll have nothing to do with it."

Her hands tightened about his arm.

"I want you, Marty," she begged. "I asked for you. I'm responsible for your being here. It'll be a little easier if you take me. Stepping off into the darkness this time won't be so bad, if I can think of you, flying above me, while I'm making the trip down."

The major sounded as if he had not heard Hanley's protest.

"There will be a two-seater Salmson on the field here at eleven tonight, fueled and ready. Miss Corbin will be in the back seat. You will fly it. You jump off at twelve sharp. At eleven you will be given your orders.

"You will return to this base after seeing Miss Corbin safely out of your ship by parachute, after which you will resume your leave in Paris, with a five day extension. That is all, Lieutenant Hanley."

Somehow, Marty Hanley was out of the M. I. office. He was laughing bitterly to himself. "Five days extended leave—for what? To go to Paris—for what—now?"

CHAPTER II

Night Flight



IT was pitch dark on the field. There were no lights. Vera stood close to him. Her cheek rested against the leather of his flying coat.

The mechanics were putting the last little touches on the Salmson, readying it for flight. It was five minutes to twelve. The grunt of the big Salmson motor in the nose of the ship sounded over the field.

"No matter what happens, we can remember things, can't we?" she said. "We can be good soldiers. You'll

always know that I'll be thinking of you when I'm alone. We had a few days of heaven in the midst of this hell. Nothing can take that away from us. You won't forget, will you, dear?"

He crushed her arm under his fingers for answer.

The mechanic spoke.

"Everything is okay, sir. She's ready to go."

He felt his legs driving him forward. Felt his arms lifting her into the back seat, and his hands fumbling in the darkness to fix her chute harness, and to buckle the safety belt around her.

He felt the warmth of her mouth against his cheek for one brief moment. Then he was climbing into the front seat. His hand touched the throttle. He heard his voice, jagged, almost snarling, giving an order.

"Pull the chocks!"

The Salmson swung free and vibrated.

The motor picked up revs with a rush. Then the engine was running heavily, into the wind, faster and faster. It lifted its wheels from the ground and plunged into the blackness ahead. He carried it over the field in great circles as he climbed it. After a while the chill of the heights seeped into his bones. The altimeter said twelve thousand feet.

THE Salmson droned on and on. Its propeller created an almost invisible sheen in the night. The sheen became a motion picture after a while. German soldiers marched with machine-like precision, rifles slanted over shoulders. He could hear the clump of heavy boot soles against the earth, could hear the guttural words of command barked at the column by an officer.

The phantoms in grey wheeled into position. There was the crash of rifle butts against earth as they came

to the order. Then figures walked slowly—shadow outlines—more officers—and a girl. And the rifles of the firing squad came up again obeying a barked order. Then the muzzles vomited flame—and the girl crumpled and fell to the ground.

Over and over, the same film ran across his brain.

It was clear and cold, with the stars still as far away as when they had watched them on earth.

He heard her voice. It spoke over his shoulder. It seemed to come out of the heavens.

"WELL always remember this, won't we?" she said. "The stars, and the cold, and the blue-black night; and the two of us, alone—like this. We have something no one else has ever had—it's so beautiful it stabs me in the heart. Please, remember this, no matter what happens. Whenever I think of you, I'll remember how you carried me up to this—up to where I could reach out my hand and touch the stars."

Then her voice was soft and low, like the note of a cello.

"I love you," she said. "There will be days when I shall have nothing else but this memory."

The altimeter said five thousand, and then four thousand and then three thousand. At two thousand feet he turned his head. The words ripped his throat.

"Get ready," he told her.

"Good-by—for now," she whispered. "And please, don't worry—I'll be all right!"

"Get those lines untangled," he said gruffly.

At five hundred feet his body stiffened. He drew a great breath. He put a hand back over the crash pad and seized her wrist. He felt her lift the hand and crush it against her cheek.

"Jump!" he barked at her.

There was an instant flash of white from somewhere under the ship. He banked sharply to the left.

When he looked over the side, the white spot in the blackness had disappeared.

She was gone.

He held the glide until the altimeter refused to register. He knew that he was on top of the trees. But he had to carry the ship away from her landing place; had to protect her before he aroused the whole of the earth with the racket of the Clerget. He fought spin after spin and held the big ship in a flat glide.

But he was not thinking of crashing against the earth inside the enemy lines. He was seeing that motion picture running through his brain. The firing squad in field grey and the crash of the rifles, and the crumpled body falling to the earth.

CHAPTER III

Forced Landing



BLINDING glare of light speared upward from the earth and transfixed the Salmson. The cruel eye of a mobile searchlight. It followed the Salmson's every move. It outlined it stark and naked against the black backdrop of the sky.

There were vicious bursts of red flame striking at him from the earth. He fought to escape the searchlight. It clung to him. The emptiness within him changed to a dull, resentful hate.

He kicked the Salmson around with the rudder and pushed the stick forward. The heavy ship gathered momentum, plunged downward. He picked up the red-hot core of the light in the circle of his gun sight.

He went down, charging like an enraged bull. He knew that the ter-

rible light was blinding him, but he forced his eyes to the center of it. When he couldn't stand it any longer he cut in his guns, fired into the flaming center of the light. He was unable to see the stabbing flame from his own gun muzzles, but he kept his thumb on the trips.

OTHER lights sprang up and probed for him. He could hear the rip and thud of metal through the wings of his ship, the rhythmical drumming of slugs through fabric. But he kept the Salmson driving for that torturing light on the ground.

Suddenly the light went out. He had an instant glimpse of men lying and writhing on the ground, and the smashing of a great reflector.

Then he was swallowed up in a black gulf. He was stone blind from staring into the glare of that light. Flying instinctively he took the Salmson out of the dive. He felt the brushing of something against a wingtip. Then he sensed that he was zooming sharply. He eased on the climb, and poured the throttle to the Salmson.

Pale beams of light swinging about in the heavens, other searchlights, were looking for him.

He flew through the pitch blackness. He could not tell in what direction he flew. He merely carried the Salmson higher and higher.

And then a new sound came into the heavens. He listened intently. It was the thin knifing whine of several airplane motors. The sound ripped through space above him. He peered about owlishly trying to locate this sound.

He heard the clatter of Fokkers and the scream of slipstreams.

He fought savagely to get clear of the Fokkers. He knew that there was a swarm of them after him. But he could not see them. He was shadow boxing with invisible opponents.

He lashed about him with the

Vickers. Sparks flew. He heard the rip and screech of metal torn asunder. Bits of white-hot steel gouged his cheeks. The engine gave off blue-green flame, choked, sputtered, ground, and then came to a grinding halt.

The Salmson stopped its flight as if struck in the motor with an axe. It fell heavily. He fought to control it. It dropped off into a right spin. He nosed it down, with the needle of the altimeter registering zero.

He reversed the controls. The spin stopped.

And then there was a shattering smash. There was an instant of almost sheer pleasure. He was down. Inside *their* lines. He didn't have to go back—without her. He was thinking that as the blackness engulfed him.

* * * * *

He heard voices. Though he understood no German he knew this was the language he was hearing. Then he was conscious of an acrid odor, the smell of a hospital. He opened his eyes. Facets of flame and red light danced before his vision. His head felt as if a rivet-hammer was banging against his skull. His body felt crushed, battered.

THEN he heard a voice speaking to him. The voice said in English, a stilted, too correct English:

"Well, my Yankee friend, you have a thick skull, yes? A real, what you say, bull head. It is a wonder you ever opened your eyes."

A face formed in the blurred void above him. A face with a black, waxed mustache, and piercing blue eyes. A flat officer's cap appeared on top of a closely-cropped head. Then a uniform grew up beside the bed. The officer who wore it had the shoulders and flanks of an athlete. The blurred void grew clear and

disclosed two other officers standing at the end of the bed. They were watching Hanley with interest.

"So you transport spies inside the German lines, eh?" asked the first officer, almost pleasantly. "Well, you will save trouble for us, and trouble for yourself by telling us exactly where you dropped your passenger. Then we will let you go back to sleep."

"You're crazy!" shouted Hanley. "I don't know what the devil you are talking about."

The officer smiled dryly.

"Now, now, my friend. We are trying to act as man to man. After all, you did put up a magnificent resistance. You have not disgraced yourself. You must have sense enough to know that a man can only give all he has to give, and if that is not enough to win, then he can shrug his shoulders and resign himself to his fate. We do not like to be harsh with men as brave as you. Now it is time to think of your own life."

SOMETHING about the last sentence sent a thrill of apprehension through Hanley. He focused his bleary eyes on the officer's face.

"I'm a prisoner of war, captured in action," he growled. "What on earth do you mean 'think of my own life'?"

"You were captured on our side of the lines, out of uniform, in a ship without markings," said the officer. "We know exactly the nature of your mission. There is a military law in the German Army providing that a pilot caught transporting spies inside the German lines is as guilty as the spy. There is a very bad case against you."

"If you're trying to scare me," he told the officer, "you can save your breath. You know blamed well I'm an American pilot, even if I'm not in uniform, and you know that fly-

ing officers are liable to go out flying in nothing but pajamas.

"As for the spy stuff—nuts! I was out on a night observation flight, looking for the flash of your batteries."

"And where is your observer? Did he just disappear into the thin air?"

Hanley remained silent.

"You don't seem to understand that this is serious," the officer continued. "You don't realize that you will face a firing squad in the morning. You were not in uniform. You were flying an unmarked plane. You were taken deep inside our lines. Every item of international laws covering espionage will be on our side when we shoot you."

"Well, amuse yourselves," he said. "If you've made up your minds to bump off an American pilot, go to it. You've done worse, I understand. But if you want me to squeal you're talking to the wrong guy. I don't know what you're talking about, and if you think that crack on the head, or whatever happened to me, is going to change the story, you're crazy."

"You wouldn't even be able to explain the presence of a Harden chute cover, attached to the under-fuselage of your plane, I suppose?" suggested the officer quietly. "I don't have to draw diagrams to explain the meaning of that strange discovery."

"WHAT I first said still goes," declared Hanley. "You can go to blazes and interpret what you please."

"It would be so easy, my friend," insinuated the German officer. "We are not fools. You flew over here last night, and you dropped someone from your ship, at a certain spot within our lines."

"Now all we want from you is a statement concerning when and where and whom you brought over

here. Then, I assure you on my word of honor, we will send you to a very comfortable hospital, where the life will not be hard—much easier than the life you have known on the front."

For a moment the face of Vera Corbin stood out in front of Hanley's eyes.

"I told you," he said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"It is a pity. It is not nice to die so young. There is so much in life for you. But you will die, my friend, two mornings from now, unless you tell me some of the things I want to know."

"You're crazy," laughed Hanley shortly. "You can shoot me, I suppose, but that's just another murder. You know damned well you haven't got a leg to stand on when you send me in front of a firing squad."

"THE court will decide that," declared the officer. "I would like to do you a service. I would like to ask you, before it is too late, to reconsider."

Hanley closed his eyes. After a moment they moved away from the bed. He lay for an hour without moving. His brain was sodden with the thought of dying. He wanted to laugh. He had been fearful of death for Vera. He never thought of himself.

And here he was—about to face the firing squad.

A succession of blurred periods of light and darkness passed. Every day the officer came to see him. One day they dressed him and helped him into another room in the hospital.

A succession of officers and soldiers stood before a long table and talked in clipped sentences. At the very end a spokesman for the officers asked Hanley if he had anything to say. Then he understood

that he was on trial for his life. He answered one word.

"No."

When they led him out he was condemned to face a firing squad on a charge of espionage.

That night, for hours, the Intelligence officers worked on him, laboring to get him to divulge information. He ignored them and turned his face to the wall.

AT dawn the next morning they led him out. This time there was nothing mental about the vision. He saw the firing squad as it marched under his window. He heard the beat of feet on the cobblestones.

Then he was marching before the squad. They came into an open space in the courtyard of a building. The squad was standing at ease. They placed his back against a wall.

"A last chance!" said the officer. "It is a shame to die—like this."

Hanley merely stared at him.

They offered him a bandage for his eyes. His face was scornful. They gave him a cigarette. He accepted it gratefully. Then the officer in command of the firing party called the squad to attention.

At that moment a car rolled into the yard. An officer, resplendent in uniform and wearing a staff helmet descended from the car. A girl stepped onto the ground after him. Hanley's eyes were riveted on the girl's face. A name was screaming inside his chest.

The girl was Vera Corbin. She was dressed in a stunning black costume. There were jewels on her hands. She was smiling at the staff officer. The officers in the yard were standing at rigid attention, eyes facing the car.

There was a conference of some kind. The Intelligence officer got into the car with the staff officer and the girl. They drove away. The officer in command of the firing squad

smiled whitely. He walked to Hanley's side. He spoke English.

"You are lucky, my friend," he said, almost as if pleased. "The order to shoot you has been cancelled. We are taking you back to the hospital. What for, I do not understand."

Hanley's mouth moved. "Who was it?" he asked.

The officer's face was suddenly serious. "What harm to tell you?" he said. "That was General von Galtz."

"The girl—who was she?" asked Hanley hoarsely.

The officer laughed, and then there was a note of pride in his voice. "Who knows?" he answered. "But you can be sure of one thing. She is very important, or she would not be riding around with the chief of the Military Intelligence on the high command, and she would not be giving suggestions which are obeyed as orders."

Hanley felt his knees sagging. Things whirled about in his brain. He felt the officer holding him firmly by the elbow. He marched blindly back to the hospital, escorted by the firing squad.

CHAPTER IV

Inside the Prison Camp



HE shuddered at the first sight of the prison. How many days had passed since they had led him out to die he didn't know. It was just one continuous nightmare filled with the face of Vera Corbin, the splendor of the uniform of General von Galtz, and the ponderous dignity of the general's car. Somewhere in the nightmare the Intelligence officer had come to him and stated that the sentence of the court-martial had been temporarily suspended and that he

would be taken from the hospital to a prison camp.

But they had merely been bubbles upon the surface of a stagnant pool within his brain. He could think of nothing but her face—that black costume, smiling face—almost happy face—riding around with the German chief of Military Intelligence.

He remembered one thing the Intelligence officer had said:

“Luck seems to favor the brave. Who would think that the *Fräulein* von Hartmann would challenge the stubbornness of a Yankee flyer? Who would think that she would enter into a small affair like this?”

“Who is the *Fräulein* Hartmann?” asked Hanley.

“Even a Yankee flyer should know of the *Fräulein*,” grunted the Intelligence officer. “She is the most famous German secret agent. She has the complete confidence of the great command. She comes and goes—and no one knows where or when. Turkey, France, England—she goes where she wills.”

Ugly flashes exploded in Hanley’s head.

“You must have been on a very important mission, my friend, to have aroused the interest of *Fräulein* Hartmann.” There was a glint of admiration in the Intelligence officer’s eyes.

THEN the prison camp. Cold, wet, disease-stricken. Men starving—little by little, day by day, on just too little food to permit them to live. Men, hopeless, with glazed eyes and wasted bodies.

Men without hope, without aim in life—waiting to have their bodies broken and to die.

Englishmen were there. Young pilots, fresh-faced kids, with down on their cheeks, looking at him, avid for a snatch of news. Irishmen, Scots, Frenchmen, Russians. Herded together like cattle found to be dis-

eased and permitted to live until the disease killed them.

The prison was a bare expanse of clay soil surrounded by a triple barbed-wire fence. There were faded tents, floorless, set up in rows within the enclosure. They were pup tents, not big enough to shelter a body.

The first meal they brought was nauseating. He smelt it when it was still out of sight. Rotten meat. Rotten vegetables. His stomach retched. He vomited as he watched fellow prisoners go for the stuff wolfishly, gobble it down while they stared about them, as if fearing that someone would snatch a precious something from them. They were growling over the foul-smelling stew, tearing at the sawdust bread, looking up from empty pans, licking lips, begging with their eyes for more—knowing there would be no more.

A STREAM of water ran through the middle of the stockade. To cross it was death. There was a sign posted: “*Deadline at the stream. Sentries will shoot anyone crossing without challenge.*”

Living dead walked inside that stockade. The barbed-wire was the boundary of a half world, filled with these living dead.

Then, one day, after a week in the stockade, a guard called his name. He turned slowly. He came face to face with Vera Corbin.

She was alone. Her eyes were fixed on his face. The sentry hovered at her shoulder and watched Hanley narrowly.

“So—you’re Lieutenant Hanley—the spy dropper,” she said sharply. “You are the brave soldier who would rather die than betray his spy. So!”

Something hissed within Hanley. He drew back his hand. He struck her across the mouth. She fell back with a little cry. The sentry lifted

the rifle butt to crash his skull. But the girl spoke a command in German.

"Let him alone!" she ordered. "Have we not known of the politeness and gentleness of the Yankee pigs?" There was a little trickle of blood running from the corner of her mouth.

"You dirty traitor!" snarled Hanley. "You damned doublecrosser! I'll save you the trouble of being tried and shot the next time you get on our side of the lines. I'll do the job here."

He moved forward, his hands reaching out like claws.

The naked bayonet on the sentry's rifle penetrated an inch into his chest. He was not conscious of the pain. He glared at her. She laughed.

"Bring him with you," she ordered the sentry.

Hanley was marched to the office of the commandant of the prison. She dismissed the commandant with an imperious nod. "Stand at the door," she ordered the sentry. "Do not interfere unless I call you."

"Now, then, my impetuous friend," she said to Hanley, "which is it to be? Do you make up your mind to tell me who you transported to this side of the lines, or shall I give you back to the firing squad?"

"I THOUGHT, that being a woman, perhaps I could be a little easier on you than the Intelligence officers who questioned you. I thought perhaps I could succeed where they failed. But I will not fool with you." She was speaking loudly.

Hanley stared at her. He wondered if he was entirely mad. If this was really happening, and this girl was actually sitting there, saying these words to him; taunting him.

"You know blamed well who I brought over here," he said fiercely.

"I brought you, and I wish I had been able to dump you out before I brought you."

She laughed. "That would be a great story to tell at Headquarters," she said, "without a change of expression. I imagine His Highness, General von Galtz, would be amused at the thought of a Yankee flyer carrying his *Fräulein* around in an American airplane, from the Yankee side of the lines to the German. I am tempted to take you to Headquarters and have you make that statement."

"Maybe it's funny," he said. "But it's damned well the truth. I don't know what it's all about—but if you want me to spill it—I will."

"You are a hard case," she said. "I have not met many men like you. Perhaps it might have been better to have let the firing squad do its work.

"ON second thought, I do not think I will send you back to the firing squad, just yet," she said coolly. "I think I will experiment with you a little before I decide." She studied his face for a long moment. "You are hungry, no?"

He stared at her, his eyes red-rimmed and glaring.

"But I know!" she smiled. "All the men are hungry here. So, I will return kindness for unkindness. I even came prepared."

She called the sentry. "Bring me the package on the desk," she ordered.

The man brought it to her.

"Something to eat," she told Hanley. "Possibly the most precious thing I could offer." Her eyes were fixed intently on his face. "I hope that what this package contains will give you pleasure."

"You keep your blasted bribes," he said harshly. "Don't think you can make a sucker out of me more than once."

Little red spots came into her cheeks. Her eyes were glistening. "Take it," she said, almost softly. "And be sure you eat what it contains."

She turned away with a swish of silks.

She walked out, leaving him with the package in his hands.

The guard prodded him back to the stockade.

The guard wanted trouble. He wanted an excuse to dash out the prisoner's brains with a rifle butt. But Hanley walked on in a daze, clutching his package.

He sat down on the ground next to his pup tent and opened the strings. There were cakes, a loaf of bread and a sausage in the package. He looked at them for a long time. His mouth generated saliva at the smell of the meat. He tore at the bread with his hands. He crammed it into his mouth. Prisoners were watching him—like one animal watching another gorging itself.

Suddenly he stopped chewing. There was something in the bread. Something which crackled and made a little tearing sound. He swallowed hard. He stared around him. Then he crawled into the tent.

CHAPTER V

Escape In Sight



WITH trembling hands he took a note out of the bread. He shielded it with his body so that he could not be seen from outside the tent. There was a fierce surge of something racing within him. It flooded into his eyes, almost blinded him. He tried to focus on the writing. It danced and swayed crazily before his eyes. After a long time he could read the

closely scrawled page. The writing said:

Darling:

Remember how cold it was, and how near the stars were? Remember that I said we should always have something to remember? My heart is bleeding because you are hurt. I could hardly stand looking at you there in the courtyard, in front of the firing squad. For a moment I was on the verge of rushing to you—and ruining everything. But I was fighting—for the two of us.

You won't understand. I won't try to explain. Only—trust me. Believe in me, and somehow, we will win through. I am asking to be allowed to see you, to try to get information. I shall be cruel to you, and you will understand, but I have to play the part as it is written.

I have a plan. There is a stream of water running through your prison. It is deep enough for the purpose. It flows out under the stockade. There are gates which block the stream, but do not worry about them, I will see that everything is clear. Get together four or five men you can trust. Swear them to secrecy. Give them the hope of escape.

Leave the rest to me. I shall be back. I will tell you what to do. Only now I tell you that you are going out of the stockade by way of the stream—underwater, until you come up on the other side. After that, it will be my job to take you the rest of the way—and to go with you.

Look up at the stars tonight, and understand that I am looking at them too, and that I am waiting for you to take me back up to them—to touch them with our hands.

Yours always,

Vera.

He chewed the pages as he read them until they were pulp, and then swallowed them. He walked out among the prisoners. His eyes swept about him. After an hour he said to the young Englishman: "What would you do for a chance to escape—to get out of this?"

The young Englishman's hand made a clawing motion. His dull eyes were suddenly illuminated. "God!" he breathed. His white mouth grew taut, his body rigid. He stared at Hanley. He was young—hardly more than a school boy.

They squatted in the shade of

Hanley's tent and Hanley talked. He talked in a normal voice so that the sentry might not be suspicious. But he spoke words of fire and his voice was like the call of a bugle to the young Englishman. In the end, the boy was trembling and feverish.

"I can tell you nothing more, but that we are going out of here, and that there is a plan for us when we are out of the stockade. If you want to go—and take your chances—say so."

"I'll come—anywhere, to get away from here," half sobbed the R. F. C. pilot.

Then Hanley went to the Russian with the wild eyes.

"What would you do for a chance to escape—to get out this?" he said.

The Russian brought his teeth together with a snap and his lips curled back over his teeth.

"I would spit in the face of the devil," he grated savagely. "Show me a chance. Just one chance is all I ask against these dogs—one man's chance to get even and to die fighting and not like a rat."

AND so, the wild-eyed Russian was recruited in Hanley's party.

At the end of two days there were five of them shaking with the desire to be free. They fought to restrain impatience; against betraying themselves to the sentries through the exhibition of nervous energy and hope. But inside they were consumed by hot impatience, and their eyes never left Hanley's face. They only knew that through him they might gain freedom.

It was five days until Vera Corbin came again. A sentry came into the stockade and gave Hanley a gruff summons. He glanced fleetingly at the four of them as he climbed protestingly to his feet to follow the sentry.

She was sitting in the command-

ant's chair. Her eyes were shining. They read Hanley's face for a sign. But he was surly.

"Well, what the devil do you want now?" he demanded.

"Perhaps you couldn't digest the food I brought you on my last visit?" she asked.

"No trouble about digesting it," he told her sulkily. "The trouble was that there was not enough of it. One small dose of food is not enough for a starving man."

"Well, show some gratitude, and perhaps there will be more," she tempted.

SHE questioned him. He gave her answers. Half-truths. This time the commandant did not leave his office. He was elated. He rubbed his hands together.

"Well, well," he said. "It seems that after all we are getting somewhere. I tell you, hunger and imprisonment softens these men like nothing else. Hah! Hah! They come in here like raging lions, but after a couple of weeks of the silent treatment, and our culinary endeavors, they become as weak as kittens."

Hanley had an overpowering desire to kick the officer in the belly.

"Well, at least, this time he has earned his little bag of food." She gave it to him. "Here, little kitten," she said mockingly. "If you had a better memory there would be more for you."

"I told you everything I know," he growled. "I brought an agent on this side of the lines and dropped him about Mericault. Hell, they don't tell us who we carry. We get orders to go some place and come back—that's all."

She climbed to her feet, her eyes fixed on his face.

"Well, if you like what I bring you, and you think it improves your memory, just ask for me. I have infinite patience and a great curiosity."

The commandant roared with laughter. Then they took Hanley back to the stockade.

CHAPTER VI

Vera's Strategy



WEAT — cold sweat beaded down his brow as he made a pretense at wolfing the food in the package. He found the note he expected. He crumpled it in his hand and stuffed it inside his shirt. He dared not read it at the moment. Someone might be watching.

He suffered agonies of suspense throughout the rest of the morning, and until the prisoners were being fed the terrible slum at noon. In the confusion of the wolfing, he threw himself down on his belly inside his pup tent and read the note. It was brief:

Tonight. The lights will go out. They will be out for more than ten minutes, until they discover a short circuit and fix it. The instant the flood lights are extinguished go to the fence at the point where the stockade crosses the stream. Dive in. Swim under water for a distance of twenty feet. The current will be turned off in the wire.

The only danger is that you will come up too soon and get tangled in the wire under the surface. The wire is only two or three feet down under the surface. You must get to the bottom of the water, and hug the bottom, until you are sure you are clear. When you are free of the stockade follow the stream on the south bank until it crosses a dirt road. I will be waiting there.—Vera.

Once more he tore the note to pieces with his teeth, masticated the paper thoroughly and swallowed it.

Then he went out to find the young Englishman and the others.

One at a time he told them of the time and the place.

It was an eternity before the dark-

ness came, and the floodlights which illuminated the stockade with a blinding brilliance were lit. The lights at night drove men crazy. There had been men who had charged those lights, screaming, and had grasped at the wire to climb up and smash them with bare fists.

And the wire had sizzled and given off blue flame, and the poor devils had been convulsed and burned to death on the spot. No one could free them until the commandant ordered the current turned off.

THEY hung until then, squirming and twisting in death agony with the smell of burning flesh rising in the nostrils of the raging men within the stockade.

Then, like a strangled breath, it happened. There was a blue flash of flame from somewhere.

In the darkness, Hanley crept along the wire until his hands found the water of the stream. He waited, his heart beating heavily, his nerves so taut that it seemed the top of his head would fly off. He heard movement about him. He called softly.

"Taylor!" A hand touched his shoulder. A voice whispered hoarsely in his ear.

"Righto!"

Other hands felt for him. He asked a single question.

"Everybody here?"

Four voices whispered jerky assent. He stood for a moment, his feet in the water. He drew a deep breath.

"Dive!" he told them. "All the way to the bottom. Don't come up until you're going to drown. Well—here goes!"

He slipped into the water head first, went down and down, until his hands found the bottom. Then he clawed at the mud bed of the stream.

He pulled himself along, fighting

against the buoyancy of his body. It seemed that he was traveling miles, but he knew it was merely a matter of feet. His ear drums became roaring cataracts. Dancing green lights burst like flares in his brain.

He knew that he could not stay down another moment. The water was about to rush into his nose and mouth. His chest was being crushed. He was going to suck water through his nostrils in spite of his will not to breathe.

He pushed himself up and struggled to reach the surface. It seemed a thousand feet to the top. He knew he wasn't going to make it. He was going to drown—in a miserable creek outside a German prison camp. He gave one last mighty lunge.

He felt his body break the surface just as the tortured lungs sobbed and sucked desperately for air. He felt for the bank of the stream with his hands. He pulled himself up on the clay and grass sides. He fell face forward and panted like a winded dog.

HE heard a splashing behind him. Someone said, as if being beaten with whips:

"Cheerio! God—what a swim!" and flopped down beside him.

There were more little splashes in the darkness. Then they were all spread-eagled on the bank, gasping for breath.

"She said ten minutes of darkness," mumbled Hanley. "Come on. We got to go away from here."

They crawled on their bellies to keep off the horizon line. After a hundred yards they came up to hands and knees and went along that way for a distance. Finally they came erect and ran. Behind them they caught the glare as the lights over the stockade went on again.

There would be a quick check of prisoners if the commandant were sober. If he happened to be drunk

there might be no check and they would not be missed until morning.

In the darkness they found the road. They came to a halt and threw themselves down on the ground. They waited and listened. A voice spoke coolly. There was only one voice in the world like it—Vera's!

"This way," urged the voice. "Quick!"

They discovered a huge bulking thing parked beside the road.

"A lorry!" the young Englishman exclaimed.

"INSIDE," said the voice. "Listen carefully. There are uniforms in there. Put them on. This truck is filled with empty cases. Lieutenant Hanley will crawl up on the seat with me as soon as he puts on his uniform. The rest of you will lift the cases and crawl underneath—and stay there until I tell you to come out. Hurry—please!"

They swarmed over the tail gate of the lorry. There was a glimmer of light from an oil lantern burning low and carefully shielded inside it. The five German uniforms—worn and dirty, were in separate piles. They snatched at the garments and shed their own clothes.

Hanley finished with the pulling on of the boots over the trousers and swarmed into his tunic. He took up a coal bucket helmet and put it on his head. He climbed up on the seat of the lorry.

"There are papers in the inside pocket of each tunic, for five German privates. You had better glance at your names. But if we are stopped you will stay under your cases and let me do the talking."

Her voice might have been giving instructions in a dancing lesson.

"Can you drive a lorry?" she asked Hanley.

"Sure, I can drive anything," he assured her.

"Well, drive this one," she told

him. "The gears are just the reverse of the standard American gear shift."

He felt for the lever and the accelerator. The motor picked up speed. He meshed gears. The lorry moved. He saw her for the first time in a vagrant beam of moonlight coming from under a cloud. She was wearing the uniform of a German sub-lieutenant.

"Where to?" he asked with a grin.

"Two miles from here you will find a train of lorries ready to pull out for the front. Just head into the train and follow in line."

HE took a deep breath and stared at her face.

"My God," he said.

She smiled.

"The best cover is in the most conspicuous place. We want to go to the front. These lorries are going to the front. We go with them. Who would suspect a lorry in the middle of a whole train?"

"Nobody," he confessed.

"That's why we're going to join the train."

There was a long silence. At the end she turned her head.

"You said some terrible things to me—back there," she said with a tremor in her voice. "I'd like to explain."

"You don't have to explain," he told her. "This explains everything." He patted the wheel of the truck with his hand.

"I've been doing this—since the beginning," she told him. "I've been playing with fire on both sides of the lines. You know about me—over here. On this side of the lines I'm *Fräulein* Hartmann—and I've earned the confidence of General von Galtz. I've given him information that no one else could get. I've given it to him, to make it possible for me to work—for the Allies. I was in Germany when the war broke out. I was

a school girl. I was approached by the French. I wanted to do something to help—anything. I accepted an espionage assignment.

"I got myself engaged to a young German officer. He was killed in the first four months of the war. I went to the *Wilhelmstrasse*. I told them that I wanted to do something to carry on for him. They took me on. Oh—it's a nasty business. It makes one shudder. It's like lying and stealing and betraying. But it's war—and I'm doing my part.

"After the first year I was assigned to General von Galtz personally. After that—I was invaluable to the French." She laughed, a short, bitter laugh. "Three times I have been set down by German pilots on French soil. Each time the *Wilhelmstrasse* thought I was going into France to learn things for Germany.

"They never knew that I was going to make my own report to the French. They never knew how I got back. I never told them. Perhaps they suspected—but after all they were interested in information and not in the ways and means of getting it."

Ahead there was a multitude of lorries. Hanley drove in among them, backing and turning into position. The long column swallowed the single lorry after a moment. A great cloud of dust obscured it.

CHAPTER VII

Hanley Scores



THEY drove on, locked in the long snake of the lorry column, through the black hours of the night. For the most part they drove in silence, deafened by the roar of the multitude of motors in the column.

"The uniforms came from a hospital," she said once, breaking the

silence. They belonged to men who died. There are weapons in the cases also—if we need them.”

Something in her voice caused him to shiver.

At dawn they were far south. In the war zone. She studied the surrounding countryside.

“In a few minutes we will come to the edge of a flying field,” she told him. “When you see it, or when I tell you, make the engine act as if it was failing—then stall it, and get out and look under the motor bonnet. There will be excitement and cursing, but let me do the talking.”

There was an air of tension about the truck train. Officers on motorcycles ran up and down the sides of the column shouting at the drivers to increase speed.

The train was being broken up into sections of twelve trucks. The sections were running the gauntlet of cross roads which had been under shellfire. The drivers were nervous.

After another twenty minutes her hand settled on Hanley’s arm.

“Get ready,” she said. They were coming to a great open field. There was the sound of other motors mingled with the drone and clatter of the lorry motors.

