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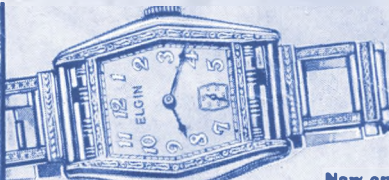
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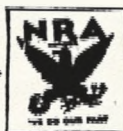
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THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XII, No. 1

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

December, 1934

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Where Readers, Writers and the Editor Meet

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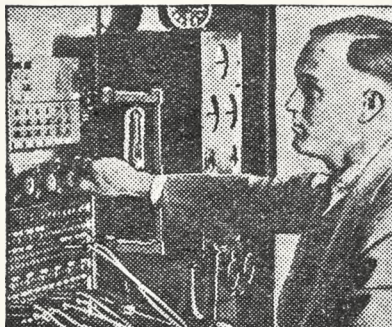
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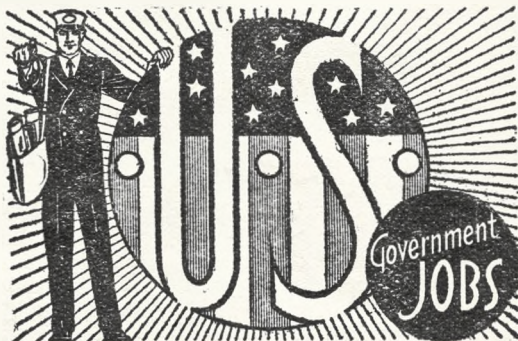
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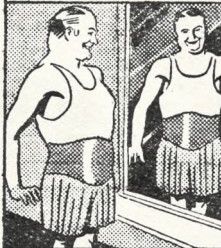
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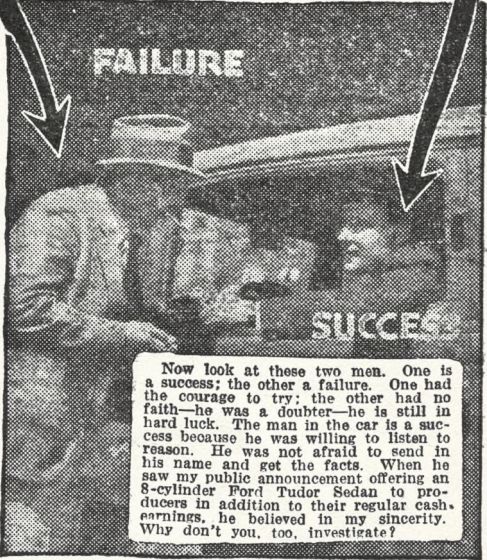
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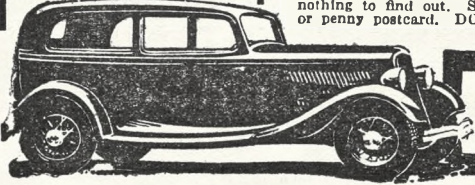