HANLEY lifted his eyes from the tail gate of the truck in front. He saw planes flying off the ground. A squadron was taking the air. He counted the ships. There were eighteen of them divided into flights of six ships each. They were vivid red and marked with the Maltese cross of the enemy. They were two-seater Hals.

They came to the side of the field bordering the road. The girl glanced at the truck column.

“Now,” she said.

He reached for the dashboard and pulled out the choke. The motor in the truck strangled on the sudden rush of gasoline through the car-

buretor. The engine coughed. The lorry slowed down, went ahead in jerks.

Hanley manipulated the choke to keep the truck moving for a few feet at a time, and to keep the motor missing and sputtering. After a moment he killed it altogether.

It stalled in the center of the road. There was the crunch of braking from the other trucks. The column came to a halt.

The trucks in front disappeared into the dust.

A FRANTIC transport officer on a motorcycle raced down the line. He was red in the face from cursing. He flung himself off the motorcycle beside the stalled truck and shouted at the driver.

“What the devil is the matter with you, you dumbhead? Don’t you know better than to stall here in the road? Do you want to be responsible for losing the whole train?”

The girl leaned forward in the seat. The transport officer saw that she wore an officer’s uniform and that her face and shoulders were white with dust.

“Something has gone wrong with the motor,” she told the transport officer. “It has been missing for an hour—then it cut out.”

She glared at Hanley. He descended from behind the wheel and lifted the hood over the motor. He stared for a long moment at the sizzling engine and then shrugged his shoulders.

The transport officer was beside himself with impatience.

“Put it in the ditch at the side of the road!” he commanded. “Get it out of the way.” He beckoned to the driver of the following lorry.

“Give this dumbhead a push! Push him clear of the road. Into the ditch if you must—clear the road!”

There was the bump of the following lorry against the tail of Han-

ley's truck. He climbed back to his seat behind the wheel. The truck behind pushed mightily. Hanley turned the truck into the ditch.

The transport officer gave orders.

"If you can get it running you can get it out of the ditch—follow. If not—stay here for all I care!" He bounced off on his motorcycle. The trucks moved forward again.

"Get out," said the girl. "Lift the hood again. Make it look as if you are working over the motor."

So Hanley stood in the road, prickles rising on his back, and puttered with a perfectly good motor, while the truck train passed and became lost in the dust ahead. After half an hour the one lorry was by itself, close to the edge of the flying field.

Vera spoke into emptiness in clipped phrases. The men under the cases in the back of the lorry listened. Hanley kept his head down as he hung over the motor and listened.

"THERE are six of us—five excluding myself. What is to come must be decided by you. There are three automatic rifles in those cases and plenty of ammunition. There is a Luger for each of you and a dozen hand grenades. Over there is a flying field. It is the base of the 91st Observation *Jagdstaffel*.

"The airplanes are two-seaters. Eighteen of them have left the field. I don't know how many men are on the field now, nor how many planes. It will be necessary for you to go over there and *get the ships you need*. You can cross this field without raising an alarm because of your German uniforms. But once you are over there—"

Hanley lifted his head from the motor. His face was set into hard lines and his eyes were burning. He walked around to the tail gate of the truck.

"Let's go," he said grimly. "Let's get this over with. All I want is one chance in a hundred of pulling this off."

The four inside the truck secured the automatic rifles and the other weapons from the cases and dropped out onto the road. They stood for a moment, their faces like *papier-mâché* masks. Hanley stepped out, climbed over the ditch and strode across the field, toward the hangars.

He looked around suddenly. He saw that Vera was striding with him.

"Go back!" he ordered harshly. "Go back—you can't come in on this."

She laughed strangely.

"I am in on it," she told him. "And I am going back—back with you. Don't argue now, you'll spoil everything. Remember I have an officer's uniform—and you can't argue with me without attracting attention."

They marched on, a little knot of men with death in their eyes.

They were in among the hangars. Their eyes were staring hungrily for ships. There was a thrill running through them.

There were ships there. A dozen more in the hangars. The field was quiet and almost deserted-looking excepting for the mechanics working inside the hangars.

A non-commissioned officer saluted the girl.

"We have a disabled lorry," she said in an annoyed voice. "We have had nothing to eat since yesterday at noon. I want rations for my men, and food for myself."

The non-com was surly.

"We draw rations to cover our own strength," he said. "I don't think it is possible to feed all the stragglers passing the field."

"Where is your officer?" she demanded sharply.

"He is sleeping—and my orders

are not to disturb him, nor the other officers who are not on duty."

The five of them stared at the airplanes in the hangars. There was a line of tents behind them, evidently officer's quarters. Hanley nodded his head toward the Englishman and gave orders with his eyes. The Englishman moved toward the tents. He carried his automatic rifle in his hands. He looked as if he prayed something would come out of the tents.

Hanley moved close to the German sergeant. Then his hand drew the Luger from the holster. The lean nose of the Luger touched the flesh of the non-com's belly.

"Walk straight ahead!" he commanded viciously.

The girl interpreted for him. The sergeant seemed dazed. He moved slowly, walking backward. The mechanics in the hangar dropped arms and lifted heads.

They stared at the spectacle of a sergeant being moved about with a gun at his belly.

"Roll out those ships!" snapped Hanley. And again the girl translated.

THE sergeant's big neck was red. There were blue networks of veins standing out on his face. He belated an order.

"Do nothing without my command!"

Hanley stood back a pace. His eyes were narrowed and filled with little glinting points of flame. The Luger in his hand barked once. A round black dot appeared in the center of the sergeant's forehead.

He took three strides into the hangar. The mechanics stared in terrible fascination at his left hand. He was holding a live grenade. He had no need to give orders. The muzzle of the Luger passed over them and they felt the chill menace of its deadly presence. Out of the

corner of their eyes they could see the crumpled body of the sergeant on the ground before the hangar.

The Russian spat German at them. He was crouched forward on the balls of his feet. His eyes also flamed. There was a live grenade in his hand.

"RUN them out, you fools!" he told them in a voice which was like a machine-gun. "Quick—do as you are told! Would you like to lie there with your sergeant? One move, one cry—and you get this." He made a move as if about to toss the grenade.

There was a choking cry from one of the men. And then the hangar crew was pushing frantically on the wings and fuselages of the planes.

A voice cried out sharply from the officers' quarters. It was stilled by the crack of the automatic rifle in the hands of the young Englishman. A Luger cracked with its dry cough.

Three or four men ran out of tents on the field, paused, stared in disbelief, and then made an attempt to duck back into shelter. But the automatic rifle tumbled them over. There was a sinister, final sound to its bark.

The six of them held the field. They watched the surrounding fields and the road for the coming of trouble, but nothing moved.

The Russian climbed into the first plane which came onto the line and seated himself in the cockpit. He gestured to the Scot to do the same. The French pilot who coughed swarmed into a cockpit before the two-seater was on the field.

"Contact!" commanded the wild-eyed Russian.

The mechanics swung the props and the motors fired.

Two more ships came rolling out of the hangars. The Russian started them both from the front seat. Finally, after an eternity there were five ships on the line, ticking over,

with white-faced mechanics herded together under the threat of grenades and gun muzzles.

The Englishman climbed into one of the Hals and fastened the belt. The Scot was next. The Frenchman and the Russian took their places.

The girl climbed into the back seat of the only plane without a pilot.

Hanley turned toward the hangars. His left arm came up. He threw the grenade in his hand. At the same time he opened with his Luger at the mechanics, firing close over their heads. They fell to the ground. The grenade burst in the center of the hangar, blowing it to shreds.

In the confusion, Hanley had hurled himself into the front seat of the ship holding the girl, had opened the throttle, was swinging it away from the line, downfield, with the B. M. W. in the Hal's nose churning heavily and powerfully

Behind him hurtled the four other ships of the flight. The flight of the living dead was awing.

Behind them the field smoked and blazed. Flame from the bombed hangar was leaping over the ground, toward the other hangars.

CHAPTER VIII

Death Rides High



COMING down like questing falcons, there were suddenly shadows over them. The shadows were two-seater Hals like the ships they flew.

Somehow, the men of that enemy squadron which had been raped by the escaping prisoners had flown over the field and had guessed the truth, or had actually seen the five Hals taking off.

None of the men with Hanley knew location or position. They

knew none of the land marks below them. They knew only to follow Hanley, and he knew only to keep the compass registering south. They raged over the earth, sometimes with spreader bars brushing the tops of German defensive positions.

THE shadows came down with wicked whining of motors. Hanley's ships were faster because they were lighter. But the ships above them had altitude and the chance to dive to the attack. They roared down, keeping in echelons of six ships each as they had taken off the field. They surged in on the tails of the five fleeing Hals just as Hanley's ship thrust its nose out over the front itself.

He cut in his own Spandaus. Each time he saw a target flying into his sights he blasted at it with quick, jolting bursts. The sky about him was filled with crazily tossing wings, and plunging fuselages. They forced him to swerve out of his course, to skirt to the east and west, while other ships rained down on him from above and poured lead into the stolen Hal.

The enemy pilots seemed to sense the fact that Hanley was the leader of the stolen ships. They ganged on him. They boxed him in and made an effort to drive him into the ground. But they were attacking mostly from the front.

He discovered the reason. He had a glimpse of the girl, standing upright in the back of the Hal, the butt of its Parabellum pressed against her shoulder, her hair streaming out in front of her face, her delicate face steel hard, and the muzzle of the gun squirting flame. Each time a Hal came swooping down to cover the tail of Hanley's ship, the Parabellum moved on its rack, and the heat of its fire warmed the back of Hanley's neck.

There were ships above and be-

low Hanley to his front. They made a flying red wall. It seemed impossible to penetrate them.

Then, suddenly, they were broken—literally broken to fragments and there was a jagged break in the circle barring Hanley from crossing the lines. There was the thin scream of a motor and the roar of a plane plunging madly through space. A red smear passed above Hanley. He glanced at it.

He saw a blond head and a white face. The shoulders of the pilot protruded above the cockpit. A picture flashed on Hanley's brain screen. The Englishman. Flying like a fury. The Englishman's hand lifted as he went over Hanley. He seemed to be smiling and nodding, as if saying:

"Well, cheerio, old man, and thanks a lot!"

He drove his ship headlong into the mass of planes in front of Hanley. There was a sudden scurrying. The enemy pilots attempted to slip out of the plunging path of the Hal. There was a shuddering impact and the sheering of wings and fuselages.

THERE were three ships smashed to kindling wood in that mad collision.

Three of them locked in a death embrace, tumbling shapelessly out of the sky and burning fiercely.

And Hanley leaped through the space which had been cleared for him and crossed the lines. He went berserk. He sent the Hal after those German-flown Hals like a pit terrier shaking the life out of a pack of rats.

The Germans were broken and stunned by the collision.

He saw olive drab uniforms under him. There was a dull thrill working within him. He was back on his own side of the lines. Those men down there were Americans.

A ship tumbled out of the sky,

splashed against the surface of the earth, rent itself into slivers.

And then he was clear, flying low and fast, jumping tree tops. There was one other red winged Hal in the sky with him. It was keeping close to his tail. Back there—a mile or more, the two-seater Hals were fighting for their lives against a group of Spads. The Spads had poured down out of the sun, drawn by the spectacle of German ships fighting German ships.

HE saw a field. It seemed that he was going to sleep and that he could not keep his eyes open. His body felt dead, sodden. He held the ship level over the open space, put its wheels on the ground. The landing gear collapsed with a jarring grind and the right wing of the Hal dug into the earth, tumbled over, and snapped off short against the fuselage.

The red shape followed him, sat down daintily. Men were running toward the cracked ship. Men, in American uniforms, carrying pistols.

"What the dickens!"

Hanley heard his own voice hoarse, rasping:

"Lieutenant Hanley, 22nd Pursuit Squadron, back from a special mission, communicate, O. I. C., M. I., D. H. Q."

He could feel himself slipping, down into a black void. His eyes were too heavy to keep open. He felt someone squeezing his hand. He saw, through the slits of his eyes, the glittering eyes of the Russian. The Russian was smiling whitely, and there was blood on his face. His black hair was matted with grease and oil.

"Some day, perhaps, I can thank you," the Russian said, gratefully. "Not now. The other two—where they are, they thank you. It is better to be free—out there, in a ship, than a starving rat in a prison stockade."

He kissed the girl's hand.

A field ambulance took Vera Corbin and Hanley to Division Headquarters.

They sat in a corner of the Crillon bar and the place pulsed with life and hectic gayety, but neither of them seemed to notice. There was a drink on the table before them, but it was untouched. They merely sat and looked, each at the face of the other.

There was a new Cross hanging from Hanley's tunic. Now and then he touched it and it seemed to burn his fingers. He opened his mouth.

"It was pretty swell of the old boy, to give me twenty days—here—with you."

SHE looked at him and there was infinite tenderness and compassion in her eyes for his gaunt face and tortured eyes. She took him by the hand and led him out on the balcony. High above the darkened city the stars looked down like diamonds set in black velvet. She breathed deeply and made a little sound in her throat. Her eyes were wide, looking up, toward the distant, black heavens.

"We don't belong there," she said, moving her head toward the jazz band and the false gayety. "We belong here, under the stars—"

She was silent for a little moment.

"I TOLD them today that I was through," she told him. "Even if I wanted to go back it would be futile—I am a marked woman—over there—after what happened—"

He was trying to say something. His hands were crushing her arms. He was looking down at her white face. There was something fierce, intense about him—and something pitifully mute. His face was white, and his breath rasped in his throat.

"Geel!" he said after a moment, and the words seemed to stick in his throat. "Twenty days—in Paris—that's great—married—"

She laughed, with a little sob in the laugh. Her hands went out to him. She wept softly on his shoulder.

And the stars which were like diamonds on black velvet hung over them like a canopy.

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I Fought *the*



*An Amazing
Story of True
Experience
in Tibet and
Kham!*

CHAPTER I

"Foreign Devil!"

"YOU'RE under arrest!"

I hadn't liked the look of that smart-aleck young Chinese officer from the minute he'd stopped me in the archway of the great gate of Cheng-tu, the capital city of the vast Szechwan Province.

He was too cocky, too insolently pleased with some hidden joke—a joke that was certainly on me, now.

I'd accepted his offer of an escort

to the Governor's *yamen*, since my business was with His Excellency—and the rascal had brought me into the *yamen*, all right, but not into the Governor's presence.

This corridor was the prison ward.

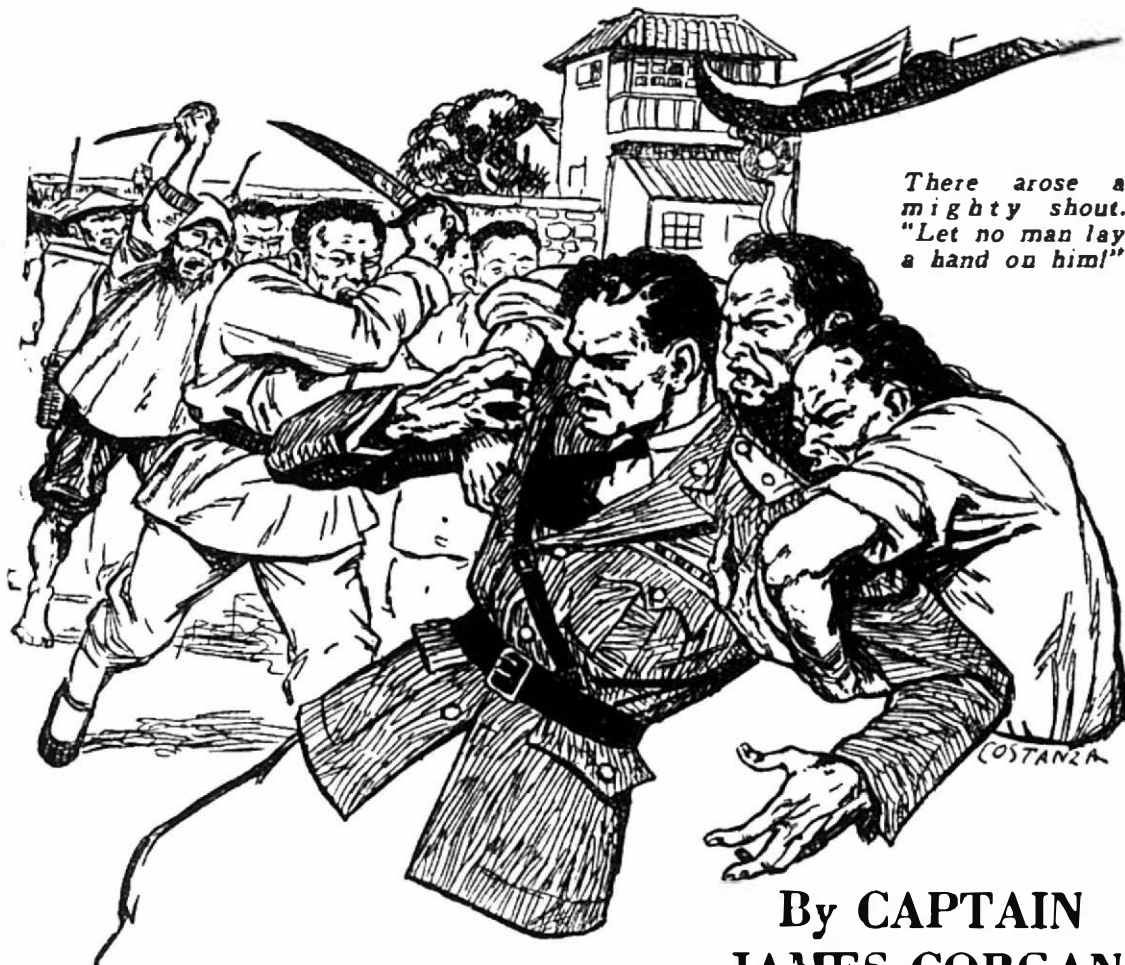
"By what right—" I began.

"By the Governor's orders!" chuckled the young officer.

The escort of slovenly Chinese soldiers halted in the dark prison corridor. With mocking Oriental courtesy, the officer invited me to enter an open cell.

Exciting Conflict with Barbarous Lamas

Yellow Horde



There arose a
mighty shout.
"Let no man lay
a hand on him!"

By CAPTAIN
JAMES CORGAN

It was a repulsive and filthy place, lighted by a small window high up in the wall, and furnished only by a stone bench. Yet resistance was useless; these men might, indeed, be seeking just such an excuse to kill a "foreign devil." I went in.

One of the soldiers followed me, dropped on a knee—there was a jingle, a click—leg-irons! Snapped deftly into place about my ankles! The man stepped back toward the door.

Rage welled up in my heart. I

leaped at the man—but the irons tripped me. I fell to my knees. The soldiers slammed and barred the grated door fairly in my face. The sound of chattering laughter and retreating footsteps down the corridor told me that they were leaving me alone with my rage and my teeming thoughts.

Only a moment before, I had been a person of consequence, an official of the Central Government at Nanking arriving on a confidential mission—now here I was chained like

in the Wake of a Precious Jade Casket!

a dog in a Chinese dungeon, and destined for an unknown fate at the whim of a petty Chinese tyrant.

I knew that it was useless to wonder even why I had been arrested.

The endless intrigues of Chinese politics were beyond my comprehension. The Governor of Szechwan—in whose *yamen* I was now a prisoner—was to all intents and purposes an independent sovereign, giving precious little allegiance to the Nationalist government at Nanking. Their arm was not long enough to disturb the Governor of this remote province.

But why had he arrested me? I could not imagine what the Governor had to gain by my arrest.

For I was here in the Governor's capital city of Cheng-tu at the Governor's own request. The Governor required a white man to go on a mission into the land of Kham.

Kham lay to the westward of Cheng-tu, a lawless territory divided among the nominal authority of a score of petty native princes, and forming a sort of buffer state between the territories of the Chinese Republic and the mysterious monk-ruled land of Tibet, secure on its high plateau amid the tremendous mountains which men called "The Roof of the World."

NEITHER in Kham nor in Tibet were Chinese pretensions to suzerainty effective. In Tibet itself the word of the Dalai Lama at Lhasa was law, while in Kham the native rajahs ruled where they could and left the rest to the innumerable bands of brigands who infested not only the states of Kham, but all the mountains in western Szechwan.

Nor was this the worst. On the west the Tibetans were pushing forward their frontier, overthrowing one native state after another and reducing them to vassalage. On the north the wild Golock nomads of Ko-

konor were raiding the Kham villages with fire and sword, and the Tibetan monasteries were becoming centers of sedition and rebellion, especially those inhabited by the Red Lamas, ever turbulent and seeking an excuse for disorder.

The one Chinese garrison in Kham was at Cham-do in the fork of the upper Mekong. A request had come to Nanking for a trusted European official who could be sent into Kham with an important secret message to the commandant at Chan-do, passing himself off *en route* as an explorer.

THE Yuans had been only too glad to oblige the powerful Governor of Szechwan. They had sent him my buddy Jack Graham.

A week later had come a request for another officer, accompanied by a hint that something had happened to Graham. I'd insisted on going—

Was Jack in prison too? Or had those grim mountains of Kham swallowed him up in sinister silence?

When I'd left Nanking I'd cherished in my heart the resolve not only to carry out his mission successfully, but to find Jack Graham—my buddy—my pal of a hundred adventures. Find him, or tear the land of Kham into little pieces trying—

Huh! And here I was in a nice Chinese jail. Pinched, by God, as soon as I'd set foot inside the walls of Cheng-tu—pinched without a word of explanation, by soliders wearing the device of the Province of Szechwan, and rushed off to the hoose-gowl!

Chained up—in the prison of the treacherous Governor, Chao Yang Ying! He, doubtless, was dishing up some new intrigue with the Russians, the Tibetans, the bandits or God knows who—

I set my teeth. The yellow devil wasn't going to get away with it! Somehow, I was going to get back my liberty. Not only my life, but



"Take me to the man you got this from!" he demanded

Jack Graham's life might hang upon my success.

I concentrated upon the immediate problem in hand. How was I going to get out of that dungeon? The door and windows were secondary considerations. First of all I had to get rid of the leg-irons.

I sat down on the verminous floor and examined them. They were not the ancient and heavy native manacles, but modern irons, apparently of American manufacture—which accounted for the fact that the soldier had been able to snap them so deftly and quickly about my ankles.

I thought a moment, yes—it might work. From my pocket I took a little six-inch ruler which I had used in correcting my rather inaccurate road map of Szechwan. Fortunately they had not bothered to search me, or to take anything from me except my holstered pistol.

I stuck the ruler in a crack of the stone floor and broke it—then without difficulty I removed a little brass strip imbedded in its edge. The end of this strip I thrust down into the hole where the notched arm of the leg-iron entered the solid part containing the lock.

WHEN I had pushed the little strip into the hole as far as it would go, so that its end was hard against the latch of the iron where it engaged the notch in the movable arm, I pushed gently on the movable arm as though trying to close the leg-iron a notch tighter.

Thereupon, the bevelled end of the latch slipped up over the end of the brass strip, which prevented it from engaging the next notch. I reversed the pressure, and, holding the brass strip in place, I found that I was able to pull the leg-iron all the way open, the brass strip carrying the latch past all the notches!

Exultant with success, I repeated the process on the other ankle and

cast my shackles aside. Of them, at least, I was free. Now for the door!

But I had scarcely started to examine this when footsteps and a jingle of keys warned me of the approach of a jailer. I snatched up the leg-irons, and jumped back into the corner next to the door where the jailer would not see me at first. I hoped desperately that the man was coming into my cell for some reason or other, and the click of a key in the lock gave this hope joyous confirmation. The door swung inward; the jailer stepped into the cell.

A WATER jar in his left hand told the purpose of his visit. Bracing myself against the wall I brought the heavy leg-irons crashing down on his round head. The fellow gave one shrill yell as he stumbled forward—then I hit him again, and he fell on his face, his blood mingling with the water from the shattered jar.

I snatched the keys, sprang out into the corridor and ran for the door at its end—the door through which I'd been brought in, and which led directly to the street.

The door was locked. Hastily I searched for the right key—and as I fumbled with them, I heard a low moan—such a moan as might be torn from the reluctant lips of a man trying to bear unutterable agony with fortitude. I spun round.

There was no one in the prison corridor. The dim light from the open cell door showed the feet of the unconscious jailer sticking out, motionless. Nothing else.

I heard that moan again—now I realized it came from the cell at the right of the door.

I peered in through the iron grill and an exclamation of pity rose to my lips. I saw an old Chinese, naked save for a loin-cloth, stretched out upon his back.

His hands and feet were tied to

rings in the wall; he was gagged, so that he could not utter a sound save those pitiful moans; and across his naked chest were laid heavy planks piled high with lumps of building stone!

A cold sweat of horror broke out on my forehead. I found a key that turned in the cell lock—now to tumble those infernal stones away, lift up the planks: so. The sufferer fixed his eyes on me and waited—it came to me that he was waiting to be killed!

"My honorable friend must not distress himself," I said in my best Mandarin. "I have come to help him. See—I cut the cords. You are free!"

The old man sat up, propping himself on one arm.

His face and eyes were utterly expressionless now, though it was plain to me that the man was still suffering intense pain.

"I must go," I continued. "I will open the door, that we may both depart."

I had the outer door open by now, and turned back to help the old man up. I just couldn't bring myself to abandon the poor old fellow.

But to my astonishment the old man suddenly bounded to his feet made a rush for the open door and was gone—out into the teeming street.

I WAS right behind him. Yet when I emerged from the vile-smelling prison, the old man had vanished into the crowd of wayfarers and was out of sight.

"Well, the ungrateful old blank-blank!" I muttered. Nevertheless, I was glad enough to be rid of so burdensome a charge. I took one look about. No soldiers in sight, not even a curious glance from the passers-by

Drawing a deep breath of the fresh air of freedom, I started at

random down the nearest street. There was a British consul at Chengtu; and though as an official of the Nanking government I had no right to ask for foreign protection, I could at least get information at the consulate.

Information was, at the moment, the thing I needed most.

Afterward I could get in touch with my small escort and my faithful follower, Seti Gurung, a Gurka from Nepal who had been my No. 1 man in many a tight place.

I turned a corner, seeking a rickshaw—and came face to face with my friend, the young Chinese officer.

RECOGNITION was mutual and instantaneous—almost as instantaneous as the smack of my right fist on his yellow cheek. I'd swung for the jaw, but he'd learned more things European than English and how to wear khaki.

He'd ducked like a flash—my fist landed too high. He went down, but not out—and was yelling for help at the top of his voice as I tore down that crowded, narrow street as fast as I could run.

His yells were not without effect. Yellow hands grabbed at me; men seemed to spring up from the stones in my path. I was seized, stopped, surrounded by a howling mob. Blows rained upon me. Some fool raised a cry:

"Kill the foreign devil! He is a spy!"

Nobody stopped to ask what or whom I was spying for.

"Spy!" howled a dozen voices. I caught the flash of steel in the dusty sunlight. Knives were out that in another instant would be buried in my body.

"Kill him—he tried to murder me—" That was the young officer who had delegated himself my especial enemy. For no reason at all, so far as I could tell— I'd never seen

the scoundrel before in all my life. He came shoving forward, and a couple of knife men grinned and started for me. I was helpless. Too many men were holding me.

There arose another shout—a shout in a different tone, one of servile respect. I saw the heads of mounted men above the crowd, men who rode on recklessly, slashing their way through with loaded whips.

The mob scattered before them; the knife men drew back.

My friend in khaki vanished as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up and the leader of the horsemen, a fattish man in the magnificent livery of a vice-regal courier, reined in his horse before me.

"The word of His Excellency, Chao Yang Ying, Governor of Szechwan!" he cried in a high nasal voice, and every pig-tailed head was bowed. "You, foreigner, will come with me to His Excellency's *yamen*. Let no man lay a hand on the person of one whom His Excellency has deigned to honor. Go to your occupations."

A HORSE was brought up. Dazed, bruised, and by no means easy in mind, I mounted. I'd escaped the young officer, but the viceroy had me back. Now for the cell again and double irons. This stuff about "honor" I took with a grain of salt. It just meant that the viceroy wanted me for his own dark ends—

When I reached the main entrance of the *yamen*, however, I was astonished to find not only the outer gate standing open, but also all the smaller gates within, giving successive access to the several courtyards.

This was unusual, being done only for a most distinguished visitor; the rank of the person received being in direct proportion to the number of gates opened for him on his arrival. The other gates were customarily passed by small openings at one side.

Evidently some one of consider-

able importance was expected. Rather to my surprise, however, there was no delay. I was ushered in—the sentries presenting arms to my escort—and was astonished to see a dignified old Chinese gentleman hastening toward me, followed by several attendants. The old gentleman wore a yellow jacket, and the button of a mandarin of the first rank—unquestionably, he was the governor himself!

And as he drew nearer, I recognized his face.

CHAPTER II

The Jade Casket



THE old man whom I had released from the torture-cell and the governor of Szechwan were one and the same!

"I salute you as my preserver and friend!" the governor said, halting several paces away. "My person was seized an hour ago by certain conspirators, led by one of my secretaries. They had been led astray by the promises of a treacherous scoundrel. Thanks to you, however, and to certain loyal troops in the barracks nearby, I have now restored the situation; I, Chao Yang Ying, Governor of Szechwan, thank you for saving my unworthy life!"

I was speechless with astonishment, but I managed to return the governor's low bow.

"It was this secretary who dared to order your arrest, using my seal," the governor went on. "His—ah—employer was anxious to prevent your journey to Cham-do, being more concerned in keeping the land of Kham in a state of turbulence! But I have much to speak to you about,—will you not deign to enter my miserable dwelling?"

As I followed my host through the open gates there came to my ears the sound of horrible screaming. It grew in volume—

In the last courtyard two workmen were busy nailing a struggling howling Chinaman to the wooden wall while a dozen soldiers stood by.

The governor waved a casual hand. "The erring secretary," he observed.

I shuddered, but I knew better than to protest. The governor simply wouldn't have understood. So—there was treachery even in the *yamens* of the great! Russian gold—or Tibetan—

I remembered the young officer—he had the face of a conspirator—could he be the "employer" of whom the governor spoke?

I had an uneasy feeling that I was being used, being made a pawn on a chessboard of intrigues at which I could not even guess. That thought annoyed me infinitely.

The governor had already, apparently, forgotten the wretched secretary, whose screams could still be heard mingling with the thudding of the merciless hammer, and was discoursing pleasantly of the new land-tax and its effect upon the peasantry of Szechwan.

Not until we two were comfortably seated on cushioned divans in the private audience-chamber did His Excellency return to more personal matters.

A SOFT-FOOTED servant brought in tiny cups of tea, with the saucers on top in approved fashion.

These cups were received with both hands and held while talking; to sip the tea was the signal for departure.

At last I ventured to ask the question which was uppermost in my mind.

"Has anything been heard of Lieutenant Graham, Excellency?"

"Alas, no," the governor replied. "I

fear I sent that brave young man into grave danger."

"I will find him," I promised rashly. "Can I start at once?"

The governor smiled.

"American youth," he murmured. "Ever impetuous. But you shall have your chance. First you had better know something of the mission on which Lieutenant Graham set out."

"A dispatch for the commandant at Cham-do, was it not?"

"OSTENSIBLY, yes. So it was given out, and I saw to it all the city was so informed. But in fact I sent Lieutenant Graham into Kham to deliver the Jade Casket," and his smooth voice sank into a hushed tone of awe, "to the Yellow Lamas, the emissaries of the Dalai Lama of Lhasa."

This meant nothing to me, and I suppose my blank stare said so.

"You perhaps do not know," pursued the governor, "that there are two sets of Lamas, or rather, three, in Tibet and its border state, Kham. The yellow Lamas are the representatives of peace and order; they rule at Lhasa. The Red Lamas are fighting devils who are always causing trouble in the outlying provinces. There are also Black Lamas, a despised lot, almost outcasts. They really do not count. Now as to the Jade Casket."

The governor made a slight movement as though even he paid obeisance to a sacred name.

"This casket is reputed to contain," he continued, "the ashes of the most holy of the former Dalai Lamas—the fifth to hold that exalted rank. In his will he gave orders that his body should not be dissected and fed to the vultures, after the usual Tibetan custom, but should be burned and the ashes preserved for one hundred years after his death.

"On the one hundredth anniversary of his demise, these ashes should be

cast to the four winds from a monastery tower, and thereafter upon that monastery should rest the special blessing of Heaven. Unfortunately, the will was so mutilated by some jealous monk that the name of the monastery prescribed by His Holiness is illegible.

"The day approaches—is within the next month sometime—and all the monasteries in Tibet and Kham are quarreling over the matter."

"Which one of them has the casket?" I inquired.

The governor looked straight into my eyes. His own were opaque, as expressionless as jet beads.

"I had it in my own unworthy possession a few days ago," he said slowly. "It was brought to me by a caravan leader, a Mohammedan who looted it from a dying Lama—or so he said. I have been negotiating for its return in Tibet. The Yellow Lamas met my little bill for—ah—expenses, and I entrusted the casket to Lieutenant Graham, who started with it for Cham-do where he was to be met by a group of Yellow Lamas. Neither the casket nor Lieutenant Graham has been heard from since."

"I SEE," I said. I saw, all right. The governor had put the well-known Chinese squeeze on the Lamas, had 'em bidding against each other probably. The Yellow boys had bid highest, and they were supposed to win the prize. Poor Jack had probably been stuck up on the road by the Red gang—murdered, more than likely.

I felt the hot blood rising in my cheeks. But I held in the words I wanted to say. No use abusing Chao Yang Ying, who'd only acted according to his lights. I'd get more from him with sugar than with vinegar.

"The commandant at Chan-do," the governor went on, "has a field radio. I have heard from him within the

past twenty minutes. Lieutenant Graham has not reached Cham-do, nor has any word of his fate arrived there. The Yellow Lamas are growing impatient, the Red ones turbulent.

"Both are sending their emissaries among the people, and the garrison is not a strong one. There may be bloody rebellion on the frontier if the Lamas are not appeased. Will you go into Kham and try to find the Jade Casket?"

"I certainly will," I replied promptly. "That is to say, I'll try to find Lieutenant Graham, which comes to the same thing."

"AN escort will be provided—"

I held up my hand.

"I have my Ghurka bearer and four Chinese 'boys' who have seen some military service," I said. "Any escort beyond that would be a nuisance. If we are attacked by a small party, we can beat them off; a strong party would overpower any escort—and there is always the risk of treachery."

"Yet I think I can do something for you," the governor smiled. "I had a cunning workman prepare a replica of the Jade Casket; it is not an exact one, but close enough to deceive any save a very learned lama. I will give it to you, and possibly you will find it of use. You may even come upon an opportunity of affecting an exchange."

The deep workings of the Chinese mind!

"I will do my best, Excellency," I promised. "I will set out at once."

"Very well. There will be ten thousand dollars waiting for you on your return—twice that if you are successful."

The yellow Lamas must have paid a nice squeeze—or perhaps the old boy was just grateful for being sprung out of the dungeon.

"I will send the false casket to

you at the west gate," he continued. "My chamberlains shall see you safe out of the city. Good fortune attend your journey."

He lifted his cup of tea, one hand going up to remove the saucer that he might sip and so conclude the interview. But as he did so he suddenly froze still, his eyes glittering beneath their slanting lids.

"Do not take the saucer off your cup!" he said in a strained voice. He tapped a little silver bell on the table at his elbow; a panel in the wall flew up, and two armed lackeys stepped into the room, bowing low before the governor. A flick of a finger, and they had seized the silent servant, who had remained in attendance at the door.

Then, and not till then, did the governor rise. He held his still covered teacup poised in his hand.

"Feng," he said to the servant in a voice of silk, "what is in this cup?"

The trembling man hung his head and made no answer.

"Not tea, Feng," the governor continued, for it is cold to the touch, and no servant of mine would dare serve me cold tea. Did you think I would not notice the cold cup, Feng?"

THE governor held up the delicate porcelain to the light streaming in through an adjacent window. Something he saw within, for he shuddered and turned terrible eyes on the servant.

"It is thus, Feng!" he said and tossed the cup out into the middle of the floor. It shattered into a score of fragments on the polished surface—and from the debris something darted across the floor like a streak of black lightning. Quickly as it moved, however, the governor—for all his age and bulk—was quicker.

He had caught up a riding-crop from one of the divans and he struck, two swift savage blows, at that which fled across the floor.

Then on the end of the riding-crop he picked up a little dangling object like a bit of somber cord.

"A grave-snake," he observed, "and appropriately so named. It is small, but so virulent is its venom that its bite is certain death. Better try your cup, Captain."

I THREW my cup after the governor's—and it also yielded forth a little black snake to die under the governor's riding-crop.

"Take the false servant away," the governor said to the guards. "Take the fool out and nail him up beside his master—no, better! Have the examining magistrate interrogate him first in the usual way. He may know something we can burn out of him." They dragged the man out as he pleaded in vain for the mercy he knew he would not get.

"Both of us—why should they try to kill both of us, Your Excellency?" I demanded.

"For the same reason they dared to imprison me in my own *yamen*," the governor replied. "This affair of the snakes was a last desperate throw. A clever throw too. An idea worth remembering."

He nodded gently.

"You see," he went on, "there are still in this city certain villainous ones who believe I have the Casket in my possession. They know it means wealth to whoever can get it—they were torturing me to find out where it was. I had not spoken—yet."

He did not even shudder—yet I knew that at that very moment he must be suffering serious pain from the way he'd been treated.

"Lieutenant Graham departed without a soul in this city save myself aware that he took the casket with him—or so I think," the governor assured me. "Yet these lamas are terrible people. Their agents here require other methods to obtain information. If I were dead—the path

might be smoother for such scoundrels."

"I'll be on my way in an hour, Excellency," I said with more assurance than I felt.

I was thinking of Jack Graham. People who'd murder a viceroy wouldn't hesitate a second about cutting the throat of a "foreign devil."

I was beginning to be afraid I'd never find my buddy alive.

CHAPTER III

The Black Lamas



WE reached the end of our third day's march from Cheng-tu without anything out of the way happening.

The mountains were all around us now; incredibly grim and forbidding. They made a man feel small and unimportant, gave you the insidious feeling that nothing you could do mattered, that you were the plaything of an inscrutable fate which would have its way.

The inn where we were to spend that third night was no more prepossessing than the run of Chinese frontier inns; which is to say, it was a sink of filth and vermin which no untraveled American could begin to picture by any effort of the imagination.

Seti Gurung, always cheerful under the worst circumstances, trotted off to see that the mules and the boys were fed and cared for.

The innkeeper, a surly fellow with a particularly evil cast in his eye, showed me a dark and poorly ventilated room, opening off the principal corridor; at one end of the room was the inevitable *kang* or raised sleeping-platform, heated in the winter time by burning long millet stalks in small tunnels underneath.

I was dog-tired; and as soon as I

had eaten a somewhat sketchy dinner I spread my bedding-roll out on the *kang* and was soon fast asleep.

I awoke some time later, rather suddenly. The room was in pitch darkness; the little night lamp was out. But it was a peopled darkness, alive with stealthy footsteps, muffled whispers, faint creakings—

P-s-s-s-t!

Some one was enjoining silence! My gun was already in my hand, instinctively. I slipped off the safety catch. With my left hand I found a big electric torch. My thumb fumbled for the button.

A brilliant ray of light swept across the room and came to rest on two human figures near the door, standing there quite calmly as though perfectly within their rights. Their shaven heads and heavy necklaces of beads proclaimed them Tibetan Lamas, even as the flash of scarlet showing beneath their brown outer robes told that they were of the turbulent fraternity of Red Lamas.

"What are you doing here?" I demanded, making the most of my small acquaintance with the tongue-twisting Tibetan language.

"We have come for the Jade Casket," the elder of the two lamas replied. "Where is it?"

IT was on the tip of my tongue to answer that I didn't know.

Then I remembered the spurious casket, which I had guarded well ever since it had been delivered to me at the west gate of Cheng-tu by the viceroy's officer, with injunctions under no circumstances to break the red wax seals which secured the lid.

It rested at that moment in my small kit bag, which was serving me as pillow. I stalled.

"Take my advice, friends," said I, "and let well enough alone. If you start trouble, somebody is going to be hurt."

I let the ray of my flashlight glint on the blue slide of the Colt.

"Your threats are nothing to us, white stranger," the lama answered sternly. "But we have a threat to which, I think, you will be glad to heed. Look first at this."

He tossed on to the *kang* at my side a little red book—a notebook—one I knew well. It was Jack Graham's—he kept cocktail recipes, telephone numbers, and the key to a sort of private cipher which we'd found useful on occasion, in its well-thumbed pages. On the last page were scrawled a few symbols which meant a lot to me. Translated they read:

I'm in a bad jam, come quick.

In a jam—then he was still alive. That was something.

I bounded from that stinking *kang* and had the nearer of the two lamas by the throat before he could do more than utter a surprised gasp.

My pistol bored into his stomach.

"Take me to the man you got this from," I ordered, "or I'll blow a hole through your rotten hide."

"That will not serve, you fool," said the other lama in a tone of lofty detachment. There was no gun stabbing into *his* belly. "Your friend is many *li* away, in safe custody. Even if you forced us to go there with you, you could not rescue him by force. There are hundreds of our brethren on guard."

"**T**HEN he's in a lamasery—a big lamasery!" said I quickly. And I could have bitten off my tongue—I heard the quick hiss of indrawn breath, the muttered curse that told me my shot had gone home. Now they'd be doubly on the *qui vive*.

"We know he is your friend," the lama persisted. "I might say right here that I never did find out how the lamas of Kham, Red, Yellow, or

Black, obtained their startlingly accurate information on such matters. They just *knew*, and that was that. "We are well aware," the lama went on, "that the dearest wish of your heart is to rescue him. What is Chao Yang Ying to you, white man? Give up the Jade Casket, and your friend will be restored to you safe and sound. I swear it on the knees of the Living Buddha, in the presence of the Eternal Peace."

Now that oath, I knew, I could depend on.

No Tibetan would have dared even to think of breaking it.

BUT what was all this about the Jade Casket? If Jack hadn't had it on him when these Red devils took him prisoner, where was it? Who did have it? Another thought came to me—was it possible that Chao Yang Ying was pulling some dark Chinese trick, that I had the real casket myself?

Anyway it was something to bargain with. But I couldn't risk handing it over and having them detect its falseness, if it was false, before they released Graham.

I released the man I had hold of; he backed away, scowling and rubbing his throat and stomach.

"Come, man," appealed his companion. "Why do you hesitate? Your friend did not have the Jade Casket, as we had thought; but you have it, or know where it is. Tell us. It is all to us, all. And nothing to you."

Which was true, in a sense. Jack's life was far more important to me than any duty I owed to my Chinese employers.

I'd have given up fifty jade caskets to save him. Only—how to work this trick?

"Bring my friend to this place tomorrow night at this hour," I proposed finally. "When I see him alive and unhurt, there will be delivered

to you the Jade Casket, seals unbroken."

"No!" said both lamas together. And one added:

"We have taken the unbreakable oath. The white prisoner does not leave his prison until we have the casket. We will give you time, white man. We return in an hour for your answer."

The two lamas sidled out of the room and were gone.

After some thought I decided that the only thing to do was to bluff it out. I'd give them the casket Chao Yang Ying had entrusted to me, be it the real thing or a replica. It might save Graham; and certainly with Seti Gurung and my faithful boys, all armed with good rifles, I could trail the men I gave it to and perhaps free Graham by force of arms if they detected anything wrong with the casket.

I wasn't at all sure, now that I came to think of it that the casket I had wasn't the real thing. It was certainly a beautifully carved piece of light green jade, sealed with vermilion wax. I rummaged for it in my kit bag—my fingers didn't find the oiled silk wrapping as readily as I had expected. And what was this? The kit bag was open—slit open by a sharp knife!

MY heart sank as my fingers confirmed the fear—the casket was gone.

I pulled on my boots and hurried out to find Seti; but he was nowhere about the inn-yard. The boys, awakened, said they had not seen him since they had had their supper. He had gone into the village.

I knew his custom of mingling with local inhabitants to pick up odd items of information; he was an uncommonly sharp little fellow, and could speak or at least understand more outlandish dialects than I had even heard of. This particular vil-

lage was not a large one. Ten minutes of stumbling around in the darkness and of inquiries at the doors of smoke-filled huts convinced me that the Ghurka wasn't there.

Now ordinarily, when a valuable article and a trusted servant disappear at one and the same time, the inference is too obvious to require comment. But I never gave a single thought to the proposition that Seti Gurung might have swiped the Jade Casket, rich though he could have made himself with it.

He just wasn't built that way. I'd tried him too often.

NO; my idea was that Seti Gurung had spotted the real thief making off with the casket and, self-confident as a cocky little Ghurka always is, had started on the trail to recover it without bothering to send me word or to take the Chinese boys with him.

I worked round the muddy outskirts of the village with my flashlight; and sure enough, I came upon the imprint of small hobnailed shoes—the army style ammunition boots which were the only footwear Seti Gurung could tolerate.

The trail led away from the village, up toward the jagged peaks which frowned against the star-filled sky. And right here I proved myself just such a self-confident ass as I'd been calling Seti. I could have gone back for the boys; four rifles would have been well worthwhile taking along—but no. I was going right on. Seti might need support, and surely he couldn't be far ahead.

I had the flashlight to follow the trail, my Colt and a whole belt full of ammunition. Moreover, time pressed. The Red Lamas would return for their answer in an hour.

I started after Seti.

The going became rough immediately. The trail was hard to follow; once it got away from the mud of

the valley on to the rocky slopes. Yet a scratch of hobnails on a rock here, a heel-mark on a bit of moss there, enabled me to keep moving at a fair rate of speed.

Dawn overtook me before I realized how long I'd been following that trail—dawn, high on the shoulder of the mountain, with the village lost in the mists far below and nothing ahead but rocks and rocks and more rocks, climbing up into cliffs and pinnacles and soaring peaks. And as I looked around me, fully realizing what sort of ambush might await me in that devil's confusion, I wished most heartily for those four faithful rifles. But there was only one thing to do now; keep on.

Presently I found a sort of pass opening in front of me. A narrow little valley, in which an unpleasant-looking stream foamed savagely over black rocks, lay ahead. Seti had gone this way; I followed.

Beyond a dark promontory of cliff, I saw a rectangular building of grey stone which clung to one side of the mountain as though affixed there by some monstrous glue. There were no openings save a single gateway; no towers, nothing but the battle-mented stone walls, the gate, which stood open, and the narrow path leading up to it.

THE distant strains of a barbaric chant—a chant in which there rang an unmistakable note of triumph—came to my ears. I quickened my pace as I strode forward.

There were tribes in these mountains who made the torture of prisoners an occasion of general rejoicing—and I knew that if our situations had been reversed Seti would never have hesitated or thought of his own skin!

I'd seen soldiering enough to understand the value of surprise. I went up that rocky path on the double, gun out, ready for anything

except the extraordinary sight that stopped me in the gateway and halted me in my tracks by an overpowering astonishment.

The gateway opened on a small courtyard, surrounded by walls on two sides and on the other two by the frowning facade of a rude stone building, a lamasery as I guessed.

The courtyard was full of lamas—not Red Lamas, nor Yellow, but lamas in robes of rusty black, bare footed and bareheaded, parading around and around, spinning their prayer-wheels and chanting.

I COULDN'T understand their chant—it was one of those incredibly ancient things with little relation to any modern language.

But I could understand the sudden exulting cry of an old monk who wore at his girdle the gold prayer beads of an abbot.

“To us the glory! To us the power!” he yelled aloud, flinging high his skinny arms. “Not to the Yellow Lamas, with their power and learning; not the Red Lamas, terrible in war—but to us, the Black Lamas, the despised Poon! Upon us has descended the blessing of the thrice-venerated—”

His eyes, sweeping that courtyard, came to rest on me, standing there in the gate. He stopped short in his paean. The chant of the lamas stopped too. A hundred pairs of beady, hostile eyes turned upon me. Ironshod staffs were brandished.

The abbot snapped out a command. The staffs went down. The lamas drew back as the abbot descended from the terrace on which he had been prancing and moved slowly toward me. It was then that I saw the stone pillar, and the thing which rested on it.

A square column of stone, about five feet high, stood at the inner edge of the courtyard. On top of it—the very evident object of ven-

eration of all present—was the Jade Casket, glittering green and beautiful in the morning light.

The abbot came toward me with measured steps, not without dignity either. His wrinkled face was as devoid of expression as though it had been carved in the basalt of his native hills. "Do you come in peace, white man?" he asked.

I pointed to a foot-mark in the dust of the gateway.

"I come," I said firmly, "for my servant. Bring him to me. Then we shall talk further."

"Enter my humble abode and refresh yourself," the abbot invited.

Which was no reply to my question. Nevertheless I went in.

Not into the building; I'd no desire to be trapped and overwhelmed. But I went to the foot of the terrace, where I'd seen something else which interested me.

Many were the looks of hatred cast at me as I strolled across the yard with the abbot. The lamas were very plainly resentful of this intrusion; their mutterings were audible.

"Foreign dog—he is a spy, sent by the Yellow Lamas—he has come to find the Jade Casket—they will be on us like wolves—"

AND then the most sinister whisper of all:

"Brothers! The foreign devil must not leave these walls alive!"

A hiss of agreement ran among the crowding lamas; they banged on the stones with their iron-shod staves, and were scarcely silenced by the abbot's upraised hand.

I had reached the foot of the pillar now; the Jade Casket sat there as though in contemptuous silence, looking down upon the turmoil it had caused. Its base was about level with my eyes.

Beyond the pillar were the stone steps leading up to the terrace; and on either side of these steps ran a

low stone retaining-wall. Set in this wall at intervals were iron rings, and to these rings were chained crouching human beings; chained, neck, wrists, ankles and waist.

There were perhaps a dozen of them, cowering against the base of the wall before the abbot's fishy gaze. But the one nearest the steps, a brown-faced, well-muscled little chap, in striking contrast to the emaciated forms of the other prisoners, did not cower. He sat up—his chain would not let him stand—and spat at the abbot's feet, calling him weird sounding names in three dialects. He was Seti Gurung.

CHAPTER IV

The Red-Sealed Casket



NOT a sign of recognition escaped him at sight of me—but his eyes glowed.

"We have not had this one long," the abbot observed, smiling a thin smile.

"He has not been broken yet—but he will break in time. They always do."

"Who are these people? What have they done?" I demanded. The mere sight of the poor devils made my flesh crawl.

"They are strangers who came unbidden into our sacred valley," the abbot replied. "We cannot let such go; for the secret of our valley is well hidden, and only the Brotherhood know the path hither. Nor can we kill them, since we are forbidden to shed blood. Hence we chain them here!"

I felt a cold chill run down my spine. I, too, had come unbidden into the valley. I saw the abbot watching me with cold significance.

There was just a bare chance.

"Release this man," I said with an imperious gesture. "He is a British

subject; do you want the British Resident at Lhasa complaining of you to the Delai-Lama?"

The abbot's face was a study of mixed expressions.

"But—" he began.

My gun waved carelessly in the direction of the abbot's stomach.

"Release him, I said!" My order cracked with more confidence than I felt.

The abbot thought fast. I could almost see his mind at work. If he refused, he might get shot; the revenge his followers might wreak on me afterward wouldn't do him much good personally.

If he complied, later they could find opportunity to deal with the two of us as easily as one, since the Gurka was unarmed.

The abbot muttered a reluctant order; one of the men guarding the pillar set his rifle against the wall and produced a rusty key from his belt pouch. With this he began unfastening the heavy old Chinese locks which held the Gurka enchained.

My back to the wall, I watched while the Gurka grinned at me.

"I THANK you, *sahib*," Seti Gurung began once—but I waved him to silence. No open speech dared I risk now, when all hung on a hair. I could see that the lamas meant deviltry, the abbot most of all. They were massed between me and the gate, waiting. When I tried to go out, they'd be all about me.

The last chain clanked to the stones; the Gurka stood up, stretching his cramped muscles—and with a swift movement I snatched the guard's rifle and thrust it into Seti's hands.

"Guard my back!" I ordered sharply. With a kick I sent one of the pillar guards sprawling, grabbed the Jade Casket from its perch and held it fast in my arms. A howl of rage

went up from the lamas, and they surged forward.

"Stand back!" I sang out, "and clear me a path to the gate! If you do not, I swear to you that I will smash this casket upon the pavement, and trample the sacred ashes it contains under my feet!"

A WAIL of horror went up—the threatened sacrilege was unspeakably dreadful to the lama mind. Bad enough it was that infidel hands should even touch the casket itself—but that the ashes of the venerated dead should be cast upon the stones and trampled by infidel feet—unthinkable!

The abbot and several head lamas rushed into the mob of underlings, beating them back.

"Go!" screamed the abbot. "Go in peace! Go quickly! Only give us back the casket!"

Seti Gurung and I were already at the gate.

I ducked outside, covering Seti with my gun in my right hand while I held the casket under my left arm. Seti swung the gate shut on the lamas; then we ran down the path.

A *jezail* banged from the lamasery wall, a great slug whirred past my ear. Evidently the reluctance of the lamas to shed blood was weakening.

Seti turned, and from behind a boulder he fired three quick shots.

A lama on the wall tumbled out of sight. One who was just coming out of the gate pitched forward.

"They teach one to shoot well in the depot at Dehra Dun," chuckled Seti as we resumed our flight.

The lamas were swarming out of the gate now, racing down the path in mad, howling pursuit. But we had a head start, and made the most of it. Twice we had to stop and give them a taste of hot lead—twice their losses checked them long enough for us to gain a couple of hundred yards more. When we came at last in sight

of the village, they were still sticking doggedly to our trail, though keeping well out of range; and by this time I'd wrapped the Jade Casket in my shirt, so as not to attract the attention of any prowling lamas of any color who might be in the village.

"Up—we march *now!*" was my word to the boys. Leaving Seti to guard the door of the inn yard lest the Black Lamas follow us even here, I introduced myself again to the innkeeper—this time by means of a hearty kick in the seat of the pants.

"I was robbed last night," I snapped, "and you, offspring of turtles, showed the robber to my room!"

"No, lord!" he whined. "Only two holy lamas, who came to discuss grave matters with your beneficence."

"Lamas? Where were they from?"

"FROM Lanchang, lord—whence should Red Lamas come—" he stopped short, his eyes widening with a new fear. Had he said too much?

"From Lanchang, eh? Now I know you lie!" I bluffed. "How could they come from Lanchang? It is too far."

"Nay, lord. It is near—not more than fifteen *li*."

Fifteen *li*—about five miles. Five miles to Jack Graham's prison—and I held the price of his freedom under my arm, if only they'd accept it as genuine. Or maybe it was genuine. The Poon seemed to think so. I'd make them bring him out, anyway.

"Never mind the mules," I shouted through the doorway to the boys. "Rifles and ammunition and a day's food. Nothing else. As for you," I went on to the innkeeper, "see that you take good care of those mules. I will return presently, and if you have done well, you shall have double your usual rates. If not—His Excellency, Chao Yang Ying, shall hear how his officer is treated."

The whole bearing of that innkeeper changed in a flash. Down he went on the floor and beat his head on the planks.

"I DID not know, lord!" he wailed. "The black dog of a Poon said you were a spy from Lhassa; the Red Lamas said you were a foreign devil come to make trouble. How should I know you rode on the business of the Heaven-born?"

"What black dog of a Poon?" I demanded.

"The one who was prowling about last night asking questions about your honor."

I thought I saw all the answers now. The Black Lama had swiped my casket, with that peculiar stealth and silence which is the stock in trade of the Oriental sneak-thief. Seti Gurning had told me that he'd spotted a Black Lama in town, carrying a bundle. A glimpse of green in the light from a doorway had set him on the trail. And—he'd been ambushed and taken to the lamasery where I'd found him.

So far so good. Now for Lanchang. We made a quick breakfast, after which the subdued innkeeper was only too glad to set us on the road which was, as I'd anticipated, none too good even for men on foot. Our way was beset by Black Lamas scouts, who sniped at us from behind the rocks.

I pushed the boys to their best pace, Seti scouting ahead; it was not yet noon when, coming to the top of a low hill, I had my first sight of the great lamasery of Lanchang.

It was as imposing a building as the hold of the Black Lamas was dirty and mean. Two great towers shot up at either end of a long curtain-wall built of red stone; two lower towers flanked an immense gateway, approached by a flight of white steps.

But the blood ran chill in my veins as I realized that from that great edi-

ficce was coming the sound of a chant horribly similar to the one I'd heard from the Black Lamas. For the last five *li* we had seen nothing of our Black lama pursuers—had something frightened them off? Had they seen some lurking danger I'd missed?

Not a soul was in sight as we pushed on across the shallow valley and set foot on those steps. My Chinese boys were terrorized.

"No good, no good," one of them muttered. But they followed just the same. They were good boys.

We entered the cool arch of the gateway. In front of us was a long narrow courtyard, empty. Not a living being was in sight. Nothing. Not even a dog. The chant rolled on.

I was waiting for nothing. No time for prudence, for reconnoitering and all that silly nonsense. I strode across the courtyard toward the open doorway of the great main building. Right behind me, grinning, came Seti Gurung the Ghurka. And behind him the trembling boys.

IN the long facade of the red wall, that open door yawned black. No guards stopped us; no red-robed figures appeared to challenge our right to invade those sacred precincts.

We plunged through the doorway, and found ourselves on a wide gallery looking down into a great hall.

From end to end, from side to side, the hall was packed with Red Lamas; yet none turned as we entered. Every eye was fixed upon a dais at the farther end of the hall, opposite the entrance gallery.

An open window admitted a beam of morning sunlight—a beam which fell full upon a majestic figure, swathed in voluminous red robes, and austere mitred—a figure which stood at the edge of the dais and intoned a stirring chant, every note of which spoke of triumph and war.

The Red Abbot—the Lord of the

Red Lamas—I sensed that much instantly. The abbot raised his arms above his head, ended his chant on one swelling, shrieking battle-cry, and stepped suddenly back.

The sunlight beat upon a throbbing note of green, a casket, standing alone on an ebony pedestal, there at the abbot's side.

THE Jade Casket—but the Jade Casket was under my arm!

The whole thing was so like one of those repetitious dreams with which my childhood had been haunted.

The lamas—the chant—the abbot—the casket on its pedestal—motif red instead of black, a sort of grandeur instead of squalor, but otherwise the same.

The same even to the chained captive. For at the foot of the dais, flanked by two huge-muscled executioners leaning on long swords, knelt Jack Graham—constrained to that humble position only by the chains.

He saw me. His eyes widened.

"Target, those two lads with the swords!" I muttered to Seti. The Ghurka grinned and nodded. I heard the safety-catch of his Mauser snick.

Then I noticed the man who was standing a few feet from the pedestal which bore the Jade Casket. His yellow face was oddly familiar—and he was no lama. He wore the ordinary traveling dress of an upper-class Chinese; a dress foreign to that setting.

A hint of calm amusement sat on that face as he watched the abbot.

I knew him now! He was the young Chinese officer who had caused my arrest in Cheng-tu! The green casket with its red seals waited there—

Red seals! What a fool I'd been—I ripped at the covering of the casket I carried, uncovering the beautiful jade. It was sealed with *black wax*.

The casket on the pedestal was the one which had been stolen from beneath my head—by none other, of

course, than that same blandly smiling Chinese!

And as I looked at the one I held, I realized that it was the true casket. About it hung the indefinable aura of its vast age. It *looked* old.

The old abbot was chanting again.

Behind him again, crowding the dais, were the lesser dignitaries of the Red Lamas—priors, under-abbots, and the like. They too were chanting.

The abbot's chant became articulate, as had his black-robed colleague's:

"BRETHREN! So come we to this day of triumph! We have feared this Chinese, even tried to destroy him because we feared him. But now he brings us this prize of victory; now he has served us well. He shall have his pay in good red gold—and in the flood of red blood that shall sweep the valleys of Kham! We lead the peoples of Kham to war, Oh, Brethren—"

"Oh, fool!" I roared.

There was an instant of stunned silence; then the eyes of the vast assemblage turned slowly, unbelievably toward me, standing aloft on the stone railing of the gallery.

"Oh, fool!" I cried again. "That is not the Jade Casket! It is a false casket—this dog of a Chinese tricks you to the end!"

The Chinese and the abbot sprang for the casket at the same moment, while a roar went up from the crowd. Like two fielders jumping for the same ball, they crashed together—the pedestal was overturned—the casket crashed to the stone floor and flew into green fragments. Instantly the hall rang with screams of terror; the abbot, his priors, the Chinese were scrambling and fighting to get away—from what? The abbot went down on his face, lay twitching there—the Chinese, tripping over him, fell and was still also—two priors threw themselves over the edge of the dais,

others collapsed on the steps leading to it, or in red writhing heaps on the dais itself.

The Red Lamas in the hall gave back as though struck by celestial fury. Those in rear, however, remembered me.

"Magic!" they howled. "The magic of the foreign devils! Kill! Kill!"

My pistol and Seti Gurung's rifle cracked at the same instant.

The two executioners collapsed across the kneeling Graham.

"Attaboy!" he yelled, snatched a sword and hacked at his chains.

"Bust loose and get to this gallery, Jack!" I shouted.

I'd meant to hold up to them the true casket, but events had moved too fast for me. Hopeless now to attract any attention—all those Red Lamas wanted was blood! Our blood.

Round the gallery they surged, screaming their hate, and up the steps at either end. Hardly a man but had some sort of weapon under his red robe. Spears and swords and bludgeons in hand, they came foaming on.

Back to back, Seti and the boys prepared to sell our lives dearly. If we could just hold our own here till Graham could fight his way to us.

Our rifles filled the hall with thunderous echoes; the first wave of attack reeled back. Then the gateway was suddenly full of yelling men—retreat was cut off!

FROM below the Red Lamas, heedless of all but their raging will to kill us, surged over the bodies of their dead—the end was at hand. I fired into a hate-twisted yellow face, saw the man go down. But there were scores behind him. Tough luck to die now—so near success—poor old Jack.

The men from the gateway were rushing past me. They were not attacking my party, but were flinging themselves on the Red Lamas,

pushing them down the steps. They were men in khaki uniforms, with queer-looking fur caps.

They kicked and beat the Red Lamas down into the hall again, using their rifle-buttts with ability. Through the gates came a group carrying a machine-gun, and set it up on the gallery while I and my followers, men suddenly reprieved from death, stared at each other unbelievingly. Who were these people?

FOLLOWING the machine-gunners came another man, alone. An old man, walking with head held high and with two acolytes bearing the train of his yellow robe. I was staring at him when Graham swung over the gallery rail, free and grinning.

What handshakings then, what excited fragments of explanations! Finally Graham got a word in.

"I don't savvy this business of the casket, old man. That one they had wasn't the one Chao Yang Ying gave me. It was sealed with black wax—say! That's it there. How'd you get it? Some rat in a black robe pinched it from me—I chased him into the hills—lost him—and these Red Lamas got me—but how the dickens?"

So that was it. The Black Lamas had got the right casket; no doubt their messenger had had trouble re-joining his people, chased by Red Lamas as he might have been. It was he whom Seti had followed from the village. The dignified old gentleman in yellow interrupted my excited thoughts with measured speech:

"I am the Yellow Abbot, he who sits at the right hand of the Living Buddha, in his place of power at Lhasa," he said gravely; and waited, his eyes fixed on the casket in my hands. I held it out to him.

"In the name of His Excellency, Chao Yang Ying, governor of the Province of Szechwan, I deliver this casket to Your Reverence," I said in my best Tibetan.

The Red Lamas were still. The machine-gun awed them. They huddled in the hall under guard, only their eyes speaking their hate.

"It is well," said the Yellow Abbot. "It is very well. You shall bear my seal to Chao Yang Ying in token of safe delivery of your precious charge. Go in peace; and peace shall be also in the valleys of Kham under the strong hand of the Dalai Lama."

Peace—and twenty thousand very useful dollars. I grinned at Graham.

"I'll split with you," I told him.

But he was interested in the scene on the dais, which was covered with sprawling silent bodies.

What had happened on that dais, anyway? The Tibetans were shouting back and forth; the crowd of Red Lamas in the hall had jammed back against the gallery, leaving a cleared space round the dais.

Then I saw—something—scurrying down the steps of the dais. A Red Lama shrieked out a word or two; several of them jumped forward, beating at the steps and floor.

Snakes! Little grave-snakes—crawling everywhere amongst the corpses they had made! I remembered the words of Chao Yang Ying—

"An idea worth remembering!"

HE had turned the device of his enemies against them, sent them a false casket filled to the brim with deadly little serpents, knowing well that those who had sought his life would steal it from me.

They were killing the last of the snakes along the tiled floor of the hall. I gripped Graham's arm.

"Let's get out of this, Jack," I muttered. "The place gives me the willies. Let's get back to Shanghai and see how much fun we can have on twenty grand!"

"Plenty!" grinned Graham.

Together we bowed to the Yellow Abbot and walked out into the sunlight.