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CHAPTER I

Trouble in Singapore

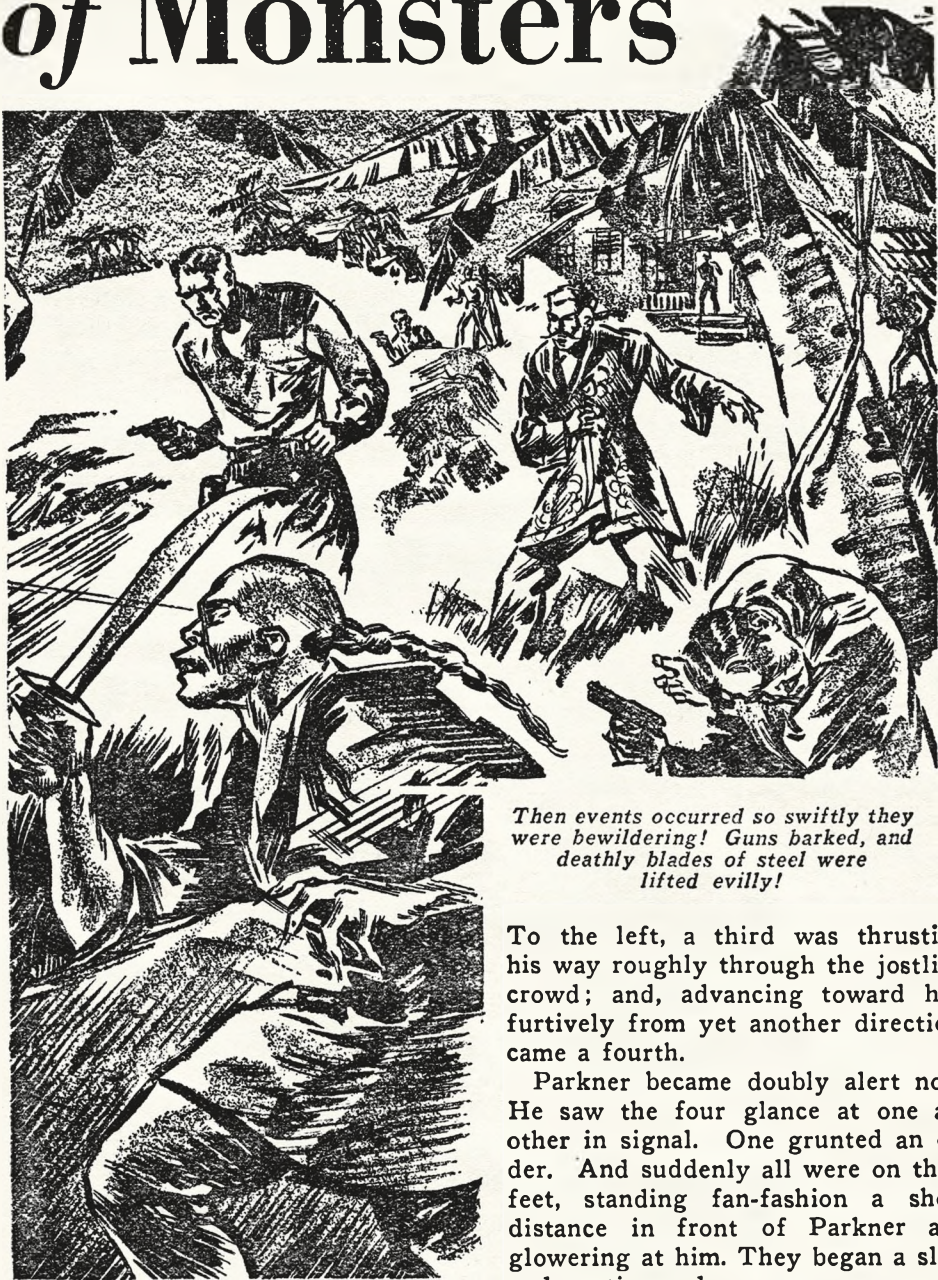
THROUGH the swirling clouds of stale tobacco smoke and the haze of dust, Joe Parkner caught sight of him again—the foul-looking, evil-visaged half-caste derelict who seemed to be watching him malevolently.

He was shuffling forward beneath

the reeking hanging lamps, with his shoulders hunched and his long arms dangling at his sides, like a great ape. He finally dropped on a bench not far from that upon which Parkner was sitting.

His beady eyes seemed to glitter as he watched Parkner. He growled at a waiter who had the temerity to ask for an order, and did not glance toward the stage, where one of the

of Monsters



Then events occurred so swiftly they were bewildering! Guns barked, and deathly blades of steel were lifted evilly!

To the left, a third was thrusting his way roughly through the jostling crowd; and, advancing toward him furtively from yet another direction, came a fourth.