The SUVA KID



The Kid sprang forward, grabbed the wrist of the knife-wielder

*Life Hinges on the Turn of a Card at Moo Fat's Dive,
the Most Sinister Spot at the Hell-Hole
of Bango Wari!*

By LAURENCE W. HARRELL

THE Suva Kid stepped from the Dutch spotlessness of the tiny inter-island steamer to the gangway. Then from the gangway into the stifling, muggy, night air of Bango Wari.

He elbowed his way through the shadowy crowd beneath the feeble lights on the quay—Chinese and Malays, Javanese and Eurasians, and all the strange mixtures—brown, yellow

and white—that are drawn from the scum of the world's waterfronts to those mysterious islands of the South Pacific. His well-cut whites, hanging carelessly on his lithe, well-knit frame, stood out sharply in the riff-raff about him.

"Dangerous place for a man with money," the Suva Kid murmured aloud. "I'd better watch my step."

As he swung past the unlighted,

shuttered fronts of the Chinese stores, he could feel in his pocket the pleasant bulk of five hundred dollars in guilders. The sum that he had taken from two Dutch traders, at stud poker, during the twelve hour run from Tarotonga. And he smiled at the crestfallen expressions on the moon-like faces of the Hollanders, after it was over, in the dining saloon.

He reached a dark fork in the road, and plunged to the right into the slimy, forbidding blackness of Bangwi Alley. He remembered that beyond two or three of the sharp-angled twistings of this narrow, gutter like lane, lay Moo Fat's gambling dive.

And there, if the gods of chance were willing, the Suva Kid intended to add to his slender stake during his few hour's stay at Bango Wari.

As he picked his way through the stench and filth of the alley, notorious for its crimes of violence, his eyes bored into the shadows on either side.

And as he watched he saw some of the shadows move.

"Just waiting to start something," he said, and the sound of his own voice seemed strange.

FINALLY he reached a narrow, batik-hung entrance with a crack of light gleaming along the floor.

He pushed aside the hanging and stepped from the blackness into a stifling, low ceilinged room, hazy with tobacco smoke.

The clatter of chips and a polyglot babble of all the tongues and dialects of the islands assailed his ears. His nostrils recoiled from the heavy smell of unwashed bodies and cheap gin, rancid *ghee* and all the myriad odors of the east—particularly the sweetish sickening scent of opium which hung like a pall in the den.

His eyes swung quickly over the scarred and evil faces in the dive—

dregs of humanity that, sinking lower and lower in the dark backwaters of the islands, had finally come to seethe and eddy here in Moo Fat's, the lowest level of all in that hell spot of the archipelago, Bango Wari.

But his gaze leaped to a startling sight in the midst of that sea of brown faces—the desperate, white, drawn countenance of an American youth.

The boy, he saw, was seated at the roulette table in the center of the room, directly beneath the big central chandelier, the light of which etched cruelly the haggard lines in his strong clean face.

THE Suva Kid saw the boy push his last chips on the board. His practiced eyes caught a flicker of amusement on the mask-like face of the Oriental behind the wheel.

Then he saw the long yellow fingers of the Chinese dealer flutter suspiciously for a moment beneath the table—a gesture the Kid had learned to read in gambling joints from Hangchow to Suva and from Suva to Sumatra.

He knew the wheel was crooked. He cursed softly.

"The fool!" he grunted. "Bucking a game like this!"

When the boy lost, the Kid saw him sit for a moment stunned, watching with dazed eyes as the dealer scooped up his last chips.

Then he saw the boy leap suddenly to his feet, wild-eyed, disheveled, whip a gun from his hip and swing it clumsily in a semi-circle as though to cow the denful of murderous riff-raff, meanwhile backing the dealer away from the heaped silver on the table.

At the same instant the Suva Kid's alert, glinting eyes glimpsed a half-naked, sepia-skinned Malay as he slithered swiftly forward from the shadows behind the boy, with the sinuous, silent deadliness of a cobra

—his gleaming *kris* poised for the kill.

As his eyes photographed the scene, the Kid sprang forward, leaping into the path of the descending blade. The Kid seized the Malay's wrist. Lunging forward he forced the glistening, brown arm back until the curved knife leaped from the killer's tortured fingers. The native spun in a back somersault to crash moaning into a corner.

WHIRLING, the Kid struck the revolver from the American's hand. And sweeping a stool from the floor, flung it crashing into the light overhead. The fixture shattered into a hundred pieces.

As the room was plunged into shadowy gloom, an avalanche of half naked bodies surged in on the two Americans from all sides, hemming them in, cutting off their escape.

Sweating bodies crushed in on the Suva Kid. He felt talon-like hands clawing at him, groping for his throat, gouging his flesh with claw-like nails. In the stifling heat he could feel their hot breath against his face.

He drove his knotted fists like pile drivers—pistoning with murderous regularity—slugging, clipping—sinking rights and lefts into yielding flesh—crashing into the indistinct, milling mass about him as he gradually cleared a space around himself and the boy. He heard with grim satisfaction, native cries and groans behind him, and the smack and thud of driving blows.

"The youngster has guts!" he grinned to himself.

Just then he saw a native leap past him in the gloom, his *kris* swinging in a cold gleaming arc directly for the boy's unprotected head. The Suva Kid's fist shot out, deflecting the blow. The glinting blade whirled by the boy's head, to split with a crunch, the skull of a Chinese killer.

The Kid caught the lithe, squirming little Malay, swung him above his head, and hurled him screaming into the pressing mob.

"Stick close to me, buddie!" the Kid yelled above the confusion of the *mêlée*. "Fight your way to the door behind me!"

He heard no answer, but as he edged, swinging and lunging toward the entrance, he sensed the boy at his side in the gloom.

Just inside the door, he heard a shrill command in Malay issue from the shadows of the hangings. As if by magic, the swarming horde of struggling natives melted away, and the Suva Kid ducked to one side as a knife whistled out of the shadows to sing past his ear.

At the same time he launched himself in a flying tackle. He rocketed through the air and drove into a pair of bare knees in the darkness. The man crashed to the floor.

"Run!" he panted, as he struggled on the *pandanus* matting with his unseen assailant.

He wrenched his right arm free. And throwing all his weight behind it, launched a terrific, driving blow to where he thought his opponent's jaw should be in the darkness. He connected. And as the man went limp, the Suva Kid leaped to his feet and sprang out the opening after the other American.

SLIPPING and falling in the slimy mud of unlighted alleys, they zig-zagged through the native quarter. Soon the Kid could no longer hear the Malays panting at his heels. He slackened his pace.

Sounds carried clearly in the sticky night air. And the Kid could hear the swift padding of bare feet along alleys to the right and left of them. He knew what that meant. The killers were circling the district to head them off.

Ahead, he saw a patch of light

from the open door of a Chinese store, lying like a square of yellow cloth on the muddy road.

He motioned to the boy to follow him.

"We'll duck into Kong Ah's," he said in a low voice. "He's a pal of mine—that is, as much as you can be pals with a Chink."

"We'll be safe enough there for the moment," he added, "as long as we keep the Chinaman with us. If we let him out, he'd turn us over to those brown devils in a minute, to save his own hide. He's scared green of Moo Fat's outfit."

The Suva Kid strode to the door. As he reached it, the fat Oriental proprietor appeared blocking the entrance. In a torrent of Chinese, the merchant announced that he was closing up. He started to slam the heavy doors.

The Suva Kid jammed his foot in the opening, and driving his shoulder as a wedge, forced the doors apart. He clapped his hand over the Chinaman's mouth, and picking him up bodily set him in a chair.

He hissed a command in the Chinaman's ear and motioning the boy to enter, quickly swung the doors shut and slid the heavy cross bar to place. He darted to the rear of the shop, slammed the shutters to and bolted them. He then turned down the lamps and stood at the front door listening.

SATISFIED that they had not been seen to enter the store, he crossed the room and spoke quietly to the merchant in Cantonese. The Oriental's slit-like eyes widened in terror and he began to protest vociferously. The Kid silenced him with a word. He laid a bill on the counter.

The Chinaman tucked the money nervously into his sleeve and, with apprehensive glances toward the door, shuffled behind his counter. A moment later he returned. He set

two glasses of whiskey and a blue steel automatic before the Americans on the deal table at which they had seated themselves.

The Suva Kid pushed a glass toward the boy.

"And now," he asked, "what the devil is it all about?"

The boy drained his glass. The Kid noticed that he was steadier.

"My *fiancée*, Jane Martin, disappeared — apparently vanished from the face of the earth," the boy began. "Today a Malay showed up on my veranda. The dirty, grinning devil told me that she's being held for ransom. She's in the hands of Ben Ali and he demands five thousand dollars by midnight tonight—or—"

THE Suva Kid saw the tortured look leap into the boy's eyes again. There was no need to finish the sentence. At the mention of the sinister name, Ben Ali, the Kid knew the rest—knew the fate of a white woman falling into the hands of Ben Ali, the power of darkness on the island of Bango Wari.

Ben Ali, whose name was mentioned in whispers throughout the length of the islands, linked with the running of dope in Samoa and guns in the Fijis, with traffic in women down in the New Hebrides, with blackbirding—shipping helpless natives out to die on desolate guano islands — with murder, pillage and theft, all the way from Tahiti to Singapore.

"And so you walked into Moo Fat's—tried to run a stake up to five grand and lost instead. Then you were going to stick up the place, is that it?" the Kid inquired.

"I was desperate," the boy nodded.

The Suva Kid shook his head.

"You're game all right," he grinned, "but you need a wet nurse. Say, what's your name, kid?"

"Lawlor," the boy answered.

"Well in the first place, Lawlor,"

the Kid continued, "the wheel you ran up against was fixed. Then if you'd stood ten seconds longer with that pop-gun in your hand and your back to those Malays, you'd 've had so many knives in your back you'd 've looked like a pin cushion. But we're not getting any place sitting here talking.

"I think there might be a way out of this. Look here, you go down and see Taro. Tell him the Suva Kid sent you. He's a native but he's a square shooter. He has the *Tiare Taporu*. She's a trim little forty foot cutter. Tell Taro to have her waiting for us—provisioned, and ready for sea—inside Lautoka Passage by midnight.

"You'll find the *Tiare* moored in Fare Uti, opposite the coal dump. Then go to Ah Su's, at the end of the quay, wake him up, and get two automatics—loaded. Then meet me at the end of Bangwi Alley at eleven-thirty. In the meantime I've got some things to do."

He pressed a bill into Lawlor's hand.

The Kid picked up the automatic from the table. He slipped out the clip and examined it, grinning to himself at the pleasant thought of impending action. He snapped the clip back and dropped the gun into his coat pocket.

He blew out the lamps and admonishing the proprietor in virile Cantonese not to move for fifteen minutes, softly opened the door. He listened. He heard no sound save the shrill plaint of a funeral dirge in some distant section of the quarter.

He called softly to Lawlor, patted the boy on the shoulder, and the two Americans melted into the darkness outside. The Suva Kid headed back toward Moo Fat's.

BEN ALI paced the rich rugs of his stronghold, deep in the native quarter, like a fat black spider

patrolling the center of his web.

"And then what happened?" he demanded of the cringing henchman before him.

"Ah, it was arranged, as you ordered, that the young American be unfortunate in his gambling."

"He lost?"

"He lost all. And then this fool-hardy young American attempted to steal what he could not honestly win."

"Ha!" Ben Ali checked his pacing, an evil smile spreading across his face. "He was killed?"

"Unfortunately, no," the henchman replied, his eyes avoiding the searching gaze of his master. "A second American devil appeared and extinguished the light. In the darkness both escaped."

The Mohammedan's face clouded with rage. "They were captured?" he suggested.

The henchman shook his head, "No."

Ben Ali's voice thundered his rage.

"Find them!" he roared. "I wish the young fool out of the way before he attempts to interfere with my plans. And you will see that the strange American is killed for his meddling. Go now!" he ordered.

AT the same time a quarter of a mile away, the Suva Kid stepped into Moo Fat's gambling dive. Grim-faced, nerves taut, he gripped the automatic in the pocket of his linen suit.

The room fell silent. He felt every eye in the place on him.

Scoring the lurking Asiatics, he strode between the crowded tables to the center of the room, where he saw Moo Fat himself — bland and greasy skinned, in undershirt, duck trousers and straw slippers—behind the roulette table, his calm yellow face inscrutable.

The Suva Kid's cool gaze met that of the Buddaesque Oriental.

"I'm back," he clipped, "to square things up."

HE whirled on the dealer and two half-caste players at the table.

"Clear out!" he rasped.

They read the challenge in his smoldering eyes and slunk away, snarling. The Kid reached quickly beneath the table. He ripped loose a length of insulated wire and flung it at Moo Fat's feet.

"You robbed that kid with your crooked wheel tonight, you chiseling rat," he snapped. "And now, you're going to play me — and play me straight."

The Chinaman blinked imperturbably. But the Suva Kid noticed that his eyes strayed toward a corner of the room. The Kid spun about.

He saw six brown-skinned figures naked to the waist, gliding along the wall — each with the ugly carved handle of a *kris* showing above his bright *sarong*.

The Kid kept his eyes on the killers.

"Get this table out of the middle of the room," he ordered, "so I can play with my back to the wall."

There was a slight twinkle in his eye as he added, "I don't want our game interrupted."

For the first time, he noticed that Moo Fat's poise was jarred. The Chinaman hesitated and the Suva Kid caught the flash of venomous hatred in the glance the Oriental shot at him.

"You heard me," the Kid said quietly.

"Make one false move and I'll blast a tunnel through that fat belly of yours. Hurry up."

The Chinaman glanced at the significant bulge in the Kid's coat pocket—a few inches from his own stomach — and called an order in nasal sing-song.

Flunkies padded forward. They dragged the heavy table to one side

of the room. The Kid and Moo Fat paced beside it. The Kid's gun burrowed into the rolls of fat beneath the Oriental ribs.

He felt that he was safe for the moment, from a hurled knife, as the convulsive twitch of his trigger finger would blast his Oriental captive to a celestial reward he was sure he was in no hurry to reap. But knowing that violent death lurked in a hundred forms in Bango Wari, his every nerve was alert for the first warning of a trap.

Moo Fat spun the figured wheel. He set the white ball coursing in the opposite direction beneath the teak rim.

The Suva Kid, his back to the wall, laid twenty guilders on the square marked seventeen.

An hour later the Kid's stake had dwindled to a hundred dollars. They played grimly in silence. Then suddenly he began to win. The ivory ball ricocheted about the wheel and bounded into seventeen. Moo Fat slid three hundred and fifty dollars in guilders across the table.

The Kid doubled his bet — won again.

HALF an hour later the Kid had fifteen hundred dollars before him. Twenty minutes later, three thousand dollars. He felt the increasing tenseness in the room as the heap of silver before him grew. He noticed tiny drops of perspiration beading the upper lip and forehead of the stoic Chinese gambler.

The Suva Kid glanced at his watch. It was after eleven. He doubled his bets. Again he won.

In Ben Ali's stronghold, the Mohammedan whirled on the swarthy half-caste who glided into his chamber.

"Well?" he demanded. "And what is the news?"

"The strange American continues to win. He now has over thirty-five

hundred dollars of your money. Do you wish him killed?"

Suddenly Ben Ali chuckled.

"It would be amusing," he gloated, "This American, before dying himself, would murder Moo Fat for me. That would save me trouble, since the Chinaman has grown soft and is no longer of use to me."

The Mohammedan toyed with the idea, rolling it about in his mind as one rolls a tasty morsel beneath the tongue. He rubbed his fat hands.

"No," he decided aloud. "I will not have the stranger killed now. Ben Ali will play a waiting game. Too many killings in my resort is not good for business."

Turning to the half-caste, he gave the henchman his instructions.

"Follow the usual procedure. But," he cautioned, "do not permit my money to become lost, dog of an unbeliever."

AT eleven-fifteen, the Suva Kid counted the silver before him on the table. It totalled five thousand dollars.

At the grilled money window he collected five thousand dollars in American bills. As the Kid stuffed them into a white envelope, he was conscious of a hundred pairs of eyes boring into him.

He smiled grimly as he stuffed the envelope into his pocket. He knew that no one had ever carried such a sum of money from Moo Fat's before, and gotten a hundred yards from the door with it.

He brushed aside the *batik* hanging and stepped from the den into the alley. From previous experience in gambling dives when he had won, he instinctively dropped to one knee.

As he did so a knife whined by his head and embedded itself in the wood behind him. He flattened himself against the wall of the building while the pupils of his eyes adjusted themselves to the blackness.

He began to edge cautiously along the wall. He could see shadowy figures across the alley, moving with him, pacing him, padding silently like beasts of the jungle, stalking, with drooling fangs, their prey—thirsting for the kill.

He came to a sharp angle in the wall. Reaching warily around the corner, his hand encountered the folds of a *sarong* and beneath them the smooth hard muscles of a native. He leaped back from the trap.

At the same instant shadowy figures flew at him from three sides. The Suva Kid's gun belched orange flame. Again and again it spat. And each time a native pitched shrieking and gasping at his feet.

Then the hammer clicked on an empty chamber and the attackers closed in on him.

He lashed out with his fist. It found soft flesh. He heard a native groan. He pumped rights and lefts into the pack of Malay killers. A *kris* grazed his temple and lodged itself quivering in the wall beside him. He wrenched at the knife and as he did, a white envelope slipped from his pocket.

There was a howl from the keen eyed Malays as they recognized the envelope. They dived scrambling and fighting for the money. The Suva Kid seizing the opportunity, leaped to one side, ducked around the corner and a second later had merged himself with the darkness.

IT was exactly eleven-thirty when he met Lawlor at the end of Bangwi Alley.

"Where to now?" Lawlor queried.

The Kid noted a hopeful ring in the boy's voice that had not been there before.

"Ben Ali's," he replied, pleased at the boy's confidence in his leadership.

The Suva Kid led the way.

"Find Taro?" he asked.

Lawlor nodded.

"Get the guns?"

Lawlor patted the bulges in his hip pockets.

"Be ready to use them," the Kid clipped, "but don't draw till you get a signal from me. I've got the money. And first, I'll give him a chance to play square with us."

"You got the money?" Lawlor then began in amazed admiration, "but how—"

"I collected a debt," the Kid broke in, "that Moo Fat has owed for a long time. Five grand won't begin to square that crooked Chink."

"How about the girl?" he changed the subject abruptly. "Can we count on her?"

Lawlor nodded. "Cool and game," he asserted loyally.

"Good," the Kid commented. "If you get a chance, warn her that we may have to shoot our way out. And if we're trapped," he added significantly, "save your last slug for her."

Lawlor flashed a look at the Suva Kid, swallowed grimly. They sloshed on through the mud.

THE swarthy half-caste glided into Ben Ali's den. There was a smirk on his thin lips as he waited for the Mohammedan to speak.

Ben Ali's beady eyes noted the smirk. He leered and rubbed jeweled hands together. "The stranger has finished playing?" he suggested.

"He has," the henchman answered.

"And did the goddess of chance smile upon him?"

"The American won five thousand dollars," the Eurasian answered.

Unruffled by the news of his loss, Ben Ali placed the tips of his fingers together above his paunchy *cummerbund*. "A most fortunate young man," he mused.

"And did an accident, by any chance, befall him, upon leaving the scene of his triumph?" the Mohammedan inquired softly.

"He was set upon by ruffians in Bangwi Alley—" the half-caste answered.

Ben Ali bared his stained teeth in a cruel smile.

"But," the half-caste continued, "the foreigner resisted and succeeded in making his escape."

Ben Ali's head snapped forward.

"What?" he demanded.

He lost for a moment his Oriental composure. His brow clouded.

"THE stranger made his escape," the messenger repeated. "However," he added, drawing the white envelope from a grimy pocket, "in his haste, he left behind his winnings."

Ben Ali snatched the fat envelope.

"You have chosen a poor time for joking," he snapped. "My patience is exhausted by these fool Americans. But," he added, tapping the envelope, his face relaxed a trifle, "you have brought me good medicine for my nerves. You shall be rewarded for your diligence."

The half-caste bowed humbly as Ben Ali ripped open the sealed flap. A cascade of strips cut from old newspapers flowed from the torn envelope. The Mohammedan's roar of rage filled the room.

"Imbecile! pig — you have been tricked!" he screamed.

At that moment there was the sound of a struggle in the outer ball, shouts, the thud of falling bodies. The door flew open and the two Americans burst into the room.

No sooner had they gained the chamber than a half dozen armed Malays bounded through the opening after them.

Ben Ali regained his usual suavity; he clapped his hands smartly together, and at his curt command the Malays lowered their brandished knives. They posted themselves about the walls of the room.

The Suva Kid noticed, as Ben Ali clapped his hands, that he held the

envelope the Kid had purposely dropped in Bangwi Alley.

Ben Ali saw the Kid's eyes on the envelope. He bared his yellow teeth in an oily smile.

"A thousand pardons for your inhospitable reception," the Mohammedan bowed. "My servants were not expecting you. Will you accept what humble comforts I am able to offer?"

He gestured toward a heap of silken cushions on the floor.

"We'll stand," the Kid answered laconically, with a glance at the armed Malays. Ben Ali appeared to ignore his visitor's brusqueness.

"Only this moment," he continued, "my servant has brought me some papers which he tells me a stranger lost in Bangwi Alley tonight." He extended the envelope.

"Could this by any chance be yours?" he inquired solicitously.

"Find you had the wrong one?" the Suva Kid queried sardonically.

Ben Ali shrugged. His attitude was apologetic.

"I took the liberty of examining the contents. Had they been valuable, I should have personally returned them to the steam—"

"Cut it!" the Kid snapped impatiently. "You're holding an American girl, Miss Jane Martin, captive. I'm giving you exactly five minutes to release her—unharméd."

BEN ALI lifted his heavy shoulders, made a helpless gesture.

"Unfortunately," his silky voice intoned, "I am but a humble tool. My employers are harsh men. They demand the payment of—"

"If I pay you the five thousand dollars will you release the girl?"

The Suva Kid caught a crafty gleam in the shifty eyes of the Mohammedan.

"Am I to understand," Ben Ali inquired softly, "that you are prepared to pay—that you have with you, at this time, the money?"

"The time I gave you is getting short, and you're wasting it," the Kid clipped. "I've put the money in a spot known to no one but myself. So forget about it," he rasped. "If Jane Martin's alive, get her here!"

The layer of suavity dropped from Ben Ali's mask. "You are a rash young man," he gritted.

He turned to the half-caste and volleyed several sentences in a jargon the Suva Kid could not understand. The henchman glided from the room through a second door, which he closed behind him.

SHORTLY the door opened and the Suva Kid gasped at the dark beauty of the girl he saw framed in the opening.

She swayed for a moment, blinking, as though unaccustomed to the light. Then she saw Lawlor. And with a smothered cry she flew to his arms, to cling to him sobbing.

The Kid's eyes darted about the room. He saw the half-caste slink back, locking the door behind him. He read the lust in the wolf-like leer the loose-lipped Mohammedan pressed on the girl, and he gripped more tightly the automatic in his pocket. He saw Lawlor bend and whisper something in Jane's ear, saw her square her shoulders, dash the tears from her eyes and turning, flash him a warm smile of gratitude. He glanced about at the six lithe Malays in the room—arms akimbo—murderous, wavy knives dangling in readiness.

Ben Ali was addressing him. "At your convenience, we shall send for the money." The Mohammedan licked his lips greedily as he spoke.

"There's no need to send for it," the Suva Kid replied. "The five grand's here," he added, tapping his breast pocket.

The Mohammedan's eyes flattened to slits. "But you said that it was—"

"In a spot known to no one but

myself," the Kid interrupted, laughing grimly. "It was," he added. "If you'd known I had the dough in this room, I figured your cut-throats would've been at me before now."

"You are right," Ben Ali replied coldly. He clapped his hands, and whirling, volleyed a command at the half-caste.

THE half-caste whipped an automatic from inside his torn shirt.

The Suva Kid's gun leaped to his hand and blazed a split second before the Eurasian's. Ben Ali's henchman pitched forward, a gaping hole in his chest.

The Kid heard Lawlor's gun roar twice. He whirled and fired point-blank at a Malay lunging at him from behind. The native slumped to the floor. A second Malay sprang at him. The Kid aimed, pressed the trigger—and his gun jammed.

He threw his arm up, caught the impact of the Malay's knife on the barrel of his automatic. Blade and gun crashed to the floor and the Kid whipped a stinging left to the native's jaw. The killer went down.

The Kid saw Lawlor, a smoking automatic in either hand, saw a Malay behind him, knife in hand, poised to hurl the wicked looking blade at Lawlor's back.

At the same instant he saw Jane whirl, and with a cry, hurl herself upon the native, sinking her teeth in the killer's arm. As they struggled, the Suva Kid dived at the native, clipping him below the knees, and whirling, drove a right to his jaw. The native went limp.

Scrambling to his feet, the Suva Kid looked squarely into the muzzle of an automatic in the swarthy hand of the leering Ben Ali. He drove his fist forward. At the instant the blow landed he heard the roar of the gun. A blinding flash seared his face and a bullet creased along his scalp.

He reeled drunkenly, as though he

had been struck by a black-jack. He shook his head and looked around. The room was a shambles. The floor was strewn with the bodies of Malays—some moving, some still. Ben Ali lay stretched full length.

He grabbed Jane's arm and shouting for Lawlor to follow, bolted through the door with her. The three raced down the darkened street.

They reached the coral beach opposite Lautoka Passage and the open sea. The brackish smell of the salt lagoon drove the acrid scent of burned powder from the Kid's nostrils. He heard the murmur of ripples breaking on the sand. And he made out the blur of a beached skiff with the taller blur of a man beside it.

"Taro," he called softly.

He heard an answering hail.

The Suva Kid waded into the lagoon as they pushed the skiff off. Lawlor and Jane pressed his hand. He handed the boy an envelope.

"Some letters of introduction," he said. "They might help you in Suva."

Impulsively the girl threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Suddenly his courage of a moment before deserted him and he welcomed the hoarse bellow of his steamer's whistle in the distance.

THE Kid waved them good-by. He stood for a moment watching the skiff fade into the darkness to the rhythmic splash of Taro's oars, then turned and swung along the coral sand beneath rustling cocoanut palms toward the steamer.

The Suva Kid chuckled, as he thought of the friends he had in Suva—of Skagway Red, of Whitie, the Wolf, and the Mormon Kid—chuckled as he thought how much they could help those two clean kids.

"But," he added to himself, "the five grand will help. Besides, I always wanted to give someone a wedding present."

The DERELICT

Silent and Foreboding in the Tropical Waters, the Ghost Ship Drifted in the Fog While Grim Tragedy and Stark Terror stalked Its Deserted Deck!

A Complete Novelette of the Sea

By ALLAN K. ECHOLS

Author of "White Ivory," "Harbor of Pearls," etc.

CHAPTER I

Stranded on the Seas

FOG—soggy wet, steaming, stifling—rolled over and around those three men in an open boat on an open sea.

Tentacles of tropical mist lapped at them as if to sweep them into the vicious maw of a greenish-black groundswell as they moved slowly, now up, now down, toward that mysterious hulk of a derelict schooner whose bow the *Brookfield* had almost smashed into in the fog. In the dreary half-light they could not yet make out the name of the drifting vessel.

Cal Motley, able seaman, rowed rhythmically toward that ominous black form wallowing drunkenly with a heavy list to starboard in the trough of the sea, her bare masts swinging like great inverted pendulums.

No smoke issued from her galley, no wake trailed behind. Nor was there a distress signal hoisted, or men on decks. There was no sign of life—merely that of silent, brooding, ghastly death, of impending doom.

At the tiller of the small work boat from the *Brookfield* sat Sven Larson, boats'n, his broad shoulders hunched forward. He glared sullenly

from beneath a low-pulled visor of his cap at the ghost ship ahead and muttered. His huge body swayed easily from side to side as the boat rolled slowly over each wave crest.

Steadily, with practiced hands, Jim Taylor, powerfully-built first officer, paid out the *Brookfield's* heaving line that was destined to drag over the tow-line to be attached to the bow of the derelict. A heavy frown pulled his face down, and now and then he glanced impatiently at the Swede.

Motley was aware that the mate and the bos'n hated each other, and he knew the reason why—they were mutually jealous. The Swede was jealous of the mate's authority, and the mate of the Swede's superior seamanship.

Larson's mumblings grew more audible as they approached the derelict. Then he raised his voice, angrily.

"I don't go on dat dead ship, by Gar. I ship from San Francisco on de *Brookfield*, not to go on—"

"Shut up!" Taylor cut him off. "And stop griping! You're under my orders and you'll do whatever I say. You're going aboard that schooner, too, right along with us, you yellow squarehead!"

Larson's lips curled up from his snuff-stained teeth.

"No," he snarled. "I take orders



"I'll show you who's running this crew!" roared Taylor

from you on de *Brookfield*, but I don't ship on dis schooner—"

With an oath, Taylor reached for a marline spike lying in the boat. Larson lifted his hand from the tiller and started teeteringly to his feet; and Motley had to strain on his oars

to keep the small boat on its course as it slithered down from the top of a swell.

"By Gott, Taylor," Larson shouted, "I kill you now. I wait for a long time, but now—I get you!"

"Come on, sailor!" roared Taylor,

rising in his place. "I'll show you who's running this crew!"

Motley had to act quickly to prevent murder and disaster there on the high seas. He gave a jerk on his left oar and a push on the right, twisting the boat suddenly to throw both giants off their balance. They fell heavily into their seats, cursing, and tragedy was momentarily averted.

Taylor's attention was distracted by a tangle in the line he had been paying out; and Larson, reacting automatically to his long years of sea training, grabbed the tiller to straighten out the boat. Motley's face remained a mask as he pulled steadily again on the oars.

Motley knew those two would be battering each other's heads again at the slightest opportunity. Despite the clammy, humid heat, he shuddered in apprehension—but he knew not what caused it.

The derelict listed to starboard until her rusty deck was awash with each roll. As the work boat swung in on the lee side of her, they made out in a faded lettering on the forbidding black bow the name *Marie*. Her steel carcass was repulsive, but the three men climbed aboard. By this time Larson had calmed down to a subdued muttering.

THE big sandy-haired Swede went about his work stolidly, glaring sidewise at Taylor. The mate, his feet spread wide apart on the heaving deck, glowered in silence. An hour's work brought over the end of the *Brookfield's* tow-line, which the three made fast to the bow with a bridle.

Nervously they glanced about, as if they expected the revelation of some sinister horror from the *Marie* as the *Brookfield* took up the slack.

Motley thought he saw a trace of anxiety—of fear—on Taylor's face, but he knew the mate was not afraid of Larson. He himself had that same strange sense of misgiving, the same

inexplicable secret fear inspired by the ghostly drifting derelict.

As soon as the tow-line was made fast, the Swede began muttering again about having to remain aboard her while she was being towed. Then he burst out to the mate: "I don't stay on dis ship! I sign up to sail on de *Brookfield* an' I go back—"

YOU'LL blamed well stay on this ship and like it!" Taylor snapped.

The mate was as large and powerful as the Swede. There had been jealousy and bitterness between them ever since they had left the Golden Gate for Adelaide, and it was only the fear of losing his ticket that had kept the mate from the boatswain's throat long before this.

The two cursed each other constantly in every language they knew. The Swede dared Taylor time and again to hit him, and Taylor replied in kind, using every epithet that would fit in front of "squarehead" that he had learned in his twenty years at sea. He threatened Larson with every kind of punishment that two fists were capable of inflicting—and more.

The Swede was now seething with rage. His huge hairy fists knotted—his knuckles were white with the strain. He took a step toward the mate, who reached down swiftly for the marline spike, and the Swede, being unarmed, halted. Then he whirled and moved in the opposite direction.

"I don't care," he shouted. "I don't stay here. I go back." He started to cast off the painter of the work boat alongside.

Taylor dropped his marline spike and rushed him bare-handed, knocked the rope out of his hand. It snaked over the side and the boat began drifting away as the two men fought there on the slanting, rolling deck of the derelict.

With crushing, man-killing blows they pounded each other. They gripped with bear-like hugs, their fingers playing for each other's throats, they strained and cursed and pounded again. Motley, a match for neither of them, could only stand by and watch the vicious combat.

IT seemed to Motley that neither man could win. They were too evenly matched physically and the fight was settling down into a question of endurance.

They clinched again, trying to break one another's backs. As they strained in locked embrace a heavier swell lifted the bow of the vessel, twisted it and set it down suddenly in the trough. And both fighters lurched against the rail and toppled into the sea.

That ended the battle. Both men struck out swimming and two minutes later they were clambering back separately to the deck of the schooner.

The plunge had brought Taylor to his senses and he stood squeezing water from his soaked clothing. The Swede showed no immediate inclination to renew the onslaught. But as Larson wiped his still bleeding nose on the torn and soaked rag that once had been his sleeve, he spat: "I kill you yat!

"Not if I see you soon enough to get an even break with you, you mangy rat," swore Taylor. "And don't forget now that I'm in command here if you don't want to spend the rest of this voyage in irons."

The seas were getting heavier and clouds were rolling up with the suddenness that is common to the South Seas. The work boat had drifted far astern. And the sun was setting. It was certain the *Brookfield* would not try to send out another boat before morning.

Larson was still muttering, but he made no move now to disobey orders

when Taylor set him to watch the tow-line while the mate and Motley went aft to look the ship over.

She was an old but sturdy schooner of the kind occasionally seen rounding the Horn with a cargo of wheat from Australia to England. What she was doing in these waters they could only guess—perhaps heading for San Francisco, or perhaps seeking to pass through the Panama Canal to the Atlantic.

The list to starboard was bad and she was so far down in the water that waves continually rolled over the stern. She evidently had a full cargo and her hatches were battered down.

THE two dropped through a manhole to the cargo hatches. Every one was filled with wheat, but the bulkheads had broken and the cargo had shifted, which was the cause of the list. All sails had been hauled in, probably to allow the crew to try to shift the cargo back and repair the bulkheads to remedy the list. There was no way of knowing how long she had been wallowing there.

"Hmm, *Marie*," mused the mate as they came back on deck. "Do you remember the story about the famous old *Marie Celeste* that was found with all sails set? This tub reminds me of her.

"You remember, the table of the *Marie Celeste* was set for a meal and food and coffee were found going on the galley range when she was discovered—but not a soul aboard! There's no coffee and food going here, but whoever was aboard can't have been gone long.

"It looks just as mysterious as the case of the *Marie Celeste*. Nobody ever solved that mystery and I don't see any clue to this one."

"Yes, sir, there's something horrible, something sinister about this," Motley commented.

"But there's a fortune on the old

scow," Taylor responded. "I can't imagine why they ditched her."

The men's quarters showed no signs of a hurried departure. Instead, they looked as though the crew had gone ashore on leave or might be about some other part of the ship.

"That's a queer one," Taylor observed. "You'd think they'd take their own stuff, or at least part of it, with them."

The safe was locked in the captain's office, a very likely sign that the ship's papers were still in it. The captain's quarters looked as though he had just dressed and stepped out of them a few minutes before. His oilskins and sou'wester hung on a peg at the head of his bed.

The seas continued to rise and the two went out on deck. It was dark and cloudy. They could see the running lights of the *Brookfield* before them and hear her panting engine as she labored under the added burden.

She was pitching, her nose burying itself under the pounding seas that caught her head-on.

The night got heavier. Roaring thunder and blinding lightning preceded a squall of rain that turned into a downpour. The boats'n left the fore-castle head and took his watch in the pilot house.

Suddenly there was a boom like the sound of a cannon, followed by a commotion on the bow. The tow-line had parted under the strain. They were adrift! Adrift in the storm on that corpse of a vessel!

CHAPTER II

Unknown Menace

THEY knew there was nothing they could do about it until morning. The storm was lashing in fury, and it would have been suicide for men to come out in another tow-line.

The three tried to rig up a drag. They thought if they could throw a few heavy spars over the stern to drag by heavy lines it might help to keep the ship's nose headed into the seas and keep her from wallowing. But they didn't have enough timber to make an effective float and they had to give up that idea.

BY turns, they stood on the bridge watching the *Brookfield* drifting farther away minute by minute. They lighted oil lamps so she could see them, but it was not more than an hour or so after dark that the two vessels lost sight of each other in the rain.

And after the rain stopped the heavy fog and mist returned to make the blackness just as impenetrable. The three were adrift and lost.

They set out to examine the schooner more thoroughly. From stem to stern they looked her over, and by a kind of unspoken understanding they stayed close together.

Larson's sullenness was returning and Taylor watched carefully to keep the Swede from catching him off guard. Motley contrived most of the time to walk between them to prevent a surprise attack or an accidental clash. Larson kept up a constant grumbling.

"Hell of a fix you get us in, Taylor," he muttered again and again. "Now maybe we die here. I ship to sail on de *Brookfield*, and now—arrh—I kill you yat for dis!"

"Shut up, you damn fool!" Taylor barked at him. "You're no worse off than the other two of us. We're all in this together and it can't be helped now."

The boats'n squinted his eyes beligerently, but he made no move to attack. His grumbling subsided again to a guttural muttering under his breath in Swedish.

When they had finished going over

the ship the three entered the saloon and settled down to wait for morning. Sitting at opposite corners of the table, Taylor and Larson went to sleep, but Motley could only doze fitfully, afraid that if he went to sleep soundly one of those two would wake and kill the other, hoping to accomplish it without a witness.

With daylight came the sun to dispel the fog, but it did not dispel that uncomfortable, nervous tension that gripped those three men on the *Marie*. It seemed to Motley that it was the personality of the battered schooner that caused it. Her black iron hulk, splotched with rust, was wrapped in gloom and mystery.

NOTHING tangible—she merely lurched over the swells with an ominous silence, as though deep-seated within her, buried somewhere in her vitals, there was something malignant, unholy. And that horrible something cast off an odor that was evanescent, yet real. It reminded Motley of long-sealed tombs, of the abodes of the dead—the living dead. He shivered in the bright sunlight.

They found food, plenty of it, though the meat in the refrigerator was going bad. And there was water in the scuttle butts.

They ate in silence, except that the Swede continued to grumble under his breath and look far away at the horizon. Taylor glared at him with nervous, angry eyes.

A pot slid off the stove and clanked on the deck with a horrible rattle. All three jumped and Taylor cursed the boats'n.

Until nightfall they went over the schooner inch by inch in a futile attempt to get some clue as to her mystery. Then they lighted an oil lamp and tried to play with cards that they had found in the captain's cabin.

They were all nervous and jumpy.

The game ended by Taylor slamming his hand on the table and walking out. They despised one another's company, yet they dared not get separated more than a few feet.

Taylor walked out to the scuttle butts. He was back in a minute, bearing the bucket that sat under the tap.

"Who emptied this?" he demanded in a hollow voice. "It was full at sundown and here I find it empty lying on its side."

Motley and Larson looked at the bucket and Motley felt the nerves tighten under the skin at the back of his neck. Larson cringed.

"The water won't last long," continued Taylor. "Don't you men use any of it for washing?"

That was a problem they had not considered before. Both men denied using the water for that purpose.

"Nobody's going to *drink* three gallons of water in that space of time!" said Taylor.

He voiced the thought as if it were a problem to be solved immediately. Motley turned away with an expression of semi-guilt on his face because he was beginning to feel the need of a drink.

BUT he decided now it was not water he wanted. He rose and went to the captain's locker and got out two bottles of brandy, and the three of them sat around the table in the saloon and began drinking it, bolstering up their nerves.

The boats'n was drinking too much, it soon became evident—he downed tin cups half full at a gulp. His pale eyes were getting bleary. Taylor watched him with rising anger, his quick-trigger temper straining to break loose.

And then somehow it came over Motley that the same thought was running through the minds of the mate and the boats'n. They had an idea that there was to be profit—big profit—from that valuable cargo. He

could see in that further cause for enmity between them.

He felt that it was time for him to say something. He had heard too many stories of the nervous strain that men undergo when they are cooped up together for a long time, tales of partners so getting on each other's nerves that they fight, sometimes committing murder.

And partners—if they could not hold their tempers enough to keep from fighting, how could these two sworn enemies keep from tearing each other limb from limb?

Motley talked to both of them about the situation, pointing out that if they were to get out of their predicament they would have to work together. They would have to bury their quarrel until they were rescued.

The Swede was too drunk to see reason by that time. The more he drank the more open became his mutterings of hatred for the mate.

Taylor's nerves were shot. His mouth was drawn tight over his teeth and there was a haunted but defiant look in his eyes. He was too upset, too unstrung to make a gesture of conciliation toward the Swede, even for the good of the three of them.

"I kill you yat," the bleary-eyed boats'n repeated to Taylor. "You wait—I get you."

AND with that he picked up one brandy bottle and left the saloon. Taylor's black eyes, shining with a malevolent gleam, followed him to the door.

Motley shivered uncomfortably. "He's drunk—don't pay any attention to him," he mollified the mate.

"Huh? What's that?" At Motley's words Taylor jumped and his eyes turned feverishly toward him. "Oh—oh, sure! Drunk!"

Motley was positive that Taylor had not comprehended a word he had

said. His mind was on something else far away—preoccupied.

The mate lifted his mug to his mouth and drained it, dropping it back to the table with a bang. He shoved himself hurriedly from his chair and went out the same door the boats'n had used.

MOTLEY sat still, numb, wondering—wondering what would happen out there on deck. The cabin was oppressive. It seemed to be slowly contracting. He half expected the walls to close in and crush him to death.

Yet he sat, staring at the door. He couldn't, wouldn't go out there. On deck it was dark and silent and the silence and darkness were more to be dreaded than the oppressive saloon. Inside there was light; at least one could see things.

Again he became conscious of that pungent musty odor, undefinable and mysterious. It seemed a part of the gloomy ship, never leaving it. It suggested the odor of Death.

He shook himself—he realized his imagination was getting away from him. He forced his thoughts into another groove—forced himself to speculate on their chances of being picked up—and what Taylor and Larson would do about the cargo.

And he wondered which, if either, of them would be alive long enough to deliver that cargo at some port if they were picked up. Death—there it was again, absorbing his thoughts.

Suddenly a scream rang out, a man's scream, one of mortal agony and fear. It was unearthly and it cut the silence like a keen-edged sword.

Motley cringed into a corner of the saloon and the blood seemed to freeze in his body. He could feel the hackles tingling on the back of his neck and the sensation communicated itself to his spine and raced up and down.

His temples throbbed and his face seemed to swell as he sat gaping at the door, unable to move. After the scream all was silent.

CHAPTER III

Two Disappear

THEN came the sound of running feet. Taylor appeared in the door, his black eyes protruding in questioning horror.

"What was that?" His voice was a husky whisper.

Motley shook his head negatively. Taylor glanced nervously over his right shoulder, then over his left, as if he expected to see the boats'n sneaking up behind him. But Motley wondered vaguely whether Taylor actually expected to see the Swede or whether the mate was a clever actor.

For Motley was almost certain that scream he had heard had come from the throat of Larson. He felt sure that Larson was dead and he began to fear being left alone with the mate.

The sailor had a vision of Taylor skulking in a dark passage, of Larson walking by unsuspectingly, of a belaying pin or a heavy marline spike thudding on a head covered with matted yellow hair, and of a body being shoved over the side into the greenish-black water.

But Taylor demanded, "Where's Larson?"

Again Motley shook his head.

"We've got to find him," said the mate.

Motley stared at him curiously, fearfully. He wondered if Taylor was mad. Surely he would realize that Motley had, to say the least, a strong suspicion that he had done away with Larson in the blackness out there.

"Come on," Taylor nodded, "we've got to find him if we can."

Although Motley, being a good

seaman, had always obeyed the orders of his officers, he was tempted now to rebel. Yet he knew that could not save him should Taylor decide to attack him, and against his will he followed the mate to the captain's cabin.

There they found pistols, two Webleys, loaded. Armed with them, the two went out on deck, cautiously. At least, Motley told himself, he now would have an even chance for his own life.

Many times Motley had faced danger in his life, but never before had he dreaded anything as much as going out into the silence on deck. And it was more than a fear of Taylor that he felt—it was a nameless dread that chilled him to the bone. But he gripped the revolver with agonized fingers and forced himself to stride out.

Two hours they spent looking for Larson, two hours that Motley felt sure were wasted. Why, he asked himself, should Taylor go through this pretense? By now he was becoming as afraid of the mate as he was of the hollow silence that hovered over that ghostly ship.

At any moment, he expected to hear a deafening report, see a red flash dart out from the shadows and feel a lead slug piercing his vitals. He endeavored in the darkness always to keep a step behind Taylor and to keep his face toward him.

BUT in the blackness they became separated. Motley crept into a pitch black passageway. Instantly he froze in his tracks.

Before him he heard a strange scratching, slithering sound, like the grating of fingernails over stiff canvas, like sand pouring over a screen.

Then all was silent again. It was terrifying.

Aiming directly before him, Motley squeezed the trigger of his gun, once, twice, three times. The echoes

of the shots roared like cannon in the stillness. Taylor came running from forward.

"What was it?" His voice was hollow with apprehension.

Motley couldn't answer coherently.

He burst from the dark passage-way, his half-empty pistol dangling from a trembling hand. After a moment of nervous struggle he tried to explain what he had heard.

"Wait here! I'll get a light!" Taylor shouted and started for the saloon.

But Motley couldn't wait—he followed close on the heels of Taylor at a run. They found a lantern and Motley stopped to reload his pistol.

Back to the passageway they crept, slowly, Taylor holding the lantern high above his head. Cautiously, they peered in.

Nothing was there. Everything was undisturbed, except for the bright yellow splinters of wood where Motley's bullets had crashed into the bulkhead of the passageway.

By common consent they headed back to the saloon, giving up the search for the Swede. Taylor's face was white and drawn, Motley noticed, and he felt sure his own was, too. Taylor's face looked hideous by the flickering light of the lantern he carried.

Motley tumbled down on the bench in the corner. Taylor dropped heavily into a chair, gaunt and exhausted, like an old man who had been completely beaten.

MOTLEY wondered whether the conscious guilt of murder was preying on Taylor's mind or whether the mate's mind was leaving him. The nervous strain that he and Larson had been under was enough to crack stronger minds than theirs.

The oily water was lapping and splashing with clock-like regularity at the rusted iron sides of the *Marie*. They could hear it faintly through

the open door. The ship was rolling easily but idly. The storm had long since passed, leaving only the resulting heavy swells that would gradually wear themselves down to normal.

AN orange red moon pushed up from the horizon on the port side, painting sickly yellow splotches where it crept through open spaces about the deck house. Outside the door a big yellow square carpeted the deck where the moonlight filtered down the open companionway from the boat deck above.

Taylor sat with his head in his hands, staring at that square. Motley, crouching in his corner, was watching the mate.

Then Motley saw the mate's eyes widen, his face blanch. His eyes distended wider and wider until the black irises were entirely surrounded by the whites. A tremble passed through his whole body.

Unconsciously his muscles tautened, straightened him up in his chair. His eyes were glued to the open door. An expression approaching that of insanity crept over his face, a look of suffering that had reached the point where it snaps.

Taylor whipped his gun from the table and emptied it at the open door. Motley had been so fascinated by the play of emotion on Taylor's features, so horribly fascinated, that Taylor had emptied the gun before Motley could tear his eyes away from the first officer and look at the door.

And there, on the deck outside the door, was—nothing!

Just the patch of yellow moonlight. But again Motley heard that scratching, slithery sound, and this time—yes, he was certain—he heard that empty bucket rattle across the deck as if it had been kicked gently.

Motley's eyes traveled back to Taylor. The mate was still staring at the decking outside the door, star-

ing in terror, the smoking gun hanging idly in his hand.

Taylor's face was ashen, bloodless. His eyes were those of a madman. He sat frozen in his chair, unable to utter a sound.

Then Taylor tore his gaze from the door and fastened it on Motley, caught his eyes. Neither spoke.

The mate, his hand trembling as though palsied, poured a cupful of brandy, lifted it to his lips and drained off half its contents. Motley could see sweat popping out on his forehead and temples.

Taylor looked at Motley again. Motley knew he was expecting a question, but he couldn't ask it. Neither of them could find his voice to utter a word.

Taylor broke the gun, felt in his pockets, stuffed the cylinders with cartridges, doing it entirely by feel, never taking his eyes off Motley. He flicked the cylinder back into place and laid the gun on the table before him, pointing directly at Motley. He stared Motley straight in the eye.

"Do you know what I shot at?" he asked at last with an obvious effort. His voice was cracked but defiant, as though he dared Motley to doubt him. Motley glanced at the gun, thought of madmen, shook his head negatively.

"EYES!" The mate gritted the word out between his teeth. "Eyes!" he repeated. "Like coals of fire! And snakes—like horrible big serpents!"

"No, I'm not drunk. Don't look at me like that! I know what I saw! Those eyes stared in here at me and then moved just as I started to shoot. And two of those snakes flipped into that patch of moonlight and dodged back!"

He studied Motley intently. Motley didn't deny his statement—he said nothing. But Taylor burst out at him:

"Oh, I know what you're thinking!" His voice rose. "You think I'm drunk, or you think I'm crazy! Well, I'm neither! I saw them and they were alive! I didn't shoot quick enough, that was all. But they were there, I tell you—you heard that bucket rattle and you heard that slithering sound after I shot!"

Motley quivered.

Taylor eyed him piercingly, searching for the slightest sign of disbelief on his face.

THE sailor said nothing. He leaned back limply in the corner of the bench, drawing his knees up under his chin.

The mate stared at him, pleadingly. He probed for the slightest evidence of incredulity.

Motley moistened his lips to keep them from cracking; they were parched and dry. He didn't dare try to speak.

"Sailor, do you hear what I'm telling you?" Taylor's voice became a hoarse whisper. Motley only nodded.

"Do you believe it?"

Motley nodded again. He wouldn't have dared contradict the mate as he sat there with that gun before him and that maniacal glare in his eyes. He wouldn't have contradicted a word the mate said—even if he *had* doubted it!

Taylor scanned Motley's face again, hoping, it seemed, to find the light of suspicion in his eyes. Then the tension broke.

The mate picked up his mug, filled it with trembling fingers. The brandy slopped out over the edge of the cup as he gulped it.

"We're going after him," Taylor cried, wildly, hysterically. "Come on, Sailor!"

Motley's abject fear seemed to have drained out of him, leaving him weak, like a man who has been ill for a long time. And with it had gone any thought of what might

happen, any interest in the matter. He was mindless.

The overpowering hand of doom that hung over the schooner, the very walls themselves of the ship, and the events of the last few hours had sapped all the life out of his soul. He followed the mate, trudging behind him listlessly, not caring where he led, unable to feel emotion of any kind.

HIS mind was not even confused now by the mate's story of the glowing eyes he had shot at, of the hideous serpents he had seen writhing in the moonlight before the door of the saloon. He neither doubted it nor believed it—he was incapable of doing either.

They stumbled out on deck. Instinctively, they both examined the black horizon. They came to a halt at the same time. Out of the gloom to the stern was a pinpoint of light, just a pinpoint.

A light on the open sea at night always seems nearer than it really is; one is not conscious of perspective. But this light seemed to be thousands of miles away. It disappeared, then gleamed again, then vanished, then appeared, off and on as the *Marie* rolled into the trough of the sea, then up again on a wave crest.

But even at its great distance it meant a ship, people, possible rescue!

"God, she'll never see us," groaned Taylor. "We'll have to get some lights out."

The two walked to the rail amidships. It seemed that even the few yards they walked took them closer to that friendly light. They stared a moment, then the mate whirled.

"You go up on the bridge and see whether there are flags in the cabinet. Run up 'distress' and the ball!" The mate was speaking excitedly, but he seemed more rational than he had been for hours. "Break out a lamp

and run it up! I'll take the one that's lighted and get it aloft. It might be high enough there to be seen. Hurry! Let's go!"

In the darkened pilot house Motley dug out the flags by the light of flickering matches that burned his fingers. He couldn't find another lamp there.

He was working with feverish excitement. With the sighting of that distant ship, as little chance as there was of her seeing them, life seemed to come back to him, but not his strength.

Taylor had disappeared toward the stern, but Motley, glancing in that direction, could see the faint shadows bobbing dizzily as the lighted lamp moved in Taylor's hands. The mate was almost to the mizzen mast when Motley turned his head back to his task.

Then Motley heard a dreadful scream, blood-curdling like the one earlier in the night when Larson had disappeared. It chilled him to the bone.

He was paralyzed, stooping over the flag cabinet, the flickering match in his hand scorching his fingers. Then he looked.

He could hear the sound of a terrific scuffle and another scream pierced the blackness of the night. He heard his own name called. There was a dull thud on the after deck and the clatter of the lantern as it rolled with a heave of the ship and brought up in the scuppers and went out.

Horrified, the sailor was unable to move at first. Then his senses returned and he seized his pistol and raced toward the stern.

BUT before he had covered more than half the distance he saw a huge, shapeless form, shining with a diabolical phosphorescence, tumble over the side with a roll of the derelict and plunge into the sea—and as it plunged another scream of despair-

ing agony rent the tropical stillness.

Motley fired once, but he knew not at what he was firing, and he also knew that his aim was not accurate at that distance. There was a tremendous splash, a threshing about in the water, then all was still.

Quickly Motley raced to the lamp, seized it from the scuppers and lighted it again. Quaking inwardly, watching every inch of space with staring eyes before moving a step, he searched the after deck. There was no sign of Taylor—the mate had vanished with that fearsome monster!

CHAPTER IV

Combat

THAT realization struck Motley like a dash of ice water in the face. He staggered back and gasped. For a long moment he stood like one petrified.

Then, involuntarily, his legs began to move, to run. He sprinted panic-stricken toward the saloon, dodging at every doorway, leaping away from the rail, not stopping until he had slammed the door behind him.

He seized the brandy bottle and poured the fiery liquid down his parching throat. It gurgled until the last drop was drained.

Gradually a bit of that liquid fire worked its way into his blood and brain. It seemed to cut away some of the blackness that was suffocating him. And once more it restored his courage—courage to think, when he had not dared think, it seemed, for ages.

Realization came slowly to Motley that whatever that monster of the sea was, it was a material thing, a living thing. And living things needed food and water—and living things could die, just as Larson and Taylor must have died!

He stumbled to the captain's locker and brought out more brandy, found

more cartridges for his revolver. He wrenched the cork from the brandy bottle and drank deeply again.

He would find out what that monster was. He would fight until he conquered it or lost his own life in the attempt!

Into his belt he thrust a long, keen, two-edged knife. In his right hand he clutched his revolver, ready for use. In his left hand he seized the lantern—once more and started creeping cautiously, slowly, toward the stern once more.

The moon slid ominously behind a cloud bank and the darkness closed tighter around the rolling schooner—darkness broken only by the feeble rays from the lantern. Even that tiny pin point of light he had seen far astern earlier had by now disappeared altogether.

The list of the derelict threw the after deck, at each roll, down to the water's edge on the starboard side. Motley steeled himself to approach that area over the treacherous footing of the wet, slanting deck to what might be his own doom. There was now no one to help him, to come to his rescue if he faced the same fate that had taken Taylor and Larson.

Suddenly he halted in his tracks and crouched against the rail. For there before him, moving over a coil of rope, he made out a slimy formless body glistening with that unearthly phosphorescence that he had seen before.

And there were huge, corpse-like, protruding eyes that gleamed balefully in the uncertain light of the lantern—those coals of fire that Taylor had described. The tremendous form covered twenty feet of deck space.

CAL MOTLEY gasped! But as he raised the lantern higher to get a better view some of his fright faded away. For now the unknown was known—now he knew what this hor-

rible monster was that he had to face. It was a giant octopus!

Its long, sprawling legs, boneless and gelatinous, raised its repulsive body only a few inches above the deck. Two of its tentacles writhed and twisted angrily in the air. And all about it the monster exuded that pungent musty odor that Motley had noted about the schooner several times before.

MOTLEY raised his pistol and fired. Besides the roar of the gun, he heard the bullet thud into the flesh of the monster.

The octopus emitted a groan that was half a snarl, and advanced to battle. And Motley knew it would be a battle to the finish—to his own death unless he could succeed in hitting one of the monster's eyes before his own life could be crushed out of him or his flesh be torn from his bones, for otherwise an octopus is almost invulnerable.

Standing stock still, Motley waited against the rail while the devil fish lumbered down the sloping, heaving deck toward him, its front tentacles threshing and twisting about like living serpents, its great horny, parrot-like beak opening and shutting with a chilling, grinding sound like two rocks being slapped together and their surfaces being twisted one against the other.

In horrified fascination, Motley waited—too long!

Suddenly one of those loathsome tentacles shot out like lightning. It seized him about the waist and began crushing and winding tighter about him.

He knew that it would be only a matter of a few moments before he would be pulled down toward that awful snapping beak that would rip him apart and then perhaps drag his dying body into the depths of the sea as he had seen Taylor go down! With a crash, his lantern dropped

from his hand and rolled into the scuppers. Taking as careful aim as he could, he fired again—and again missed those gleaming eyes.

Another tentacle slashed through the air and seized his right arm. Instantly he felt the sharp claws of the suckers that line the inside of the tentacles biting into his flesh. Those suckers would leave scars for life even if he did come through. His gun was twisted from his grasp and fell clattering to the deck.

A sickening lurch of the ship and Motley's feet skidded from under him on the slimy deck and he fell. With unbelievable agility, the devil fish seized his right leg and prepared to dismember him.

But another lurch of the schooner as she dropped into another trough unbalanced the monster. He slid into the water dragging his human victim with him.

DOWN they went into the icy depths of the sea in a terrific battle of life and death. With his free left foot Motley contrived to hold the octopus far enough away to keep out of reach of that terrible beak. But he could feel tentacle after tentacle tightening about his body and he knew he could not continue that unequal struggle much longer.

He held his breath until he thought his lungs would burst with the pressure. His temples throbbed with a pounding like sledge hammers. He could feel his hold on life growing weaker, second by second.

Then calm clarity returned to his brain, a clarity born of desperation. He had one more chance for life, only one, and if that failed—

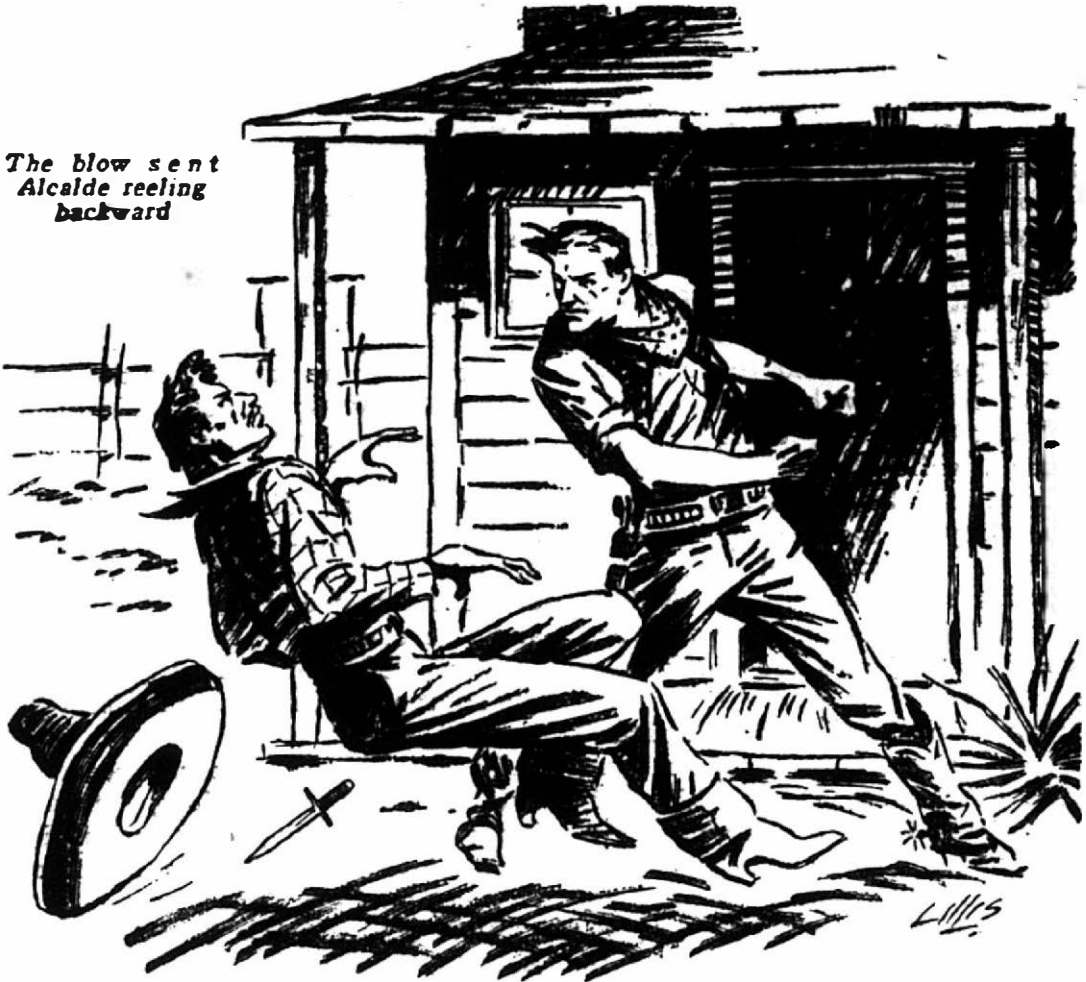
With a stealthy movement, he felt with his left hand along his belt. The knife was still there!

He seized it and plunged wildly through the water with all his remaining strength. He felt the point

(Concluded on page 144)

Welcome Party

*The blow sent
Alcalde reeling
backward*



When the Ornerly McCallum Brothers Ordered Bob Grayson Off His Claim, Hell Popped Loose!

By SAM BRANT

Author of "Hanging Evidence," "Girl Deputy," etc.

MANUEL ALCALDE smiled a shrewd, oily smile, his eyelids squinting as he stood there beside his horse.

"We weel see about that, *senor*," he said. "We think you weel decide to move on verree soon, though, or the sheriff weel send deputies to move you on."

"What have yuh got to do with th' sheriff's business?" Bob Grayson demanded, looking down in growing anger from where he stood on the edge of the porch of his little cabin.

"You weel learn that verree quickly if you are not soon away from this range."

Suddenly Grayson's anger over-

came him. His right boot shot out from the edge of the porch in a powerful kick that caught the Mexican full on the point of the chin. He crumpled to the ground.

STUNNED, the Mexican lay there for a few minutes. Then slowly he began rising, with a crafty panther-like look on his face as his right hand slid toward his belt.

Grayson leaped to the fray barely in time to seize the other man's right wrist with his own left hand. Then throwing all his hundred and seventy pounds behind the blow, he sent in a blow with his right that sent Alcalde reeling to fall flat on his back, while his knife flew out of his hand and dropped harmlessly.

Bob Grayson scooped up the knife before the Mexican had time to recover his senses, and when Alcalde was able to get to his feet he found himself staring into the black muzzle of a .45.

"Now, yuh sneakin' knife fighter," Grayson gritted, "I'll lift that gun yuh've got hid in that shoulder holster an' yuh'll get off my property. I've staked out this claim legally an' I've put my little bunch o' cows an' hosses on it an' they're goin to stay.

"If there's anybody interested in runnin' me off an' grabbin' my little place," he continued as the Mexican painfully but unhesitatingly mounted his horse, "it's Bill an' Buck McCallum, an' I notice their brand on that hoss yuh're ridin'. Now git movin' away from here an' don't come back pretendin' that th' sheriff had anythin' to do with it! *Sabe?*"

"Veree well, *senor*," Alcalde responded with a show of his earlier craftiness, "I go now—but I have warned you—squatters are not welcome in this valley."

With that, he whirled his horse away and galloped off.

Grayson got on his own horse and rode toward Salt Creek City.

As soon as he reached the little cowtown he went straight to the sheriff's office. For a 'ong time he was in deep conversation with the sheriff and when he emerged there was a new expression of confident purpose in his grey eyes and his chin was set grimly. Under his arm was a bundle, which he strapped on the back of his saddle.

Then he rode down the street to the hardware store. When he came out of there he had a long slender package that he had some difficulty in balancing on the saddle in front of him. Then he started for the cabin with the best speed he could make under the circumstances.

IT was the middle of the afternoon before he reached the vicinity of his place. His horse had just slipped and slid down one bank of a coulee and was starting up the other when there was a crack of a six-gun off to the right and a bullet whined past his head

Grayson fell as if he had been hit, but held on to his long package. Scrambling rapidly, he edged behind a mesquite thicket, while his horse trotted down the coulee.

Tearing open his long package, Bob drew from it a new .30-30 rifle and a quantity of cartridges. He filled the magazine quickly and then squinted in the direction from which the shot had come. There was no one in sight but he judged that it probably had come from behind a large clump of prickly pear.

"This will give him a surprise," he chuckled as he leveled and fired. "Thought he'd catch me out here with only a six-gun."

His shot clipped off a large ear of the cactus and there was a howl as a figure scuttled out from behind the clump and dodged down into the coulee. A moment later Grayson saw him racing away in the distance and he was sure it was Alcalde.