Parkner became doubly alert now. He saw the four glance at one another in signal. One grunted an order. And suddenly all were on their feet, standing fan-fashion a short distance in front of Parkner and glowering at him. They began a slow and cautious advance.

That settled it!

With sudden decision, Joe Parkner sprang to his feet and kicked the bench back out of his way. He half crouched behind the table. His six feet of broad-shouldered, well-muscled young body was tensed like

dancing girls was twisting and squirming in time to the weird music.

Parkner took his eyes off the man a moment to glance around the room—and was startled to behold another of the ilk watching him closely also.



Joe Parkner

a fine steel spring. His hands became fists at his sides, and his lower jaw was thrust forward pugnaciously. And so he waited for the attack.

For there was not the slightest doubt about it in Joe Parkner's mind now—he was to be the object of a murderous assault. The four were concentrating on him, their purpose unmistakable. Parkner knew of no reason for it. And there was no time to ask.

Here he was, in this low dive in the most notorious and lawless part of Singapore, where many a man would engage to slit a throat for the price of a drink. He had come here with Pelican Jones, his boon companion these days, for sightseeing only. Pelican Jones had left him alone to slip out into the semidark little garden and make love to one of the dancing girls. And so, alone, Parkner faced the suddenly perilous present.

Why he should be subjected to an attack puzzled him. He had not been flashing money foolishly, for he had none to flash. His clothes certainly did not stamp him as a man worth robbing. And none of these assailants, creeping upon him like hungry

wolves upon a wounded stag, was a personal enemy.

He never had seen any of them before.

Parkner retreated until his back was against the wall. The four followed, deliberately closing in on him, and making not the slightest effort to hide their purpose. One thing was a pleasant surprise for Parkner—no knives gleamed in the streaky light that came from the reeking hanging lamps.

He was glad for that! He carried no weapon himself.

Then they rushed.

Here was the welcome relief of action after a period of uncertainty and tense waiting. Parkner sprang forward, and his fists came up. Screams of rage ripped from four throats as he hurled himself at the men before him, carrying the fight straight to them and meeting them more than halfway.

THE blatant music of the native orchestra ended in a sudden discord. The dancing girl on the stage stopped her gyrations abruptly, and the other girls screamed and ran toward a corner. Men sprang up from benches and stools to crowd back against the walls and watch. But no profane bouncers appeared to put a swift and violent end to the disturbance.

That surprised Parkner—made it appear that the management had anticipated this trouble, and had sanctioned it.

Somebody was bellowing orders to Parkner's assailants, cautioning them not to injure him and to take him alive.

Parkner had a fleeting glimpse of him—a white man, plainly of the seafaring type.

He had no time to wonder what the unusual order might mean. It was as mysterious as the reason for this attack. And now, though cer-

tainly not needed, reinforcements arrived for the enemy. Two more men rushed into the fray from tables where they had been watching, to cut off the possibility of Parkner's escaping to either side.

Joe Parkner's Texas blood was at the boiling point now. This attack for no reason at all, plus the overwhelming odds, enraged him. He roared in a frenzy of wrath and hurled himself forward again.

Parkner could use his fists with telling effect, and he did so now. They thudded into faces and against breasts, and his elbows jabbed. He was hurled back against the wall, but rebounded at his antagonists, smashing into them, while they screeched and howled in his ears.

He was trying to get out of the dangerous corner, and was wondering whether Pelican Jones would hear the row and come to his assistance.

And, at the crucial moment, Pelican Jones arrived. He announced his descent with a strident shout that rang above the din:

"Stand to 'em, Texas! New Hampshire is comin'!"

PELICAN JONES came with a rush—a short, squat, uncouth individual with squinty eyes and a wrinkled face, whose age was perhaps fifty. Pelican Jones prided himself on being what he termed an international tramp. The ports of the seven seas had known him.

Strange and dangerous adventures were to him but the ordinary bread of daily life.