"So they were goin' to dry-gulch me," Bob thought as he mounted again and started warily on his way. "I'll have to watch out fer that 'fore I git my little welcome fixed up."

HE pushed on to the cabin, but made sure there was nobody lurking near it before he rode up to the corral and turned his horse into it. He had little time to spare, so he set to work immediately.

Carefully he scanned the distance every few minutes to make sure he was not being watched or ambushed again. And just as darkness came on he was ready. He lighted a lamp and put it near his front window so that its beams would fall directly on the front porch and sat down to wait.

It was not long before he heard the approach of horses on the trail. He quietly slipped out the back door of the cabin, went around to the north side and waited. Three riders came up, at first cautiously, then boldly almost to the steps of the porch.

"Bob Grayson!" came a bellow, and Bob recognized the voice as that of Bill McCallum. "Come out o' there with yore hands reachin' fer the ceilin' or we're comin' in to git yuh. We're depity sheriffs and we're takin' yuh with us!"

Bob kept quiet and waited. The call was repeated and still he gave it no apparent attention.

"All right, then, boys," he heard Bill remark in a lower tone, "I guess we'll have to go in and git him. He's bound to be at home. Manuel, yuh and me'll shove in th' door an' go in. Buck, yuh jump over to that window. Let's go!"

They jumped from their horses and started up the steps. Suddenly there was a crack of a rifle from off to their left and behind them and the bullet thudded into the door jamb.

Whirling in that direction, they peered into the darkness to try to find out where the shot had come

from and one of them nervously whipped a replying shot toward a tree. Just then, though, came the crack of another rifle from off to the right and Alcalde fell, howling.

Immediately after that Grayson's two revolvers let loose from near the house and while they were still bewildered Bob shouted:

"Drop those guns and grab fer th' sky or we'll drill yuh all. There are plenty o' us to take care o' yuh an' we've got yuh surrounded!"

Without hesitating then, he walked boldly forward with six-guns ready. Bill and Buck dropped their guns with a clatter; the Mexican was already far beyond fighting.

Grayson searched the two McCallums for other weapons, made them mount their horses and tied them on. He dragged Alcalde into the light, found he was dead and decided his body could be taken care of later.

"What are yuh goin' to do to us?" Bill began to whine. "How many of yuh are here?"

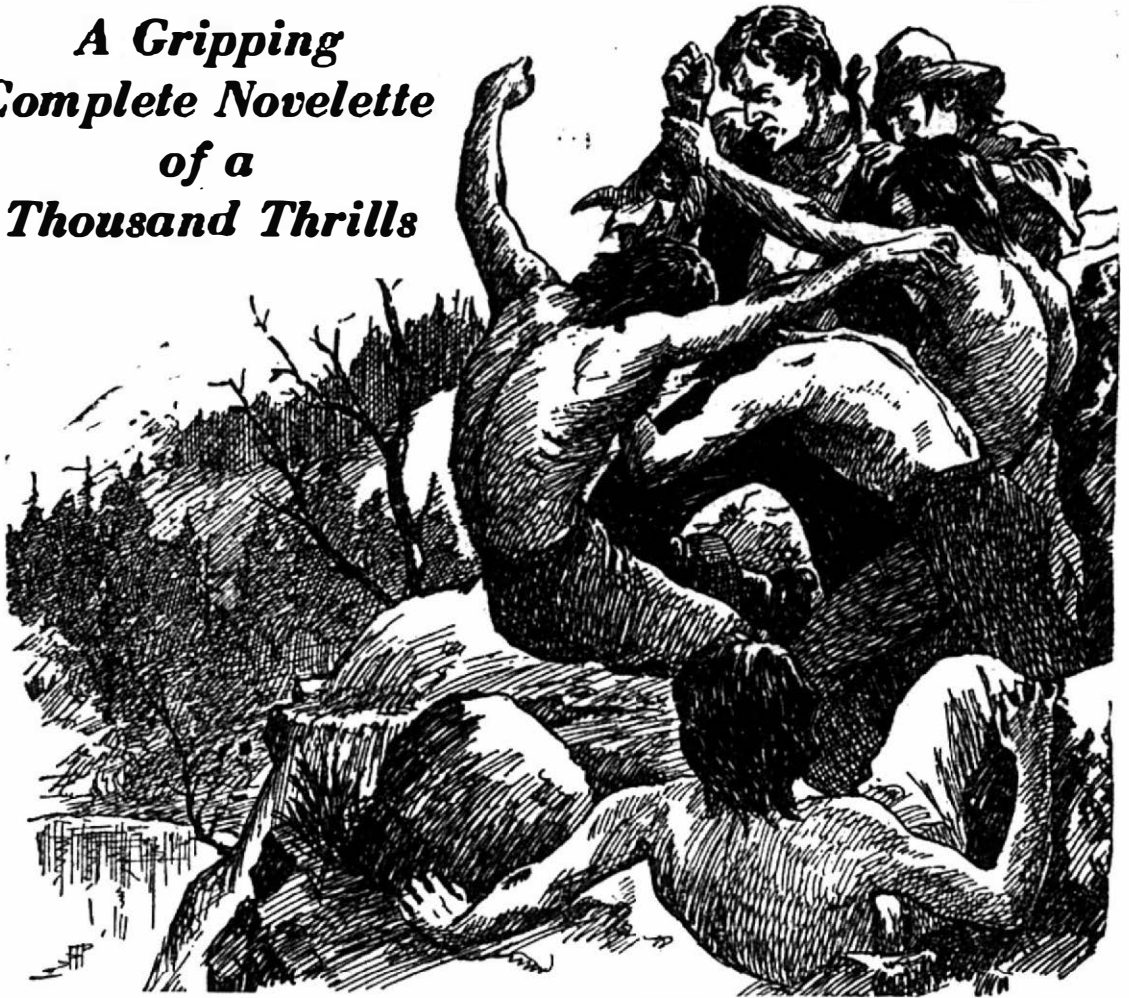
BOB laughed. "There's nobody here but me an' my silent pardner—yuh jest walked into my trap. I'll git a lantern an' show yuh th' silent pardner 'fore we leave fer jail—also I want yuh to see my new depity badge."

Leading them over near a tree, he held up the lantern and showed them a rifle securely fastened and aimed directly at the cabin door. A small pulley on the tree and a long length of fine wire fastened to the trigger and leading under the corner of the house where Bob had been standing completed the arrangement.

"This pardner's silent only except when I pull the strings," Grayson said. "There's another one over there, but it works just the same, so I guess yuh won't want to look at it. Besides, I'm in a big hurry to git yuh two in jail fer impersonating officers. Let's ride!"

The Curse of

*A Gripping
Complete Novelette
of a
Thousand Thrills*



Walt resisted fiercely as the savage

CHAPTER I

A New Job

WALT BOWMAN stared at the bartender of Watson's American-owned *cantina*.

"It's a job, ain't it?" he stated rather than asked.

The bartender, who had just offered what he evidently considered good advice, fumbled with a glass and glanced away from Bowman's hard grey eyes.

"Yeah, it's a job," he admitted, "but I'm sayin' again what I jest told yuh—don't take it!"

Bowman stared after him as the drink dispenser busied himself at the back bar.

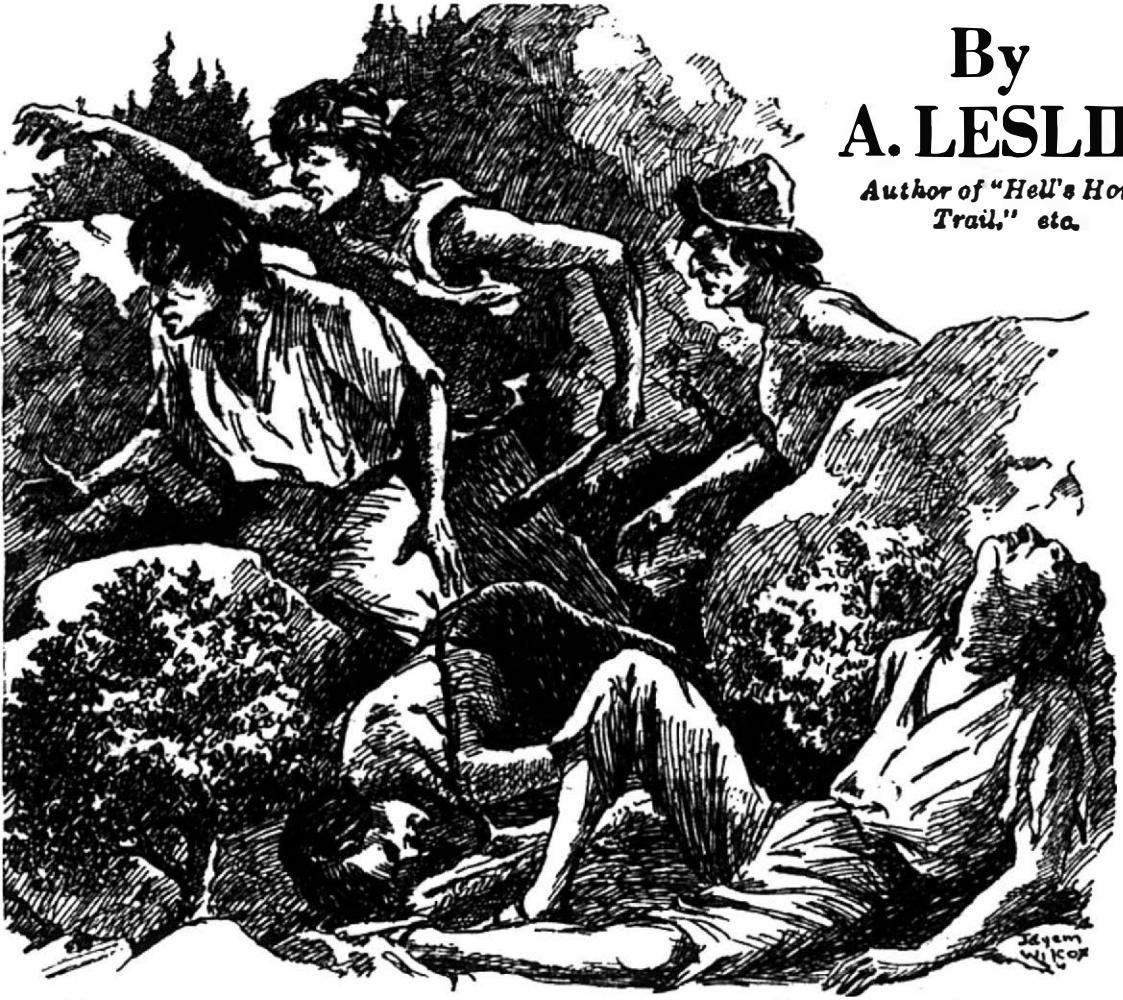
"What's eatin' that jigger, anyhow?" muttered the tall young puncher. "An' why shouldn't I take a job ridin' for the—Rockin'-R, I believe he said it was. That old feller who called hisself Hunter looked to me like a square-shooter.

An Arizona Cowboy Barges into the Thick of

the Shining God

By
A. LESLIE

Author of "Hell's Home Trail," etc.



creatures rushed madly upon him

He leaned elbows on the bar, quietly sipping his drink.

Wham!

Walt instinctively lunged sideways. Quivering upright in the gleaming surface of the bar, so close as to touch his elbow, was a long knife with a rough horn handle. The keen blade glowed murkily in the light from the smoky hanging lamps. Walt whirled to face the room, hands hovering over the black butts of his heavy Colts.

Men, Americans and Mexicans at the roulette wheel and the card tables, were calmly attending to business, apparently not noticing the incident at the bar; but Walt caught the gleam of eyes slitting sideways. His own hard gaze studied the room and its occupants.

He reached behind him with his left hand, jerked the knife from the bar and sent it spinning into the air. Eyes came up at the gesture. *Crash!*

Walt's gun seemed to leap to his

Puzzling Mystery and Savage Battle in Mexico

hand like a living thing. Fire streamed from its muzzle. The knife streaked through the air and clanged against the far wall. Walt's cold gaze flickered from one to another of the tables. Then, walking neither fast nor slow, he crossed the room and vanished through the swinging doors.

Curses and exclamations pattered through the smoke rings. A man slipped from his chair and picked up the knife.

"Good gosh!" he yelled.

The horn handle was ripped to splinters.

Men crowded around, examining the work of Walt's bullet. A sullen-faced individual with a mouth that was a cruel bloodless gash grunted a curse.

"Blast it, that's shootin'! Well—"

WALT BOWMAN, Arizona cowboy a long way from home, unhitched his horse and rode down the main street of Zacarra, the roaring Mexican cattle and mining town. He entered the office of the local *alcalde*. Of the two occupants of the room, one was an elderly cattleman with grizzled hair and beard; the other a dignified *caballero* who spoke the precise, stilted English of the educated Mexican. Walt nodded and sat down on a bench.

"He's workin' for me, Don Alberto," said the cattleman, jerking a horny thumb in Walt's direction. "Leastwise he was, 'bout ten minutes ago."

Walt grinned as he rolled a cigarette with slim bronzed fingers.

"Reckon I kin stand yore payroll for another ten minutes," he drawled. "Go ahead with yore talk; I'm jest waitin' to ride out with yuh."

The *alcalde* smiled and nodded.

"As I was saying, *Senor* Hunter, I have been unable to learn anything of value. I wrote to our governor asking that *Rurales* be sent to inves-

tigate the situation; but we are far from central authority here in the mountain lands of Sinaloa, and I fear we can hope for but little assistance from Culiacan. It is deplorable but, alas, true."

"Yeah, I guess yuh're right," admitted Jeff Hunter, "but it's shore raisin' the dickens with me. There ain't no sense in it, either," he added with an angry growl.

"Assuredly not," agreed the mayor, "but there are, among the ignorant of our people, those who fail to understand that it is to the good of our country to have in our midst energetic and enterprising *Americanos* such as yourself. That is, admitting that you are right in your surmise and it is some of our people who are causing the trouble."

"Who else kin it he?" grunted Hunter.

"There are many lawless elements here since the gold strike in the southern hills," said the *alcalde*.

"But what would that sort gain by runnin' me off my ranch?" Hunter countered.

The mayor shrugged resigned shoulders.

"*Quien sabe?* Who can tell?"

WALT and old Jeff Hunter left town together and rode through the moonlight to the Rocking-R ranchhouse, ten miles west of Zacarra.

The ranch owner listened attentively to Walt's account of the happenings in the *cantina*.

"They ain't wastin' no time," he commented when the puncher had finished. "Givin' yuh a idea of what yuh kin expect if yuh stay on with me. Still figger yuh want the job?"

The big cowboy shrugged his wide shoulders.

"Why not?" he countered.

"Waal," grimaced Hunter, "they shore managed to scare the livin' daylights outa all my *vaqueros*. They

quit me cold and I can't hire no more no matter what wages I offer. If I hadn't had the luck to git them two American waddies, Reynolds an' Waters, I don't know what I woulda done. Now, with you added to them, I may be able to git together a ship-pin' herd in time to keep from losin' my Gov'ment contract."

A light shone through the bunkhouse windows when they reached the Rocking-R.

"I'll be seein' yuh in the mawn-in'," Hunter told Walt. "Come to breakfast with the other boys."

Walt put his horse away and walked to the bunkhouse. A glance through the window as he passed showed two motionless figures hunched over a table littered with cards.

"Them fellers don't seem to have much use for sleep," he chuckled as he shoved the door open. "Rise and shine, gents," he called. "There's a new poker expert in yore midst."

The figures at the table did not answer. Walt grunted his surprise and closed the door. He started across the room and suddenly froze in his tracks, staring with slitted eyes.

"No wonder they didn't say nothin'!"

SILENT and motionless the two figures sat, their glazed eyes glaring at the littered cards, their lips drawn back in horrible, agonized grimaces. Protruding from the back of each was the rough horn handle of a long knife!

Walt did not touch the bodies.

"Better leave 'em right like that till the *alcalde* or the *jefe politico* looks 'em over," he told Hunter. "Yeah, I'm still hangin' onto the job," he added as he closed the door.

The *alcalde* and the *jefe politico*, chief of police, both rode to the Rocking-R next day.

"There is nothing we can do other than bury them," said the mayor. "I

am distressed, greatly distressed, *Senor* Hunter, but what can I do? Yes, those knives are of Mexican manufacture, such as our *peones* use."

AFTER Reynolds and Waters were buried, Walt and old Jeff held a council of war.

"One thing's sartin," the ranch owner stated emphatically. "Yuh ain't gonna sleep in that bunkhouse. You leave yore blankets right here in the hacienda where yuh spread 'em last night."

"All right," Walt agreed, "but I got a little idea I'm gonna try out."

Hunter smoked silently for some time. Then—

"I'm gonna ride over to the Triangle-D t'morrer an' see if Cal Rickey has had any more trouble," he said.

"Who's Cal Rickey?" Walt asked.

"He's American," Hunter explained. "He owns the Triangle-D an's int'rested in a coupla mines south o' here. He's a good *hombre*."

Soon afterward Hunter went to bed. Walt sat and smoked until he felt the old rancher should be asleep; then he walked to the bunkhouse.

He lighted the lamp and undressed leisurely, crossing and recrossing the room before the open window. Then he blew out the light.

He redressed with swift, sure motions and slipped silently through the window. Keeping in the shadow of the bunkhouse and the widely spaced trees, he reached the ranchhouse. He placed a chair beside a window and sat down to watch.

Hour after hour he kept the lonely vigil, his eyes heavy with sleep, his body aching from the unaccustomed strain.

"Dang," he grunted at last, "looks like I'm follerin' a cold trail. Reckon I'll—"

Crash!

Blinded, dazed, the puncher was

burled to the floor. Broken glass tinkled over him. His ears rang with the mighty roar of an explosion. A red blaze of light threw trees and stables and corrals into startling relief against the black night. Then the darkness swooped down again; through it sounded the thud and rattle of falling objects.

Walt could hear old man Hunter shouting as he staggered to his feet. Soon Hunter burst in, followed by the cook, a stolid Yaqui Indian, bearing a lantern.

"What in blazes happened?" bawled the ranch owner; but Walt was already outside, running swiftly toward the bunkhouse, a gun in each hand. Hunter and the cook followed.

Where the building had stood was a scene of wild confusion. Chunks of adobe and splintered timbers littered the ground. The iron stove lay in shattered fragments.

"What the—how—why—" sputtered Hunter.

"Dynamite," Walt told him briefly. "They figgered I was in there an' 'ranged a little house warmin' for me. I tell yuh, Boss, them jiggers is slick. I never took my eyes off that shack a minute an' jest the same they manages to slip up, plant dynamite, set her off an' scoot without me seein' or hearin' 'em."

Walt went back to the ranchhouse very thoughtful. On a table beside his bed lay the knives that had killed Waters and Reynolds. He picked them up, examined the horn handles, the finely ground blades, and laid them down again.

"MEX stickers, all right," he muttered, "an' that one in the *cantina* was Mexican and threwed like a Mexican throws 'em. But this business o' blowin' up a bunkhouse with dynamite ain't Mexican a-tall. It jest don't fit with the way *peones* do things. Le's see, jest what did that letter they sent Hunter say?"

He rummaged in a drawer, found the rude scrawl and reread it:

The land of *Mejica* belongs to the *Mejicano*. The *gringo* must go. The land must return to the *peones*, the people of the soil. We have spoken.

"Written in darn good Spanish, too," Walt mused. "Too darn good for ignorant *peones*. But why would anybody else wanta run Hunter out? This range ain't nothin' extra, an' 'sides, there's plenty o' good land easy to git."

HE puzzled over the matter the following day as he rode the range and made plans for getting together the needed shipping herd. He was still puzzling over it when he entered the ranchhouse for supper. Hunter was talking with a visitor.

"Bowman, this is Cal Rickey who owns the Triangle-D. He rode in to talk things over."

Rickey was a big dark man with keen eyes and a heavy mustache. He acknowledged the introduction and shook hands with Walt. The puncher was impressed by his steely grip and the warm moistness of his big hands; but Rickey was cordial enough.

"Shore glad yuh was outa that bunkhouse last night!" he exclaimed heartily. "Yuh wanta keep yore eyes skinned. Bowman—these hellions down here are plumb bad. I got a bullet hole right through my hat yesterday."

He pulled the wide-brimmed J. B. from his knee and handed it to Walt. The puncher examined the punctured crown curiously.

"How'd this happen?" he asked.

Rickey swore with energy.

"Down on my south range. I was ridin' past a draw when a slug turned my hat sideways an' a couple more knocked dirt in my eyes. I didn't waste no time puttin' distance 'tween me an' them dry-gulchera."

Walt's grey eyes narrowed thought-

fully as Rickey lumbered out to wash up before eating.

"Now why did he go an' hand me a tall yarn?" the puncher mused. "The gun what made that hole in his hat was held so close it powder-burned the felt. I got a large-sized notion Rickey shot that hole hisself. But why?"

Rickey left shortly after supper. Walt and Hunter sat smoking while Huyan, the cook, cleared away the dishes.

"Ain't there anybody 'round here what would like to see yuh give the ranch up?" Walt asked. "That's a mighty rich gold strike they got down south o' Zacarro. Mebbe somebody figgers yuh got gold on this range an' wants to freeze yuh out?"

Hunter dissented emphatically.

"Nope, I usta be a minin' man myself. I've rode this range clean over to wheah *El Negro Inferno* begins—that's them sulphur colored hills—an' there ain't a sign o' gold or silver rock on it. Nope, it's jest them consarned pigheaded *peones* with their newfangled idears 'bout liberty an' the-soil-for-the-people an' sich."

"*El Negro Inferno*," Walt mused. The phrase caught his fancy. "That means 'The Black Hell,' don't it? Sounds interestin'. Reckon I'll hafta take a little ride that way."

Neither Walt nor Hunter saw the startled gleam that lighted the dark eyes of the Yaqui cook.

THE puncher was surprised the following morning when Huyan came to the corral where he was saddling up. The cook spoke in Spanish. "*Senor, ride not to El Negro Inferno!*"

"Huh?" Walt exclaimed. "Why not, Huyan?"

"Because, *Senor*, it is a place of death! The Shining God dwells there and he slays in a way most horrible."

Walt stared into the unwinking beady eyes.

"Say, yuh're twirlin' yore rope too fast for me," he protested. "What yuh mean, the Shinin' God?"

"Long has he dwelt there," intoned the Yaqui monotonously, "and he permits no one to approach him. Those who do are seized and forced to serve him, and they die, most terribly."

Walt grinned.

"SOMEBODY'S been handin' yuh a runaround, Huyan," he said. "Yuh oughta know better, too—*Senor* Hunter tells me yuh was educated over to the Mission."

"*Senor*," said the Indian earnestly, "there was a man of my village. He rode into *El Negro Inferno*. One day, long afterward, he crawled back to our village. He had been caught by the priests of the Shining God and forced to tend him.

"The Shining God had stolen the very bones from his body. That man, *Senor*, was but a lump of rotting flesh that could not stand, that could not eat, that could only tremble and moan—and die."

Walt did not ride to *El Negro Inferno* that afternoon. He was altogether too busy. That day and the next and the next he and Hunter worked from daybreak to dusk in a frantic effort to get the needed shipping herd together. On the fourth day they had a piece of rare good luck.

Two *vaqueros* from the north rode up to the Rocking-R seeking work. Dark-faced young daredevils from distant Sonora, the threat of the local situation held no horrors for them.

"*Quien sabe?*" said Alfredo, the elder, shrugging with Latin expressiveness. "Tomorrow we die. Today we eat, and are merry! Knives, say you, *Senor*? Häh! I know a trick or two with the blade myself!"

"*Maldito, yes!*" agreed Felipe with a flash of his white teeth.

The work went faster after that;

the number of *ganado* in the big corral increased rapidly. Walt and his two riders combed the outlying brakes for fat dogies that had been living high on the succulent grama grass.

Dusk one day found them in a narrow canyon, holding together a considerable herd they had collected.

"Yuh draw the fust watch," Walt told Felipe as he and Alfredo spread their blankets by the fire. "Call me if anythin' goes wrong."

He lay down and was instantly fast asleep. He was awakened hours later by Alfredo's hand on his shoulder.

"Capitan," whispered the *vaquero*, "something is wrong."

Walt sat up, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

"Why yuh think so?" he asked.

"Capitan, there is a storm approaching and Felipe he does not sing. Besides, it is far past the time when he should have awakened me to relieve him."

Walt threw the blankets back.

"Come on," he ordered crisply. "Quiet now. Got yore guns?"

Swiftly the two cowboys drew on their boots.

"The *caballos*?" questioned Alfredo.

"NO," Walt told him, "leave the horses; they'll make too much racket. You go to the right, I'll go to the—hell's-fire-and-damnation!"

Through the uneasy sounds of the night had burst a wild yell and a roar of gunfire. Followed the bellows of terrified cattle, then a low, terrible thunder.

"Fork yore bronc!" yelled Walt. "Hustle, feller, it's a stampede!"

Never in his life had Walt Bowman cinched with such lightning speed.

Death, a frightful death beneath slashing hoofs and goring horns, was swooping down the narrow gorge. To

climb the rock walls was impossible. In headlong flight lay their only chance.

Walt swung into the saddle, held his frantic horse in check with an iron hand.

"I come, Capitan!" yelled Alfredo.

Walt gave the horse his head. Down the gorge they raced, neck and neck, that terrible thunder rumbling at their very heels. A jagged flash of lightning split the black heavens wide. In the blue glare Walt caught a glimpse of rolling eyes and tossing horns surging from wall to wall of the canyon.

HE leaned forward, urging on his flying horse with voice and hand. Then he jerked the animal, staggering and reeling, back onto its haunches.

Alfredo's despairing yell ringing in his ears.

The *vaquero's* horse was down, screaming with a broken leg. Another glare of lightning showed Alfredo staggering to his feet.

"Hurry!" roared Walt, "they're right on top of us!"

With that wave of death sweeping down upon him, Alfredo took time to draw his gun and put the suffering horse out of its misery.

"Good man!" Walt applauded as he hauled the *vaquero* across the pommel. "Git goin', hoss!"

Mad with fright, the bronc shot forward. It screamed as a sharp horn raked its haunch. Walt could feel the hot breath of the roaring herd. His ears rang with the terrified bawls. He drew his gun and fired at the wild heads tossing on either side.

The cattle lunged away. The straining horse gained a yard—two—five! Like the shadow of a cloud fleeing before a lightning flash, he burst from the gorge and scudded across the open plain. Walt pulled him sideways in a long slant and brought

him to a sobbing halt. The herd had passed them by and was already milling and scattering.

Alfredo dropped to the ground. "Capitan," he said simply, "I thank you. And now," he added in a dry, hard voice, "we will go back and find Felipe."

"Yeah," agreed Walt, "what's left o' him."

They found what was left—a motionless body with the rough horn handle of a long knife protruding from the back.

"Slipped up on him, cashed him in, and then sent the herd down to finish us off," Walt deduced briefly.

"For which, Capitan, men—many men—shall die," said Alfredo.

"I hope so," agreed Walt, "but who?"

CHAPTER II

Tangled Threads



THEY buried young Felipe Fuentes on the lonely prairie, beside Waters and Reynolds. Old Jeff Hunter wiped the sweat from his face as he straightened up from setting the crude headstone. "Let's all ride to town," he suggested. "I feels the need of a drink an' I 'spects you fellers kin stand one."

"Suits me," said Walt. "You come along too, Huyan."

The Yaqui smiled, evidently well pleased at the invitation, but shook his head.

"Funny Injun," commented Hunter as Huyan departed with a load of mattocks and shovels. "Never touches it. Well, let's git goin'. Saddle me a hoss, if yuh don't mind, Alfredo."

Walt walked to the ranchhouse with Hunter.

"Got something to show you," he said. He handed the cattleman a

short length of gold watch chain. The links at either end were broken.

"That was in Felipe's hand when I turned him over," he explained. "Looks like he made a grab for the jigger what knifed him an' jerked his watch chain loose."

"LOOKS that way," admitted Hunter, "but it ain't much good, is it?"

"It's liable to give some sidewinder a dose o' lead poisonin'," said Walt. He hurried on before the other could interrupt:

"Hunter, no *peon* ever wore that chain. I even figger I kin go a bit farther and say no Mex ever wore it. That's an American-made chain an' I'll bet my last *peso* it was bought in the United States. You keep yore eyes skinned for a jigger wearin' a broken chain. Chances are he never noticed Felipe jerk it in the excitement. See?"

Hunter nodded, but was not impressed.

"It's playin' a long shot an' danged little chance to cash in," he growled pessimistically.

But that very night Walt "cashed in" on the long shot, and was left even more bewildered than before.

Zacarra was roaring when the three cattlemen rode in. It was payday at the mines and the miners were celebrating. Cal Rickey's Tumbling-D riders were in town also.

Walt found Rickey seated at a table in the American-owned saloon where Hunter had hired him. He sat down at the ranchman's invitation. Rickey introduced his foreman, Squint Brenmer, a sullen-faced individual with a mouth that was a cruel bloodless gash.

Rickey swore angrily when he heard of the stampede and Felipe's death.

"They won't stop at nothin'," he grunted. "Somebody run a dozen steers over a cliff for me yesterday

an' the boys found a fire jest in time to keep one o' my stables from goin' up in smoke. I'm thinkin' seriously o' sellin' out an' leavin' the country. Well, reckon I'll be ridin' back—it's gittin' late."

Brenmer pulled out a large gold watch, consulted it and rose to his feet.

"See yuh again," he grunted.

For long minutes Walt Bowman sat staring at the swinging doors through which the cattlemen had vanished. He ordered *tequila* and downed the fiery stuff at a gulp. For more minutes he sat pondering what he had seen.

It was not unusual for men in the cattle country to use a rawhide thong in place of a watch chain. Brenmer had worn such a thong looped from buttonhole to vest pocket. But when he drew the watch forth, Walt had seen that the thong was not fastened to the stem-ring of the watch—but to a short length of heavy gold chain!

"I'da swore they was the same big flat links, too," the puncher muttered. He downed another drink and left the *cantina*.

"The whole thing don't make sense," he growled as he walked down the crowded street. "What in tarnation would Rickey want with Hunter's range? It ain't no ways as good as his own an' he's got too much land, now. But why did he lie 'bout that bullet hole in his hat? And right now, of all times, his foreman's wearin' a broken watch chain!"

WALT rode alone the following day, through the wild and broken country that formed the western half of the Rocking-R range.

"I got a notion a lot of the dogies we ain't been findin' are holed up back in these hills," he told his tall roan gelding. "Seems ev'body's got a mighty pore opinion of *El Negro Inferno* an' keeps away from there.

I bet this section ain't been worked over right for one long time."

As he bored farther into the hills, the surmise was justified. He found cattle, wild-eyed, truculent *ganado*, but in prime condition.

"This bunch is gonna have us settin' purty with the shippin' herd," he exulted. "Now what's that, a calf bogged down?"

His keen eyes had caught a floundering movement beside a low ridge of rock. He rode toward it, lids slit-
ted against the sun glare.

"THAT ain't no calf!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Danged if it ain't a *hombre!*"

It was a man, or had once been one, a man whose skin had originally been coppery-red, whose hair had been lank and black. Now the skin was a repulsive, dirty grey, the hair thin and dead. Walt paused a half-dozen paces distant, a chill of horror prickling his scalp. In his ears rang the words of Huyan, the Yaqui cook—

"—a lump of rotting flesh that could only tremble and moan—and die!"

That was all the dying Indian was—a lump of rotting flesh, toothless, trembling, moaning. The slow writhing of the body suggested the boneless movements of a torpid snake. It took all Walt's courage to kneel beside the horrible thing and pillow the rolling head on his knee.

"What happened to yuh, old-timer?" he asked. "Is there anythin' I kin do?"

He repeated the words in Spanish. The filming, lack-luster eyes gazed into his, the quivering lips twitched and writhed. Words like the croak of a tortured frog seeped between the shriveled, bloody gums:

"*El Dios de la luz!*"

"The god of light—The Shining God!" Walt translated. "Say, what—how—"

The Indian suddenly rattled in his throat. The writhing body stiffened, quivered, relaxed. The shrunken jaw sagged.

But even in death there was no expression of peace for the tortured features. The glazed eyes still stared with horror in their depths. The thin lips writhed back from the bloody gums. The whole emaciated form seemed to cry out against some dread and agonizing fate.

Walt eased the body to the ground and stood up. For long minutes he stood gazing toward those gloomy, threatening hills that fanged the blue sky. He shivered in the bright sunshine.

"Heck, it's cold!" he muttered as he walked back to his nervous horse.

THAT night Walt Bowman fought a hard battle with himself. He had a hunch and he wanted to follow it. Back in those ominous sulphur-colored hills of *El Negro Inferno* there was undoubtedly some terrible Thing of blasting horror.

Walt had been more amused than impressed by Huyan's grim story. Now he had seen that tale of terror unfolded and brought to its awful conclusion before his very eyes.

"I don't know how I know it," he growled to himself, "but I'll bet all the *dinero* I ever hope to have that back in them holes is the reason why Cal Rickey, or somebody, is tryin' to run Hunter off this range!"

He was suddenly struck by an idea. "Didn't Huyan say somethin' 'bout the priests of the Shinin' God? Mebbe there is a Shinin' God an' his priests is sore 'cause Hunter came in here an' took up land they think oughta b'long to their god. If it wasn't for that phoney bullet hole and the chain, I'd be 'bout ready to count Rickey outa the deal."

Walt rode away from the Rocking-R at daybreak, alone. He shivered as he passed the shallow grave he had

scooped out for the dead Indian the day before. Over him swept again that terrible feeling of oppression and deadly cold.

Hard of eye and grim of mouth, he rode on beneath the shadow of those lurid hills that seemed to reach out mottled skeleton arms to crush horse and rider. Far to the west the great somber cone of a slumbering volcano reared against the sky, a trickle of dark smoke slaving over its drooping crater lip.

The stricken Indian could not have traveled far, Walt reasoned. Somewhere at no great distance, doubtless within the confines of the Rocking-R range, lay the mysterious horror. Silver River, chafing against the westernmost hills of *El Inferno Negro*, marked the limit of Hunter's range in that direction. But within that half-score of miles lay the wild, rugged and little known Black Hell.

The faint cattle trail Walt had been following petered out altogether and the cowboy rode between frowning canyon walls that drew closer and closer together. Mile after mile he threaded the gloomy gorge, alert for danger but seeing and hearing nothing.

WATER moaned over the rocks and from time to time a weird bird cry winged down from the saffron-flaring crests. The canyon ended abruptly in a blank rock wall.

Walt pulled up, eyeing the unclimbable cliff.

"Looks like we done mavericked inter nothin' at all," he told the sorrel. "Nobody ever clumb down them rocks."

Suddenly his eyes centered on a fissure in the frowning barrier. It was a mere crack in the rock, extending from top to bottom of the cliff. Had not the early afternoon sun been shining directly against the cliff face, Walt would have overlooked the rift altogether. He rode forward

and peered into the gloomy opening.

"If that don't look like the front door to hell, I hope I never see the real thing," he muttered. "Hoss, yuh can't go in theah, an' I ain't got no business goin'."

He turned the roan and rode slowly away from the cliff. In a little grove where there was grass and water, he dismounted.

"Jest stay here an' wait for a plumb danged fool," he ordered. "An' here's hopin' yuh don't hafta wait too long!"

CHAPTER III

El Negro Inferno!



SLITHERING and winding, the fissure bored through the solid rock. Walt cursed heartily as he stumbled over loose stones and bruised himself against snagging fangs of rock. He was sweating profusely when the fissure opened into a gorge narrower and gloomier than the one he had just left.

This gorge was in reality little more than a cave with a crack in its roof. Walt groped along in the half light, an intangible apprehension clawing at his nerves. He tried to shake it off but it persisted.

An unfamiliar, irritating odor began clogging his nostrils. His eyes stung as if from heavy smoke. He glanced about, but could see nothing but the frowning walls of queer reddish rock.

He rounded a sagging corner and halted abruptly, staring with puckered eyes.

The gorge widened slightly and ended, a hundred yards or so distant, at what appeared to be the lip of a cliff. Beyond the lip was blue distance. Walt gave all this a passing glance and then devoted his attention to what lay nearer at hand.

The walls of the gorge were torn and gutted. Heaps of the strange reddish rock lay about. At one side and close to the cliff lip was a crude furnace built of stone blocks, through whose poorly filled niches seeped clouds of oily black smoke. Dark wisps blew back into the gorge from time to time and bore with them that strange, irritating odor.

"Had a notion I was crawlin' inter hell," muttered the cowboy, "but durned if I figgered I'd find one o' the cook pots goin' full blast!"

He walked slowly toward the furnace, alert for any danger that might threaten. He could see dark fissures gouging the cliffs, but no movement was apparent within them. The gorge seemed utterly deserted.

The smoke grew thicker as he approached the mysterious furnace. Walt coughed chokingly. His eyes stung. There was a peculiar constricted feeling inside his chest, as if an iron band were slowly tightening about his ribs. He hesitated a moment, then went on, bending low to escape the fumes.

As he drew nearer, he noted the peculiar construction of the furnace. It appeared to have upper and lower compartments. A wooden cylinder, evidently hollow, thrust out from the upper compartment, curved down and vanished in a shallow pool of water.

CHANNELS cut in the smooth rock of the gorge floor led away from both pool and furnace. Walt moved in a little closer, and as he did so a gust of wind swept a great cloud of oily smoke down upon him.

Choking and gasping, he reeled back, pawing at his stinging eyes; and as he did so hands like vulture talons gripped his arms and legs and hurled him to the ground!

He struggled madly with the horrible figures that had darted, under cover of the smoke, from the dark holes in the cliffs; but his arms were

wrenched behind him and quickly bound with rawhide thongs. He was jerked to his feet and dragged back out of the fumes. His eyes cleared and he glared about.

His captors were Indians, or what had once been Indians. Now they were frightful, toothless, hairless things that seemed mere bundles of rotting bones and stringy muscles. They stared at the prisoner with furious evil eyes, champing their flabby jaws, their lips writhed back from swollen, bloody gums. Their limbs jerked and trembled, their breath hissed out in incredibly foul blasts.

One of their number gave a sort of animal howl. The others yelped in chorus. Their grip on the prisoner tightened. They rushed him past the furnace and toward the cliff lip. Walt resisted fiercely but he was almost on the edge before his efforts brought forth any results.

There he managed to kick one man's feet from under him. Another stumbled over the prostrate one and the whole group was brought to a milling halt. Walt Bowman cast a glance over the cliff lip and fought with maniacal despair.

He had seen the Shining God!

A SCORE of feet below was a pool, the surface of which shimmered and coiled and glittered. Sparkling drops falling from the channels grooved in the stone sent dancing ripples over its surface. It was sublimely beautiful, there in the bright sunlight, but with the beauty of terror.

"Quicksilver!" the cowboy panted, as he struggled with all the strength of his lithe body. "A pool of quicksilver!"

Madly he strove against the death of horror that awaited him there at the foot of the cliff. He jerked one hand free and drove an iron-hard fist into the face of one reeking horror. He swept another to the ground be-

fore the hand was pinned again. But numbers were telling. They were slowly dragging him back to the cliff lip.

His feet were on the very edge. The sinister pool flashed its blinding beams in his eyes. His captors tensed for the final lunge.

Above the grunt and gabble of the straining Indians sounded a high-pitched voice shouting an angry command. Walt's captors hesitated, holding him helpless but no longer striving to hurl him over the edge. Again the voice sounded—harsh, peremptory.

WALT was dragged back from the cliff lip and thrown to the ground. His hands were bound again, more firmly than before, and his feet likewise. The group about him dissolved and he gazed up into the face of an ancient Indian.

Fell disease had not struck at this man's life; only great age. He was straight as a lance. His snowy hair was thick and glossy; but his glittering black eyes were the eyes of a fanatical madman. He glared hate at the helpless puncher, then turned and barked a command.

Taloned hands lifted Walt and carried him into one of the dark fissures. There he was dumped upon the damp ground and left alone with his thoughts, which were not pleasant. He was not deluded into believing that any prompting of mercy had caused the old Indian to rescue him from immediate death.

"Jest gonna hold me for a proper stage settin'," he decided. "Well, I found out about the Shinin' God and why Rickey wants Hunter's range, but it ain't likely to do me a lot o' good. Yeah, it's plump simple now—

"Hunter was right, they ain't no gold in these hills; but there's some-thin' darn near as valu'ble. Quicksilver is wuth plenty o' money. Them red rocks is cinnabar ore an' yuh git

quicksilver from cinnabar. The Indians roast it out in that furnace an' run it into the pool. They can't hold it an' they can't pick it up an' they think it's a god an' worship it.

"O' course they git mercury-poisoin' from the smoke an' die. That old high-priest jigger is wise enough to keep away from it an' them pore dumb devils think he's ace-high with the god."

All of which was interesting but hardly comforting. No wonder Huy-an and his tribe considered *El Negro Inferno* a place accursed. A man dying in the last stages of mercurial poisoning was bound to look as though he had plenty of devils clawing him.

With a sudden thrill Walt realized that his guns had not been taken from him; but his exultation was short lived. Guns were of little use to a man with his hands and feet securely tied. He strained at the thongs but only succeeded in cutting his wrists. His body ached and the damp cold of the ground ate into his bones. Nearby, water dripped into a pool with maddening monotony.

THAT steady drip reminded Walt that he was desperately thirsty. He located the pool by sound, rolled and shuffled to it and ducked his face down against the water. He sucked up a mouthful, sputtered, gagged and spewed it forth. It was rankly bitter with minerals, undrinkable. He swore despairingly and rolled over on his side.

His burning wrists shrieked for attention. He writhed toward the pool again, backward this time.

"If I can't drink it, mebbe I kin cool them cuts down a little in it," he mumbled. "Blast rawhide anyhow, an' blast anybody what'll tie a man with it!"

Suddenly a thought struck him.

"Rawhide — water — rawhide will

stretch when it gits wet! Mebbe—"

Immediately he put the thought into action. By straining and squirming, he managed to get his wrists into the pool.

To do so he was forced to lie in the water and the chill of it set his teeth to chattering.

The minutes seemed to grow to hours, and still the stubborn rawhide refused to stretch the fraction of an inch. Walt's body was one agonizing ache, his head was splitting; but with grim determination he endured the torture.

AND then slowly the thongs loosened, stretching almost imperceptibly as he strained against them. Outside the fissure he could hear voices and shuffling sounds. The Indians were doubtless coming for their victim. The thongs were much looser now, but still he could not free his hands. His heart sank as a shadow darkened the fissure mouth.

A sudden yelling arose. Then a sound that Walt least expected to hear—the boom of a gun!

Other reports followed it in quick succession; the rattle of sixes. Voices shrieked in agony and among them Walt recognized the cracked tones of the old high priest. Silence followed, then voices—gruff voices speaking English.

"That settles the scum," said one that seemed vaguely familiar. "Wasn't no use lettin' 'em hang 'round here any longer, now that we 'bout got things in our hands. With old Hunter outa the way, I'll git a grant o' his land from the Gov'ment an' a little later we'll 'diskiver this ore deposit, by accident."

"Yuh said it, Boss," another voice chuckled evilly, "an' by this time t'morrer yuh won't have to worry none about Hunter, nor 'bout that smart gun-slingin' puncher from Arizona, neither. He'll wish he'd took notice when I chucked that

knife side him there in the *cantina!*"

"Yuh shore yuh gōt everythin' fixed, Squint?"

"Fixed is right," grunted the evil voice. "I got enough dynamite planted under that ranchhouse to blow the Mexican border inter next year. They won't be no slip-up this time, 'cause they all sleep in there now. I got the same kind of a alarm clock jigger with matches an' sandpaper to light the fuse as I used on their bunkhouse—it's right under the front porch an' it's set for midnight t'night."

"You an' me better be in town at midnight, where we got plenty o' witnesses."

"Uh-huh, I done told all the boys to be in Watson's *cantina* then. The whole Tumblin'-D will be present an' 'counted for. We'll all be plenty alibied, Boss."

Inside the dark fissure, Walt Bowman jerked the last wet thongs loose from wrists and ankles. He stood up, flexing his stiffened arms and legs. He loosened his guns in their carefully oiled and worked holsters, closed and unclosed his fingers a few more times and stepped out of the fissure.

ALL about were scattered the bodies of the dead Indians, seven of them, including the old high priest. The furnace fire had died to a faint smolder. At the cliff lip two men stood gazing down at the Shining God.

"Cal Rickey!"

The two men whirled at Walt's shout, alarm on their faces. For a split second they stood petrified with astonishment; then they went for their guns.

With effortless ease Walt Bowman flipped his Colts from their holsters, their muzzles streaming fire as they came. Rickey went down, sprawling on his face. Squint Brenmer, the Tumblin'-D's sullen-faced

foreman, sent one bullet zipping past Walt's head and kicked up the dirt at his feet with another. Then he slewed sideways and lay in a crumpled heap, a black hole oozing blood between his eyes.

Walt holstered his guns and strode forward. He glanced at Rickey, turned to Brenmer, and as he did so, Rickey came to his feet in a lightning bound.

"Gotcha, yuh range tramp!" he howled as his huge arms closed about the cowboy.

TAKEN utterly by surprise by the ruse, Walt was hurled backward to the ground. The force of the fall broke Rickey's grip and they rolled apart, instantly to regain their feet. Toe to toe they stood and slugged with all their strength.

Walt was the faster and more agile, but Rickey outweighed him by many pounds. He was forced to give ground before the rancher's attack. Rickey followed him close, his big fists working like pistons.

Walt weaved and blocked. He dared not go for his guns. Let his guard drop but for an instant and one of those sledge-hammer blows would stretch him senseless at the other's mercy. He leaped back a pace and Rickey rushed.

Walt ducked under the flailing arms, gripped Rickey about the loins and heaved with all his strength. Over his shoulder flew the rancher's big body, arms and legs revolving. He cleared the lip of the cliff and with an awful shriek shot head first into the mercury pool.

The shimmering surface heaved and rippled for an instant, then resumed its sinister, lazy coiling. The Shining God had claimed his sacrifice!

The stars a glowing net above him, Walt Bowman rode across the Rocking-R range. He was anxious and worried, for while he had plenty of

time to reach the ranchhouse before midnight, there was the chance that Brenmer might have miscalculated, or that something might happen to speed up his crazy clockwork device. Walt urged the big mount to greater efforts.

The roan surged forward, and stepped in a badger hole! Down he went, hurling Walt over his head. The cowboy struck the ground violently and lay still. The roan struggled up, whinneying with pain, limped a few steps and stopped.

The horse pawing close beside him finally brought Walt back to consciousness. He sat up, dully wondering what had happened. Memory came back and he staggered to his feet. One glance told him that the horse was useless with a badly sprained shoulder. Walt quickly loosened saddle and bridle and threw them to the ground. Then he set out toward the distant ranchhouse, running awkwardly in his high-heeled boots.

THE miles seemed to stretch out into an infinity of agony. Walt's feet were a mass of blisters, his head one vast ache. He stumbled on, limping and floundering, straining his ears for the sound he dreaded to hear.

But no rending explosion greeted him as he neared the dark ranchhouse. He yelled twice, then saved his breath to run the faster. As he reached the porch, a low whirring sounded. There was a bright flash, then a steady hissing like that of an angry snake.

The glow of the burning fuse guided him to the dynamite. He hauled the crude bomb out from under the porch and groped with trembling fingers for his knife. With a thrill of despair he realized it was gone. He jerked at the fuse, but it was firmly secured.

GRIPPING the fuse with his teeth, close to the cap, he chewed frantically, ripping through the outer covering. A rain of stinging sparks seared the roof of his mouth. The fire was already lapping against the cap!

He ran to the rear of the ranchhouse and hurled the dynamite over a stable roof. It exploded with a terrific roar before it struck the ground, knocking the stable to pieces and shattering every window in the ranchhouse.

Deafened and half stunned, Walt picked himself up and staggered to the front door. He reached it just as Jeff Hunter burst out, a sawed-off shotgun in his hands.

"Hold it!" Walt yelled as Hunter leveled the gun.

He sat down wearily on the step. Alfredo and Huyan gathered around him.

"What in blazes happened, anyway?" demanded Hunter.

"Plenty," Walt told him, tugging at his tight boots. "Squint Brenmer won't chuck no more knives at people, an' Cal Rickey won't write no more notes or start no more stampedes. An', Boss, yuh're a rich man! Jest lemme git these blamed boots off, an' I'll tell yuh all about it!"

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Trouble *on* Misty River



The man stiffened to full height, then came crashing down

*A Pulse-Stirring Story of Two Sourdoughs of the North
Country—Where a Stern Code Calls for
Vengeance at All Costs!*

By BRUCE DOUGLAS

THERE has never been a case in the memory of man, when any mother, on listening to the first weak "ya-a-a" of her newborn son, has announced from her bed of pain: "We'll name him Goldpan." Or, "Pyrites is just the name for him."

Hence it is fairly certain that at some time in their lives Goldpan and Pyrites must have had other

names. If this is true, however, those other names were long since lost in the dim and distant past and faded from the memory of man.

For as Goldpan and Pyrites, the two old sourdoughs had prospected and trapped all over Northwestern Canada from Yukon Territory to Great Slave Lake and northward beyond the Circle.

They had made fortunes and lost

them; and now, in an indeterminate and leathery old age, were on the way toward making another, perhaps the biggest of them all.

THERE is a saying in the Yukon country that every prospector who spends his life at it has at least one rich strike somewhere in his system and due to come forth, but you can't count on more than one.

Perhaps it was because of this superstition that Goldpan and Pyrites were being so extremely careful about this, their second really big strike.

The first they had lost.

Announcing the glad tidings to a waiting world, they had guilelessly taken in outside capital to buy machinery for the operation of their mine.

Then the outside capital had turned right around and taken them in, fully and completely, so that they suddenly found themselves, in a quite regular and legal fashion, entirely on the outside of their little corporation, watching other men grow rich where they had toiled and discovered.

Hence, when they had successfully followed patches of yellow metal through pockets and gravel benches up the Misty River until they came to a lode of quartz, rotten, crumbly, shot through with thin wires of gold, they had mentioned their find to no man.

Instead, for five long years they had panned gravel in the summers and trapped in the winters, piling up their earnings in the bank at Dawson against that time when it should be enough to buy their own machinery and allow the working of the vein without need of outside capital.

"It'll take time," Pyrites had stated. "We dassent take in any quartz gold, or th hull o' Yukon Territory'll be on our necks in a

minute. But by pannin' gravel summers an' trappin' winters, we c'n pile up what's necessary. An' when we do register our lode an' git it producin', it'll be all ours."

Foolish? Probably. For old men can ill spare five years from their lives; and papers can undoubtedly be drawn up which will protect the discoveries of a lode from conscienceless capital. But Pyrites and Goldpan had been pretty badly burnt; and were wary a-plenty of anything that smacked of law.

Perhaps, too, the legal robbery of their strike was the reason for their attitude toward the law as represented in their neighborhood by the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, in the person of Corporal Cullen. Or perhaps it was just the old-timer attitude of minding your own business.

Misty River was a natural trail for outlaws and "wanted men" to follow. in their efforts to escape from Yukon Territory into Alaska; and several times Corporal Cullen had stopped at the little cabin to ask the old prospectors if this or that sort of person had been seen passing by. But finally Goldpan had quit evading the questions and had come right out with their stand:

"**I**T ain't that we're agin' th' law, Corporal," he had stated. "But we don't take much truck in it. So long as a man don't molest us, he's a good neighbor no matter what he may of done elsewhere. Outlaw or sky pilot, he kin have bed an' food fer th' night, an' no questions asked. No, we ain't in th' man-huntin' business; an' we leave that business fer them as is."

This attitude, too, had prevented Goldpan from even thinking of seeking the aid of the law in his present trouble. Sent in by Pyrites to the settlement at the mouth of Misty River, to carry in the summer's pan-

ning of gold for shipment to Dawson, and to bring back provisions to last the rest of the winter, he had dropped in on a newly-built grog shop, had just one drink, and wakened the next morning with a head like a steam boiler.

KNOCKOUT drops—and the gold was gone. The whole result of what was to have been their last summer of panning; for they had figured that with the returns from the winter's trapping, they could go ahead in the spring, register their lode, and get the machinery.

And now Goldpan was on his way back, heading an empty sled up the solid ice of Misty River. Heart-sick at the realization that his loss would force old Pyrites into a full other year of back-breaking toil, he pushed listlessly against a growing blizzard.

Somehow, it almost seemed as though the will to go on had been taken out of him.

For the first time in his sixty-eight years, he felt now that he was growing old.

The thing that hurt worst was the way Pyrites would receive the news of their loss. If he would only get mad about it and bawl Goldpan out for his carelessness— But, no; Goldpan knew mighty well that Pyrites would simply shrug those bony shoulders of his and remark that it didn't matter a shuck.

He'd take pains to point out that the same thing would have happened to him if he had gone in to the settlement instead of Goldpan; and would make light of the extra year of panning and trapping which their loss made necessary. Good old Pyrites!

But Goldpan groaned, he'd feel better if Pyrites would give him the swift kick that such carelessness merited. Suddenly he realized that Pyrites, too, was old, and that an-

other year of hard labor such as the five they had just put in would cut off at least two from the years in which they might expect to enjoy their wealth.

His preoccupation with his loss and the unhappy confession ahead of him when he should face Pyrites in their cabin did not prevent Goldpan from noticing things along the blizzard-swept trail.

Unnumbered years of fighting the trackless North had made noticing things almost instinctive with the old sourdough.

Ever since early morning when he had hitched up his dog team and left the settlement, his sled empty of the provisions he had intended to buy, he had noticed signs that somebody was ahead of him in the trek up river.

Hours ahead, he calculated, from the fact that the snow had almost obliterated the sled marks, and that a deserted noon campfire had been cold for several hours when he reached it.

THAT dead campfire had told Goldpan more about the man ahead than merely the approximate distance between them.

Some half-charred branches of green alder told him that his predecessor was a *cheechako*, a greenhorn who couldn't tell live wood from dead when the leaves were off it, and who didn't know that bark from the abundant birch hereabouts would burn readily when no dead wood was available.

Probably, he decided, one of the many *cheechakos* driven out of the cities by hard times and lured by tales of money to be made trapping furs. Little did those greenhorns know of the fierce struggle for life they faced in that sub-Arctic winter.

Some few would succeed; others would count themselves lucky to

come through alive. Still others would not come through that winter at all.

FROM a sudden speeding up of the tempo of pulling, Goldpan noted that the dogs realized the trek was almost over.

Not more than a good rifle shot ahead, the frozen river disappeared around a bend. And a hundred yards beyond the bend was the cabin. Warmth, rest, food, frozen salmon for the dogs, and—that painful interview with Pyrites.

Unconsciously Goldpan squared his shoulders as the sled rounded the bend and the cabin swung into view, a dim shape in the deepening darkness and whipping gusts of snow.

There was no putting off the unhappy moment now. Might as well hold up his head and go eat his humble-pie like a man. Then suddenly his old frame stiffened.

The cabin— There was no smoke issuing from the stone chimney. And no light from the window spread its cheerful glow on the snowbanks outside.

Something must be wrong. Something must have happened to Pyrites in his absence!

With a little catch of fear in his throat, he halted the dogs in front of the cabin and, without unhitching them, thrust open the door and strode into the dark interior.

"Pyrites! Where are ye?"

Even before he spoke the words, he knew there would be no answer. A wilderness man needs no light in a cabin to tell him that no other human beside himself is in it. Nonetheless, Goldpan pulled off his heavy mittens, groped over to the table, and lighted the oil lamp. As he had known, Pyrites was gone.

A hurried look about the cabin revealed something else besides Pyrites' absence. Winter had struck

early that year, and the two partners had already amassed a pile of valuable furs on the long shelf above the bunks. And now that shelf was empty! All of those furs, including a pair of matched silvers worth near a thousand dollars, were missing!

His jaw grimly set, Goldpan glared about the little cabin. There was no sign of a struggle, no chairs overturned or anything else out of place.

But Pyrites was missing, and the furs were gone. To the old sourdough this could mean only one thing. Pyrites would never have given up those furs without a struggle.

Hence it appeared plain that Pyrites was unable to put up a struggle. And Goldpan knew from years of association with the gaunt, leather-tough old Pyrites that he could always put up a good fight unless unconscious.

CAREFULLY he searched the rough board floor for any telltale sign of blood. There was none. At length he straightened up, the light of resolution burning in his faded blue eyes.

"There's only one way to figger it," he muttered. "That human *carcajou* got himself admitted peaceable. Then when Pyrites wa'n't lookin' or expectin' anythin' he socked him over th' head with his rifle. Seen a chanct to get a stock o' furs without workin' for 'em. Either he's took Pyrites along with 'im as a prisoner or else—"

His voice quavered to a trembling halt in mid-sentence. Why — the question drummed insistently in his mind—why should the holdup take an old man like Pyrites along with him? Wasn't it more likely—practically a certainty—that he would get rid of him instead?

This blizzard that now raged and howled about the cabin would long

since have blotted out all signs. Pyrites, either dead or unconscious, could have been dropped into any of a hundred ravines and gullies that criss-crossed the countryside hereabouts.

And whether dead or merely unconscious when it happened, Pyrites would certainly be frozen to death within a short time after. Grimly old Goldpan lifted his clenched fists into the air.

"Th' stinkin', murderin' *carcajou!*" he gritted, speaking the words slowly. "Pyrites, old pard, I'll trail th' low-down murderer an' revenge ye, ef it's th' last thing I do!"

Like one in a trance he walked over to the larder and hauled out a good sizeable meal of fish for the dogs. This he hurled outside to the pack. While the dogs were snarling and fighting over it, he inspected his rifle and filled his pockets with extra ammunition.

Then he snuffed out the lamp, walked out of the cabin, and carefully closed the door.

WEARY from their long day's trek, the dogs were loath to start out again after so short a rest. But Goldpan was in no mood for insurrection in his dog string.

Popping the long lash of his dog whip up and down the line, he quelled the growling huskies and snapped them into their collars in short order.

At his command the leader turned down the low bank, and the sled shot away up the smooth stretch of frozen river.

Hour after hour they pressed on, stung by the lashing gusts of snow, whipped by a wind straight from the North Pole.

At times Goldpan hesitated, wondering whether he might not have passed his quarry in the blackness of the night. Surely, no *cheechako* could travel through this night, even

if he were leaving a murdered man behind him.

Loop after loop of steely ice fell behind the plodding dogs, as Goldpan urged them with word and lash, or trotted silently behind, swinging his arms to ward off a creeping numbness.

AT last the sub-Arctic night brightened to a grey dawn. The blizzard blew itself out; and Goldpan was mushing along a stretch of white, unbroken snow.

Suddenly he drew the tired dogs to a halt. His keen old eyes had picked out a thin wisp of smoke rising over a strip of burnt-over land that marked a bend in the river. As silently as was possible, he herded the dogs into the shelter of a clump of quivering aspens.

Then he drew his rifle from his blanket roll, tightened the bands on his snowshoes, and crept noiselessly forward. From a point of vantage in the aspens at the edge of the river, he looked across the open stretch of ice.

By the stream's edge six weary huskies lay where they had dropped in harness, too tired to crawl out on the bank. The *cheechako* had evidently traveled all night.

Only the skill of many winters of such traveling had allowed Goldpan to close that gap of hours and come upon him so soon after he had made his first stop.

Out on the bank, the *cheechako* had built a little fire and was frying bacon. The scent drifted on the icy air clear across to where Goldpan, his stomach empty for almost twenty hours, crouched in the bushes.

Beside the *cheechako*, propped on a fallen tree to be instantly to hand, stood a rifle.

Goldpan surveyed the open stretch between him and his quarry. There was no way of getting within speak-

ing distance of the man without being seen.

THE *cheechako* had stopped at a bend where the river broadened out to a good hundred yards. And if Goldpan were to drop down below the bend and cross over, the burnt-over land which stretched on both sides of the river had removed all possible cover for more than shouting distance.

And Goldpan intended to have words with his man. He couldn't simply stand off and shoot it out with him at long range; he intended to find out from him where Pyrites' body was hidden, so that he could give it decent burial.

An idea occurring to him, Goldpan inched slowly back to where he had left his sled. He would come mushing boldly up the middle of the river, pretending to be a trapper on a purely innocent errand. In that way, he might get near enough to talk. What would happen afterwards he left for circumstances to decide.

It was harder than ever to get the dogs moving; but he finally managed it. Swinging them out in a long curve from the bank, he brought them around the bend in the middle of the stretch of ice.

But his ruse failed to work. As soon as the sled swung into view, the *cheechako* whirled from his campfire and swiftly grabbed up his rifle.

Aiming quickly, the man sent a bullet speeding out over the ice. It whined by, a full two feet over Goldpan's head. Cursing excitedly, Goldpan cracked his whip beside the ears of the lead dog. The great husky threw himself into the collar, and the sled dashed forward with renewed speed.

Obviously frightened by the move, the *cheechako* fired again. And again the bullet sang its song of

death above the old sourdough's head. Reluctantly Goldpan mounted the runners and drew his rifle out of its bedding.

"Well, if ye just will have it that way—" he remarked, dropping off the runners and letting the sled go on without him. Carefully he sank to one knee and raised the rifle to aim.

Another bullet whizzed by him, this one not so high, but a trifle to the right. The *cheechako* was getting the hang of that rifle.

Slowly Goldpan pulled the trigger. The rifle jerked in his hands; and the *cheechako* flung his weapon from him and clasped both hands over a hole in his parka. Blood flowed through the fingers pressing against the wound. Almost deliberately the man stiffened to full height, then came crashing down on the snow.

GOLDPAN trudged the remaining distance and stood beside the fallen man.

"You killed him!" he gritted, looking down into the glaring eyes of his quarry. "Killed him without givin' him a chance! Now you're goin' out. Feller, do just one thing to level off th' badness you've done. Tell me where ye left th' body, so's I can give it decent burial!"

On Goldpan's approach, the *cheechako* had removed one hand from the gaping wound and shoved it deep inside his parka. Now, just as the old sourdough stopped speaking, an automatic fired from inside the man's clothing.

A stream of bullets burst through the riddled parka. The first one tore through Goldpan's sleeve and seared his arm like the burn of a hot iron. He leaped quickly aside; and the other bullets streaked harmlessly by.

The wounded man coughed and spit out a clot of blood.

"I—I—" he choked, glaring up at

the old man. "I almost—took—you—with me, you—" The sentence ended in a mumble of vilification as the man again sputtered pink froth. Then the *cheechako's* eyes glazed, and he sank into unconsciousness.

GOLDPAN knelt down beside him. The man's heart was still beating; but the bullet from the old prospector's rifle had gone perilously near that heart.

He had intentionally aimed wide of an instantly killing mark, bent on getting information out of the man; but the bullet had struck closer than he had intended. Finally he rose to his feet.

"Crooked an' mean to th' end," he muttered, looking down at the unconscious form. "Ye'd think he'd at least be willin' to let me bury my pard."

His voice cracked at thought of Pyrites, frozen stiff in some unknown ravine or crevice of rock; and his eyes burned relentlessly as he glared down at the man.

"I'll take ye in," he decided. "There's a chance that ye'll come to before ye pass out. An' if ye do—"

Leaving the sentence unfinished, he set about rounding up his dogs, which had mixed with the dogs of the *cheechako* and were now in the thick of battle. Half an hour's work with whip and hand straightened out the mess. One dog was dead. The others he hitched in with his own string.

Then he laid the still, unconscious form in his blankets and covered him up.

Cracking his long lash like gunshot along the line of huskies, he swung them downstream.

"Mush!" he commanded, and set off trotting behind the loaded sled.

It was nearly dark when Goldpan again came in sight of his cabin. Twice that day he had stopped long

enough to build a little fire, melt some snow, and pour the liquid between the lips of the rapidly weakening *cheechako*.

An hour ago, he had stopped for the third time. But this last time he had given no water to his prisoner.

When he threw back the blankets to uncover his face, he discovered that the man was dead.

Goldpan had groaned inwardly. All that long trek back had been for nothing; the man would never reveal where the body of Pyrites lay. Pulling the blanket up over the dead face, Goldpan had plodded wearily onward.

As the wornout huskies staggered a little faster onward, Goldpan looked ahead down the stretch of ice toward the cabin. He started suddenly, and drew the back of a mitten over his eyes. He blinked, but the vision still persisted.

THERE was a light in the cabin. Somebody had entered during his absence and made himself at home.

It was not unusual, he realized; any trapper going through the blizzard of the preceding night would feel free to enter when he found the cabin empty, and seek shelter from the storm. But at this time of all times, Goldpan did not want company. He wanted to nurse his grief in silence. And besides, there was this dead body.

The dogs fell exhausted in front of the cabin. Hastily loosening their harness, the old prospector strode to the door and flung it open. At sight of what was inside, he stiffened and took a backward step, as though at the impact of a mighty hand.

"Pyrites!" His tired voice mounted to a high note and cracked.