That his physical strength had not been entirely wrecked by the years and his mode of existence, Pelican demonstrated now. Deftly, he unbalanced one of the assailants and hurled him aside, floored a second with a blow to the face, and won through to a position near Parkner.

"Make for that window, lad!" he



Pelican Jones

shouted. "Smash the dogs! Right at 'em, Texas!"

Side by side now, they fought fiercely to get to the open window. Parkner's fist crashed against a nose and brought a deluge of gore. He snatched up a heavy stool, and used it to help stop the next rush. As their enemies gathered for another advance, Pelican Jones went through the window headlong, and Parkner went tumbling after him. They found themselves in a pitch-black alleyway between two rows of dark buildings.

The window behind them immediately spewed angry men.

Wild cries of insane rage assailed their ears.

"This way, Texas!" Pelican Jones shouted.

"Comin', New Hampshire!"

"Hold out a hand in front. It's so blamed dark—can't tell what we might run against."

So they began their flight. Behind them was an immediate pursuit. Nor were they to be allowed to remain in protecting darkness. Lights appeared, brought from the resort they had just quitted, and revealed them.

Some of their pursuers ran ahead



Wu Chang

of the others, spurred on by a bel-
lowed promise of reward made by
the seafaring man Parkner had no-
ticed.

Parkner and Pelican Jones found
that they would have to stop and
fight them off again.

They retreated slowly as they
fought side by side, working back
along the narrow alley and prevent-
ing their foes from getting behind
them.

But suddenly they found that they
could retreat no more. Their backs
were against a wall.

"Look for a door—a gate," Parkner
panted.

Pelican Jones' reply had a tone of
finality in it:

"We're caught in a blind alley,
Texas. Here's where we stop."

"We don't stop till they down us,
Pelican. That ain't Texas way!"

"'Tain't New Hampshire way,
either. Smash 'em, lad! Beat off
the rats!"

With their backs against the wall,
they fought as well as they could.
They felt that they could expect no
mercy after the terrific beating they
had given some of this riffraff. And

from the darkness another offer of
reward was bellowed—a reward for
taking the pair alive.

Parkner reeled as a stiff blow
caught him on the side of the head.
His fists thudded into the blur of
faces before him.

He saw Pelican Jones go to the
ground beneath a couple of his ad-
versaries.

And then, as he tried to go to
Pelican's assistance, another blow
came, and with it oblivion.

CHAPTER II

Punishment

TO Joe Parkner, the first in-
timation of a return to con-
sciousness came from a ter-
rific pain in his head, accompanied
by a nauseating taste in his mouth
and a dull roaring sound throbbed in
his ears.

He tossed and moaned, and im-
mediately felt a hand upon his brow,
and heard the welcome nasal twang
of Pelican Jones, at first as from a
far distance.

"Good lad, Texas! They couldn't
kill you with an axe. Take a swig
of this."

Parkner felt a supporting arm
around him, half lifting him, and
managed to sit up. Nausea claimed
him a moment. He made no attempt
yet to open his eyes, for things
seemed to be swimming around even
with them closed. He felt the rim
of a glass against his lips, and gulped
liquor which went down his throat
like fire.

"That's prime stuff, lad," Pelican
Jones was telling him. "Let it hit
bottom, then take some more. You'll
be on your pins again in a jiffy."

Parkner gulped more of the liquor.
The pain in his head grew less sharp.
He heard a distant, regular throb-
bing, and became conscious of a ris-
ing and falling sensation that needed

no explanation. He was aboard some ship.

He opened his eyes slowly, averting his head from the bright light. He found that he was in a berth, and swung his legs over the side. Pelican Jones sat by him, keeping an arm around his shoulders.

"Lad, that was a scrap!" Pelican Jones announced. "Best I've had since a couple of years ago in Liverpool. Too many for us, though."

"What was it all about?" Parkner asked.

"Don't you know?" Pelican Jones' surprise was genuine. "I sure don't. I never saw any of 'em before. Heard the row, and came runnin' when I saw you in it. Thought that you'd mixed it with 'em for some reason."

"They just jumped me, Pelican. I don't know the why of it. I thought they might be some of your old pals tryin' to square accounts."

"It's right peculiar. Didn't even turn our pockets inside out. Wouldn't have got anything if they had."

"Where are we now?" Parkner asked.

"We're aboard some ship, but that's all I can tell you. Haven't heard or seen anybody. Found myself stretched on the floor, with that bottle of prime stuff beside me. Somebody probably figured that we'd need it."

WITH Pelican Jones helping him, Parkner got to his feet. He reeled, and braced himself against the wall. His face had been bruised, the clothes half torn from his body, and Pelican Jones was in a similar state.

"I've got it!" Parkner said. "I know the answer, Pelican—we've been shanghaied!"

"The devil you say! Take a look around," Pelican ordered, "and then guess again. We're in a fine cabin—mahogany trim, beveled lookin'-glass on the wall, and other fancy fixin's. Men who get themselves shanghaied



Lottie Marchand

are generally tossed right into the fo'cas'l."

"What do you reckon the idea is, then?"

"I've stopped askin' myself questions, lad. We were doped after bein' smashed on our heads—the taste in my mouth when I woke up told me that. Maybe jabbed with a needle, then brought here. How long we've been asleep, I don't know. It's still night—but maybe not the same night."

Parkner lurched across to the port and looked out.

He could see a wide expanse of tumbling, moonlight-drenched water, and nothing more.

He began a methodical examination of the cabin. On the mahogany lintel of the door had been carved a Chinese character he did not understand, and a word: *Soha*.

"Look at this, Pelican!" Parkner exclaimed. "*Soha!* I'm bettin' that we're on the yacht owned by Wu Chang, that millionaire Chinese pirate."

"What?" Pelican Jones betrayed sudden interest.

"Soha is the name he gives to that

mysterious island he claims he found, and which nobody else can locate. And his yacht is named *Soha*, too."

"You're right, lad! But why should we be on Wu Chang's private yacht? We ain't his friends—and what's a long sight better, we ain't his enemies. And why are we here in a fancy cabin, 'stead of for'ard?"

"You're askin' yourself questions again," Parkner said, grinning.

They examined the door, to find that it was fastened securely on the outside. But now they heard a key scratching in the lock, and the sound of a bolt being withdrawn. The door was opened a few inches, and eyes gleamed at them.

"Oh, come right on in!" Parkner invited, sarcastically. "We might as well get acquainted. Don't be afraid—we never harm children."

The door was opened wider. In it stood framed a giant of a man, who regarded them fiercely. His shirt was open at the throat to reveal a hairy, barrel-like chest. His sleeves were rolled above the elbows, and bulged with biceps. His hair was close-cropped; his florid face was seamed and wrinkled and scarred.

Behind this man, two others were standing in the semi-gloom of a companionway. They were Chinese, and were holding revolvers. In their belts were wicked-looking cutlasses. They peered piercingly at the pair revealed in the bright light of the cabin.

"**L**OOKS like a gang of pirates," Pelican Jones growled.

"Step along, you!" the giant in the doorway ordered, in a rumbling voice. "Don't make a wrong move, or you'll be food for sharks."

He motioned up the companionway, and Parkner and Pelican Jones went before him, following the two Chinese. When they came to the deck, the fresh air smote them pleasantly, and they drank in deep gulps of it.

The yacht was wallowing through the moonlight-tinted sea. A glance at the nearest life-preserver on the rail confirmed the belief that she was the *Soha*, owned by Wu Chang, a somewhat mysterious and fabulously wealthy Chinese with headquarters in Singapore and elsewhere.

Parkner and Pelican Jones were conducted aft. Here a silk canopy had been stretched, and the deck beneath it covered with thick rugs and studded with heavy carved furniture. Shaded lamps cast eerie streaks of light. Incense was burning in a large brazier, the cloud of scented smoke trailing toward the stern.