His gaunt old partner rose from his chair. "I reckon it is, Gold-

pan," he replied. "Was you expectin' to see anybody else? Where ye been all this time? When I got held up in that blizzard, I allowed you'd get back long afore I did."

GOLDPAN'S mouth opened and closed spasmodically, and his Adam's apple bobbed up and down in his throat. "You — you —" he gasped finally. "Then you ain't kilt?"

Pyrites snorted. "Kilt nothin'. What in tarnation are ye maunderin' about?"

Goldpan's faded blue eyes roamed slowly about the cabin, coming to rest on the shelf above the bunks. He nodded in that direction.

"But the furs? He—he got away with th' furs? Goshamighty! I went an' left them furs a day's trek up-river!"

Pyrites slowly crossed the room and gave his partner a squinting inspection. "What's wrong with ye, Goldpan?" he inquired, his voice indicating grave concern. "Have ye gone bush-crazy? What d'ye mean, up-river? O' course th' furs are gone. Yest'd'y mornin' that trapper Eldridge who traps th' Jealous Crick country over yonder come by with a load of furs.

"Seems that this Donaldson Fur Company that's tryin' to edge in here had sent a buyer to Salt Lick to buy a lot o' mid-winter furs an' bring 'em out early for top prices.

"So, knowin' ye wouldn't be back from Misty Mouth settlement till night, I packed up an' went along with our furs. Got a right good price, too; but th' blizzard kept me from gettin' back till mornin'. I thought ye'd be here long ahead o' me."

As Pyrites talked Goldpan's face fell and a hunted look appeared in his eyes. At the conclusion, he groaned.

"My God!" he muttered. "My

God! Not even th' furs. Why, th' man didn't even come near th' cabin!"

His brow furrowed with anxiety, old Pyrites seized his partner by both shoulders and shook him. "Goldpan!" he exclaimed sharply. "What ails ye, man?"

Goldpan shook him off and sagged down on the edge of a bunk.

"My God!" he mumbled unintelligibly. "I've kilt an innocent man!"

A loud hail penetrated the cabin door. Pyrites went to the door and looked out into the blue-black darkness.

"It's that Mountie," he announced. "Corporal Cullen. Now what brings him up this way, I wonder?"

AGAIN Goldpan groaned. He knew. Even in his moment of agony he wondered at the speed with which the Mounted Police pick up information about crimes committed in their trackless domain.

With a little shudder, he rose from the bunk and strode to the door, elbowing his partner back into the cabin. The light from the open door fell upon the officer, and he walked toward him.

Squaring his shoulders, he blocked the way.

"Corporal Cullen," he began grimly, "I've told ye many a time that Pyrites an' me don't do nothin' to assist th' law. But this is different.

"There's no use mincin' words or stringin' things out. Might's well have it over with. Just take a look under them blankets, Officer. You'll find him right there." With a gesture of the arm which had in it something of magnificent surrender, he motioned toward his still loaded sled.

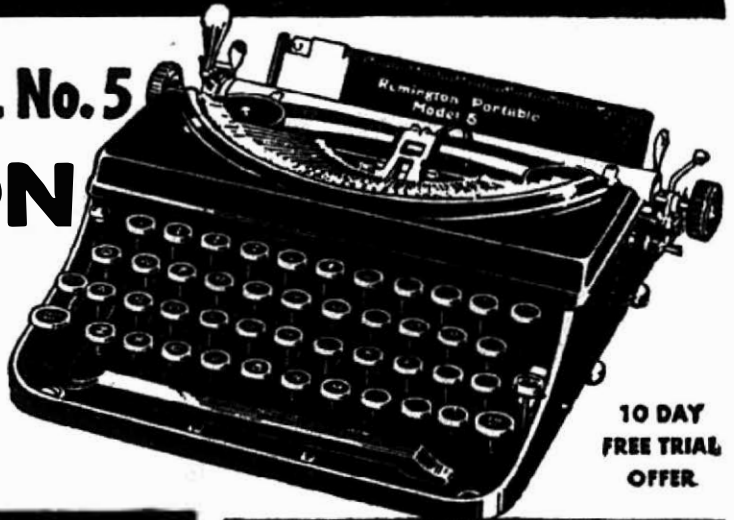
Corporal Cullen walked over to the sled and pulled down the top blankets. He stood there for some

(Continued on page 142)

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(Continued from page 140)
time, gazing down through the gloom at that white face.

"Dead?" It was more a statement than a question.

GOLDPAN granted in reply. Corporal Cullen turned. "Help me bring him inside," he ordered.

Stolidly Goldpan lifted his share of the ~~immense hoard~~. Together they carried the dead cheechako into the cabin and stretched him out on a bunk. Then Corporal Cullen turned and faced the old prospector.

"You've changed your habits, it seems, Goldpan."

Goldpan nodded. "It was a—" he began. He intended to say it was all a mistake, then thought better of it. It was too much trouble to explain anything; and of a sudden Goldpan felt very weary, and very cold. "I reckon," he stated gruffly, "that I'll be goin' in to Misty Mouth settlement with ye in 'th' mornin'. Corporal."

Corporal Cullen did not answer. He was busy feeling about in the depths of the cheechako's clothing. His hands came out with a fat money belt, which he laid on the table.

"I suppose," he stated, beginning to count a big sheaf of bills, "it was what he did that changed you, eh, Goldpan? Though how you heard of it so quick is a mystery to me. A regular heartless, bloodthirsty massacre. Lined up the cashier and the teller with their faces to the wall, and then mowed them down with that automatic. Laughing while he did it."

With a slap he brought the counted bills down on the table, then rifled off a number from the top of the pile. These he extended to Goldpan.

"You'll have to wait until papers go through for the thousand dollars reward on this carcajou's hide,"

he announced. "But there's a standing reward of the Bankers' Association of ten per cent. of all stolen monies recovered. I'm authorized to pay that over at once. This comes to fifty-two thousand and forty. Here's fifty-two hundred and four."

"And I want to thank you for altering your ideas about assisting the law. We M. P.'s have a pretty hard time administering thousands of square miles of wilderness. When an honest man can step in and help a bit, he really ought to do it."

When the old prospector failed to reach out and take the money, Corporal Cullen rose and put it into his hand. "Take it," he urged. "It's all clean money. The cleanest sort of money. Money earned by risking your life to rid the world of a depraved, inhuman monster."

Noting that Goldpan still stood watching him goggle-eyed, he went on: "By the way, you mentioned going in with me to Misty Mouth tomorrow. I'm sorry, but I've got to push on tonight. Now that this matter is settled—I'll certify to the death, and you can bury him somewhere hereabouts—I have time to get over to Loon Lake.

"There's some liquor leaking in to those buck Injuns, and I want to plug that leak. But I'll be back in the settlement in about three days. Anything I can do for you then?"

HURRIEDLY Goldpan pushed the handful of bills toward the police corporal.

"Yes," he gasped. "Yes. You kin. Send this money on to the bank in Dawson for us. An' when I see ye in town, you can help us register discovery of a lode!"

Three hours later the two old partners faced each other across their worn table, cups of steaming coffee before them. The dead bank

(Concluded on page 144)

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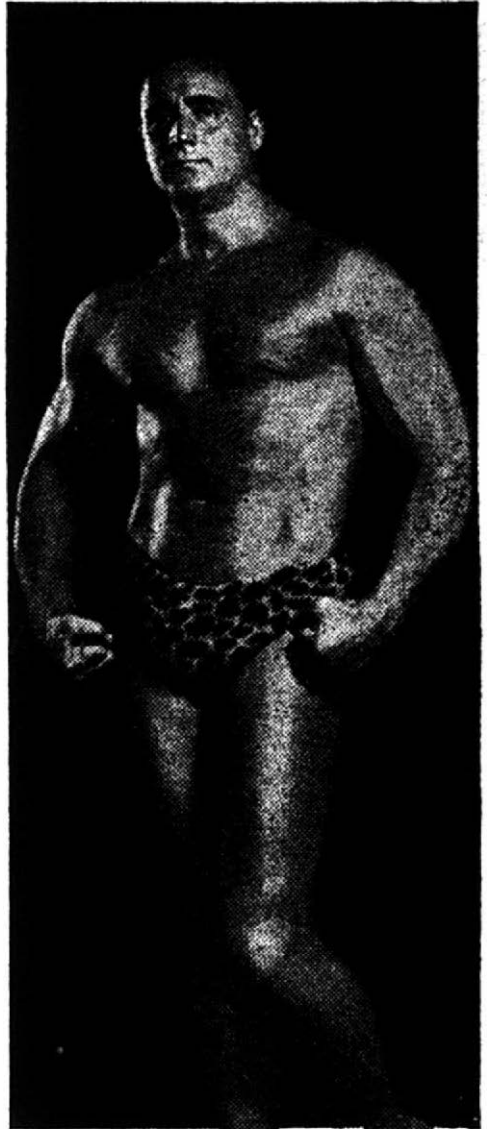
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(Concluded from page 142)

robber lay in a shallow grave across the river; and the weary dogs had been fed and sheltered for the night.

"So ye see, Pyrites," Goldpan concluded shamefacedly, "I had to come back without no provisions an' with th' dust stole offen me."

THE grunt old prospector across from him reached out a bony hand and laid it over the back of his.

"It wouldn't of mattered a shuck," Pyrites said.

"I know it won't now," Goldpan replied. "That reward money'll more'n make up th' difference; an' next spring we'll be haulin' machinery in here to start our lode!"

Pyrites rose and yawned. "It wouldn't of mattered anyhow," he declared. "What's another summer of pannin' gold? Mark my words, Goldpan: no matter how much money this lode makes us, when it's runnin' like clockwork an' don't need

our help no longer, we'll be right out pannin' gravel again! Just mark my words."

FOR a long three minutes Goldpan sat in silence, meditating, sipping the steaming hot coffee. Then he chuckled.

"Pyrites," he mused, "th' law's a funny thing, after all, ain't it? Fust, when you make a rich strike an' take in some outside capital to buy your machinery, it shoves you right off your claim an' hands it over to crooks.

"Then when ye go an' do some-thin' plumb illegal, like killin' a man that ain't even come near your cabin, let alone wronged you, an' you're all set to go in an' have yore neck stretched fer doin' it, th' law up an' thanks ye an' hands ye a reward! It worked out all right this time; but believe me, I'm mindin' my own business a-plenty from now on!"

THE DERELICT

(Concluded from page 114)

strike something soft and sink up to the hilt.

It was a desperate chance and he won! His aim had been true and he had struck one of the hideous creature's gleaming eyes.

And as quickly as those boa-constrictor tentacles had seized him, they released their hold and began thrashing madly in the water. The monster's horrible groans, even there under water seared themselves into Motley's brain.

In a flash, Motley struck out with both arms and shot upward. It seemed like hours before he at last reached the top. Just when he thought he would never last long

enough to make it, his head popped through the surface of the water and he greedily gulped the life-giving, cool air once more.

He threw himself over on his back and floated for several minutes before he recovered enough strength to go on. Then, hand over hand, he pulled himself back to the schooner's deck and fell exhausted.

How long he lay there he did not know. But when he was able to arouse himself the sun was shining.

And not fifty yards away was a tramp freighter. She was sending over a work boat, paying out a heaving line.

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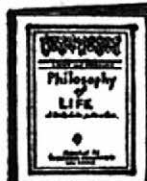
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The GLOBE-TROTTER



TAHITI — Haiti — Sonora — Hyderabad — Bechuanaland — from one to another the yarns hopped like a cricket jumping about on an outspread map of the world.

That's what happens when a dozen rolling stones all pause momentarily



before a great open fireplace—and when old Henri Lemoine fills the cups with that savory concoction of hot wine which only he knows how to mix.

Those fellows had been most everywhere, and the miracle was that they were all gathered there to spin their yarns. Charmed lives, perhaps—and then again perhaps it was simply that they were two-fisted adventurers to whom preparedness was second nature; men who saw danger coming and opened their arms wide to meet it.

Born Too Late?

There were two or three gathered around that fireside whose adventures still lay before them. Easily identified, those fellows—by their wide eyes, their open mouths and their straining ears, as if they were anxious lest they miss a single thrilling word.

All except the indolent blond

young giant. He was no breathless listener; he was bored.

"Tabiti—the French have tamed that," he yawned at last. "The Marines took all the kick out of Haiti; Mexico has turned Sonora into a model state; John Bull keeps his eye glued on India—and South Africa's been turned into a farm since the Boer War. You fellows have been around; you've seen what there is to see. But we're too late. There are no more frontiers. The little old world is pretty well tamed—and it looks to me pretty much as if this generation has been gyped out of its share of adventure."

The Great Unknown

There was silence after that. Those hardy sons of the far, far places seemed taken aback. They seemed at a loss for words—until a lean, bronzed six-footer banged out the dottle of his pipe against the heel of his hand and spat into the fire.

"No more frontiers, eh?" he rumbled. "Then I don't know what you'd



call the little playground that lies between China, Mongolia and Tibet. They call that vast region Kham, or Ko-ko-nor. The Tibetan lamas and
(Continued on page 148)

INSURE ★

Fifty is a crucial age in a man's life. He is in full possession of his faculties but has lost some of the power of youth. You may not be fifty yet, but listen—

You can afford to think about it now! You cannot afford to ignore this certainty in your life.

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own bootstraps, so to speak, and have found invaluable help in the counsel and service of this forty-one-year-old institution which has kept apace of the times and is as modern as the new economic era facing us. You can do the same thing! Some of these men started under greater handicaps than you, most of them were just about like you are now. They changed their whole careers by mailing a coupon to Scranton. Do the same thing—today!

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(Continued from page 146)

the governors of the Chinese frontier provinces of Kan-su and Szechwan have done their damndest to get control of it—but they are no nearer to subduing it now than when they started.

"The many petty kinglets that are sprinkled over it are continually at war with one another, and the place is one great unknown No-Man's-Land. You'll find all the adventure you want there, youngster.

"And while you're looking around for a bit of excitement, you might drop in on Tibet—one of the wildest, toughest places the world has ever known.

Lama Warfare

"The Yellow Lamas are very much in the saddle now at Lhasa, the Tibetan capital—but Lhasa is only a speck in a tremendous wilderness. Until a few years ago it was supposed that the Red Lamas, who are the older sect of the two, had been entirely stamped out. But recently several lamaseries of the ancient order have come to light in Kham and Outer Mongolia.

"They are a tough lot, those Red Lamas; the sort who'd rather fight than eat. Even the fighting Moslems of Kan-su, who have certainly made themselves a name as warriors, have a respect for Mr. Red-Hat out of all proportion to his numbers.

A Tale of Adventure

"The existence of Black Lamas—the so-called Pun—is also a recent discovery. They are believed to represent a still earlier religious order, the mixture of witchcraft and devil-worship which was the religion of the country before the advent of Buddhism. In fact, the religion of the Black Lamas may be said to be witchcraft with a slight trace of Buddhism; of the Reds, about fifty-fifty; and of the Yellows, Buddhism

with more than a slight trace of witchcraft.

"It was under the fifth Dalai Lama, or Reincarnated Buddha—a gent named Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang—that the Yellow Hats made themselves supreme throughout Tibet. This fellow was esteemed as the holiest of the succession of Living Buddhas, and his ashes were venerated.

"The Red Lamas would have given most anything to get hold of those ashes—and the desperate bid they made for them was packed with enough adventure for any place and any generation. I was part of that effort; I fought the yellow horde."

Captain James Corgan half-closed his eyes, as if in transition he was back on the wild plains of Tibet. And from his lips came as rare a story of adventure as it has been Ye Olde Globe Trotter's privilege to hear in many a day. So good that we induced the captain to put it down on paper—which is why "I Fought the Yellow Horde" comes to you, an epic of first-hand adventure, in this issue.

Plenty Adventure Spots

Maybe some of the far places are now more or less civilized, as the blond youth contended. But, man, there are plenty—and I mean *plenty!*—spots where adventure still rules supreme. One of those danger spots is the setting for Arthur J. Burks' story, "Hell's Oasis", of which he tells us:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I know very well that there will be plenty of questions as to the authenticity of "Hell's Oasis." There is a city in an African desert that is much like M'Tab, though I have changed its name slightly for religious and other reasons. The real city which inspired this story is set in another desert, peopled by exiles from the long-ago, men and women who fled from religious persecution, driven into the desert to die.

But they were a hardy people who refused to die. In a land where even the jackal starved, they determinedly set about

(Continued on page 150)

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(Continued from page 148)

making homes for themselves. They dug wells where none would have thought of digging wells, and fitted them with traps to keep out the sand. They arranged their economic system so that they could eke out an existence of sorts. And they became extremely wary of strangers; grew, down the years, to resent and hate all outsiders.

For this reason, because they would accept nothing from the outside world, their religion became warped. Strange rituals began to mark it, and mark it to this day. Their cemeteries, every grave of which is carefully tended, became places of horror, where witch-doctors, or beings comparable to witch-doctors, worked out spells and curses with the bones of their ancestors. It is even said that human bones figure in their weird medicines.

Their women are never seen, and for any not immediately related to look upon them is to die by the sword. The men are hawk-eyed, fierce, and will fight to the death against any whom they suspect of potential



treachery—which is everybody outside their own city.

The real name of the real city may be found in the public library. It is very much like the name I have given it—and when it is studied it will be obvious why I have taken two unimportant liberties with the story: its name and its exact location.

Arthur J. Burks.

Tropic Isles

So long as there is a jungle, there will be adventure. Man may conquer the jungle and push it back for a while—but the jungle never sleeps. Always it is ready to recover lost ground and reclaim its own. That's why the jungle-clad isles of the tropic seas will always be but outposts of civilization.

Laurence W. Harrell knows those isles well. He wants to step up now and say a few words about what lies behind his fine yarn, "The Suva Kid":
Dear Globe Trotter:

As I pound out this letter to you, a cold, drizzly rain is sifting down outside the steamy windows. I can hear the steady

swish of cars ripping along the slushy street below.

It's hard to believe that at this time last year, I was watching from the deck of a little trading steamer, a string of palm-fringed islands shimmering beneath a tropic sun, as we nosed through the clear, turquoise waters of the Flores Sea.

It was on that trip that I met the Suva Kid. When I first saw him, he was seated



in the stern sheets of a native cutter that darted out towards us from the palms lining the shore of one of those brooding green islands of the Malay Archipelago, as we lay outside the reef.

Two days later I watched him go down over the side to a crumbling stone quay that jutted out into the blue-green lagoon, two hundred miles south. He waved once, then turned away. A few long strides, and the jungle swallowed him up. I have never seen him since.

I know that he was a gambler. And I know that he was an American. But what took him out to the islands in the first place, I do not know. Nor what—aside from a keen love of adventure—impels him to live out his life in those far-off, lonely and, more than often, dangerous specks of land that dot the charts of the South Pacific, alone, self-reliant, cut off from his kind.

I have been unable to get out of my mind the remembrance of that quietly smiling, level-eyed adventurer, with his square jaw and fighting lips. That's why he comes to you in "The Suva Kid."

Laurence W. Harrell.

So much for adventure in the far places. Now let's have a look at that greatest adventure of all—war—where man, in the hundreds of thousands, faces danger and death on every side. And that other, little known side of war where men and women fight out their destinies in the midst of their fellows but just as much alone as if they were in the center of a great desert.

Incredible Adventure

George Bruce knows these hardy adventurers very well, and has a few remarks to make about his story in this issue. He writes as follows:

(Continued on page 152)

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I ordered your Periodic Pills some time ago and they brought results. I had missed my normal cycle for two months, but I took your pills and to three days I had results.—Mrs. W. S., Ohio.
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(Continued from page 150)

Dear Globe Trotter:

"Flight of the Living Dead," like all the stories of this nature I have written, is based on fact. No one will ever know all about the tremendous and vicious war which was fought between invisible armies of men and women who individually exposed themselves to a danger far greater than uniformed soldiers were called upon to face, and who took chances with their lives which even today, fifteen years later, bristle with the incredible—the impossible!

Gustav Steinhauer, in his book, "Steinhauer, the Kaiser's Master Spy," tells the story of "Polish Mary," whose true name was Mary Sorrel. She was enchantingly beautiful, and worked, at the same time, for France, Russia, and Germany. Her exploits would be simply incredible except for the fact that they are contained in the archives of the Berlin Kriminal Kommissar. Four times, during the campaign in



Galicia, she passed between the German and Russian lines, on missions for the Germans, dressed in the field uniform of a Russian private.

And most stupendous of all! General Kennenkampf, the Russian general-in-chief, was her lover! He knew that she was a spy—and yet he did not have the heart to kill her, in spite of the fact that he knew she was selling information to the Germans. She was finally captured secretly by a command of Cossacks and hung to a tree limb before the general could be informed of her capture.

"Flight of the Living Dead" was written because there was a boy in the war who was very much in love with a girl he met overseas. Exactly as happens in the story, he was given an assignment to fly a spy over the lines. You can imagine his feelings when the spy climbed into his ship and he discovered her to be the girl he loved—who meant everything in the world to a youngster in the midst of the hell of war.

George Bruce.

The Meeting Place

No adventure any more these days? Well, there we've just heard from four gents who tell us otherwise in no uncertain terms. There's plenty of adventure out there waiting for you, brother; and plenty of good, thrilling

(Continued on page 154)

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(Continued from page 152)

adventure yarns when these Globe Trotters get together.

By the way, have you hooked up with the outfit yet? Are you a Globe Trotter? If not, you're sure missing a bet, old-timer. This is the outfit in which you belong—an outfit of red-blooded, he-man adventurers like yourself.

And there's a place in it wide open and waiting for you. All you have to do is cut out the coupon which appears on Page 161, fill it in, and send it to us with a stamped and self-addressed envelope. We'll inscribe your name on the membership roll and send you a handsome member's identification card immediately—without another penny of expense.

There is no initiation fee in this outfit—no dues. All you need is the desire for adventure and an interest in your fellow adventurers. Okay—Ye Olde Globe Trotter will be expecting to hear from you *pronto!*

All Set to Go

One big trouble with this Globe Trotters' outfit is that they certainly hate to stay put. Just mention the word "go," and they're buzzing around your head like a flock of bees. Last month Ye Olde Globe Trotter made a few remarks about all these gents who are clamoring for news of expeditions with which they might be able to hook up.

That wasn't a signal that all the rest of you should pull up anchor and get ready to sail! But lots of you seemed to take it that way. Like this Globe Trotter, who believes in preparedness:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Can you let me know if there is any chance of getting with some expedition? I am well-acquainted with all sorts of firearms. I am a member of the National Rifle Association, Bronx Revolver Association, and I have served in the C.M.T.C. for three years. I have medals for sharpshooting with rifle, machine-gun and revolver.

2489 Tiebout Avenue, George Leipert,
Bronx, N. Y.

Or this Globe Trotter, a light-weight boxer, who has seen his share of the U. S. A.—and is all set to see more:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am greatly interested in flying and am anxious to know of anyone who is planning an expedition who can use a competent young man who is capable at any kind of work—office or manual labor.

Nick Barbara.

820 N. Montford Avenue,
Baltimore. Md.

And still another rolling stone who feels it's about time to stay put for a while:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I've traveled quite a bit, but what I need now is some experience in how to make a living off the land. I aim to find me a spot out in the isolated places where I can stay permanent for a while. I've always had a hankering for prospecting and trapping, but I have hardly anything for a grubstake. However, if there is anyone itching for a partner, please look me up. I will work for a whole year for nothing but chow, a bunk and the experience.

153 Perry Street,
Elgin, Ill.

Vince Joy.

Jungle Adventure

Last month Ye Olde Globe Trotter offered to pass on to you fellows information which comes in from time to time about expeditions which might appeal to you. But with these provisos: **THRILLING ADVENTURES** and the Globe Trotter do not in any way sponsor or endorse any of the projects or expeditions so mentioned. If you find them interesting and decide to follow them up, you are to do so with your eyes wide open, investigating carefully before you do any signing up or paying any money. Ye Olde Globe Trotter will merely pass on the tip: it's up to you to decide how much the proposition is worth.

For example, here is an adventurer who is seeking to organize an expedition with various angles:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am an amateur motion picture photographer; known locally for my work in motion pictures, and have even made stuff for the news reels.

At present I am anxious to organize a
(Continued on page 156)



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ARE you aware that hypnotic power lies dormant in all of us...in you? You have complete control over anyone under your hypnotic power... they must say anything...tell anything...do anything that you command. Think what that means!

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A FEW OF THE SUBJECTS

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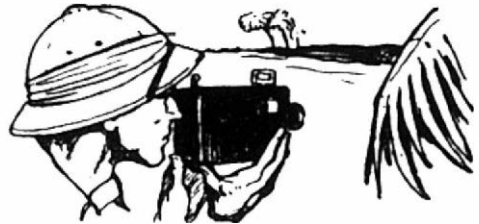


(Continued from page 155)

motion picture expedition to the jungles of Terra Quintana Roo, formerly a part of Yucatan, Mexico, and also to the jungles of Guatemala, in search of Mayan ruins.

A year ago a newspaper man in Oklahoma City organized an expedition of scientific nature to go through the waters of Latin America, following the coastline of Mexico, British Honduras, Nicaragua, San Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica and Lower California. The purpose of the expedition was to make motion pictures and to gather biological and geological collections.

Samples were to be taken from sediment of the beach zones exposed at low tide, dredgings from estuaries and lagoons, along with dredgings from the ocean floor to a depth of around 300 feet, taking collections of various types of shells, sea worms, and living algae; collecting various small mammals that occur along the coastal plain; and, last but far from least, both



motion pictures and stills of the ocean floor made from a specially constructed photographic bell or bathosphere. I was to do the undersea cinematographic work with a Bell & Howell professional studio model camera.

The expedition was to be made in a four-masted schooner, which we had chartered at Tampa, Florida. It had a gasoline engine for auxiliary purposes. The crew consisted of a navigator, deep-sea diver, a wireless operator, a doctor, a writer, a seaman, the leader and myself. Much of our time, while on the 9,000-mile itinerary, was to be spent in the bush searching for lost cities of the Mayas.

The University of Oklahoma sponsored the trip, but at the last moment our backer, a wealthy oil man, dropped out and the expedition sank into obscurity—save for Yours Truly.

I am looking for someone interested enough in science, dangerous adventure, and motion pictures, to help back such a project. I would even like to hear from those interested, whether they are financially able to help or not.

I have studied the Mayan Indian for three years. Recently I wrote a treatise on the Mayas for the Department of Middle American Research, Tulane University.

Deep in the jungles of Quintana Roo are the hidden cities of Huntichmul and Ich-

(Continued on page 158)

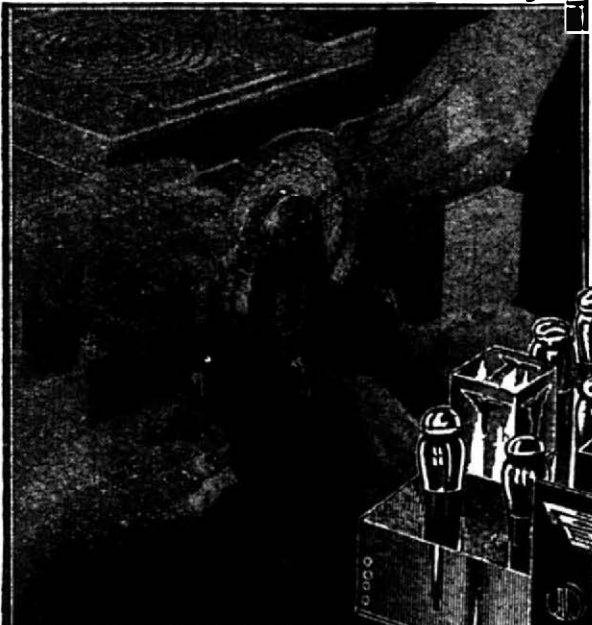
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FAMOUS NOVELTY COMPANY
 Dept. TF 30 Irving Place, New York City

(Continued from page 156)

mul, whose walls have never been gazed upon by white men. To enter these two sacred cities of the Mayas, wherein are still held inviolable ceremonies of the Feathered Snake, Kukulkan, is death. Yet some day a white man is going to visit those cities and come back out without having his hide stretched across some **Holpope's** (keeper of the sacred drum) **tomtom**. Why not one of us?

Let me hear from anyone interested.
 Box 1271, Eugene Healin, Britton, Oklahoma.

Typical Globe Trotters

Time now to hear from a few of the Globe Trotters who drop by to say hello before they go rambling:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I don't know about being a globe trotter, but I've been in all forty-eight states several times, Alaska, Mexico, Europe, the British Isles, India, most U. S. possessions and some of the British possessions. I'm a civil engineer—and where the jobs go, so go I. I'd like mighty well to get in touch with the Globe Trotters.

Larry Stapleton.

Soldiers' Home, Chelsea, Mass.

And this world rambler, who claims to be one of the only three white men who have penetrated into the heart of Borneo:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Having traveled for the past seventeen years to the farthest corners of the globe, I certainly appreciate the stories of the various countries appearing in your magazine. I have done big game hunting in Africa and Asia. Trapped wild animals in both these continents for zoos in America and Europe, and collected valuable scientific data for our museums.

I am contemplating another trip to the South Seas this spring for scientific purposes and expect to be gone about four months.

Don. F. Taylor.

2007 1/2 N. Highland Avenue, Hollywood, Calif.

Back and Off Again

Here comes a breezy note, post-marked San Salvador, from a Globe Trotter who certainly does not believe in wasting time:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Just staggered out of the Honduras jungles after a week of tropical sweat and hardships. I was in an expedition that searched for and found a mysterious "Fountain of Blood."

In a number of months I intend to tour

the U. S. A. and Canada in search of unique adventures. I would like to receive any tips concerning buried treasure, lost ruins, odd caves—anything interesting that may exist in the States.

I wonder if any Globe Trotters know of any spot in the U. S. A. or Canada that smacks of adventure? I have heard that beasts resembling prehistoric cavemen have been seen in British Columbia. Stuff like that is what I want! I am writing a book on these things and will credit in print any reader who sends me suggestions. 6103 18th Avenue, Irving Wallace. Kenosha, Wisc.

Shanty-Boater

If it's a romantic way of living, an exciting occupation or an adventurous pastime that Ye Olde Globe Trotter mentions, it's dollars to doughnuts that up will pop one of the Globe Trotters who is there and is doing just that.

Remember that question about shanty-boating on the Mississippi we took up a couple months ago? Well, here's a Globe Trotter with first-hand dope on the subject:

Dear Globe Trotter:

When I saw a letter from Hartley Jennings to you, asking about shanty-boating on the Mississippi, I just had to speak up and say "Howdy, boys." I have been there and lived there. I know Old Man River (Concluded on page 160)

LIST OF MEMBERS

The Globe Trotters' Club

(Continued from last month)

- Charles Sexauer, 927 Loyal St., Pittsburgh, Pa.
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- Carl Glenn, 121 North 10th St., Wymore, Neb.
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- Millie Gorence, 925 Cedar St., Sharon, Pa.
- Garrison E. Rose, 4215 Maryland, St. Louis, Mo.
- Warren T. McCready, Transient Bureau, Gulfport, Miss.
- Otilio Rodriguez, Gen. Del., Cowell, Calif.
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2

2

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\$2x4.75-19	3.40	\$2x3.00-20	2.98
\$2x4.75-18	3.40	\$2x2.75-20	2.98
\$2x4.00-18	2.88	\$2x2.50-20	2.98
\$2x4.00-20	2.88	\$2x2.25-20	2.98
\$2x3.75-18	2.88	\$2x2.00-20	2.98
\$2x3.50-18	2.88	\$2x1.75-20	2.98
\$2x3.25-18	2.88	\$2x1.50-20	2.98
\$2x3.25-20	2.88	\$2x1.25-20	2.98
\$2x3.00-18	2.88	\$2x1.00-20	2.98
\$2x3.00-20	2.88	\$2x.75-20	2.98
\$2x2.75-18	2.88	\$2x.50-20	2.98
\$2x2.50-18	2.88		
\$2x2.50-20	2.88		
\$2x2.25-18	2.88		
\$2x2.00-18	2.88		
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(Concluded from page 159)

and all his ways; also lots of the people, from St. Louis to New Orleans.

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Keys of Perfect Making
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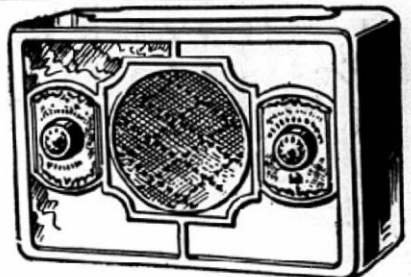


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