THEN they had their first sight of Wu Chang. He sat in a huge chair, motionless save for ever-shifting eyes set in a yellow mask of a face. He clung to the old order of things, even to wearing a queue. Rich Chinese garments shrouded his form. Jewels gleamed on his fingers.

"Bring the two men before me at once, Snebley." Wu Chang gave the order in a low voice. "I am eager to see the pair so dangerous that I am paid ten thousand dollars in gold for carrying them away."

So Snebley was the name of this giant who had taken them from the cabin. Parkner had heard of him as one of Wu Chang's trusted men, a white renegade the Chinaman had saved from prison and turned to his own uses.

But what was this about Parkner and Pelican Jones being so dangerous that somebody would pay ten thousand dollars gold to have them carried away?

They had no opportunity to discuss it. Snebley motioned to the two Chinese, and they thrust Parkner and Pelican Jones forward ungently into the light.

Wu Chang bent his head slightly and made a swift inspection of them. His eyes blazed, but not at the pris-



*Screams of rage ripped from
four throats as he hurled
himself at the men*

oners. His voice was low and even again, however, when he spoke:

"A good brain may evolve perfect plans, and poor hands ruin them. There has been a regrettable error, Snebley. These are not the right men."

"What?" Snebley cried.

"Not the right men," Wu Chang repeated. "And I promised my friend that I would attend to the affair properly. Now I am in shame before him. To whom did you entrust the capture of the men I wished to get?"

"I gave the job to Baxton."

"Baxton has been careless. There can be no excuse for this. I cannot endure carelessness in carrying out my orders. A careless man is always dangerous. I believe we can get along without the further services of Baxton. Those two men behind you, Snebley—have them attend to it at once."

Snebley gestured; the two armed Chinese slipped away silently through the shadows. Snebley got out a revolver and stood on guard

behind the prisoners. Wu Chang bent forward again.

"Who are you, gentlemen?" he asked.

"I'm Joe Parkner, American."

"And I'm Pelican Jones, another American. And these here are fine goin's-on, I must say! When two gents goin' about their business are jumped on—"

"I regret the incident very much, gentlemen," Wu Chang interrupted. "You have been subjected to annoyance. But the man Baxton shall be punished for his mistake, if that is any satisfaction to you."

"Where are we bound?" Parkner asked. "We've got business back in S'pore—got jobs promised us."

"We are bound for the island of Soha, gentlemen. Perhaps you have heard of such a place? I contracted to take two certain men there and keep them, for they were in somebody's way. Through an error, I have you instead. Truly, we are atoms driven by the winds of chance. But you are fortunate, gentlemen. Suppose my orders had been to have the two men slain?"

"Who were the men you were supposed to kidnap?" Parkner asked.

"**N**OBODY known to you gentlemen. Two bright young Englishmen, who accidentally learned too much regarding the business methods of a merchant of means. They were threatening to cause him trouble with the authorities. He merely wished me to remove them from his vicinity, and insure they would not return. I gave my promise—and I failed. It is regrettable."

"You mean that we've got to go to this island of Soha and back, and in that way lose a lot of time?" Parkner asked.

"You must go to Soha, gentlemen, since that is where this yacht of mine is bound," Wu Chang replied. "But, you are not coming back."

"How's that?" Parkner cried.

"Save for the few trusted men aboard this craft, nobody is allowed to come back from Soha. Thus is its location kept secret."

"You can't do this, Wu Chang!" Parkner cried. "You can't get away with it! We've got influence! We've got friends—"

"But none of them know where you are. You were smuggled aboard the yacht while unconscious. You have simply dropped away out of sight."

"Let me tell you—" Parkner began.

BUT he did not have an opportunity to tell it just then. Further speech was interrupted by a piercing scream somewhere forward. It was not an ordinary scream, but the terrified cry of a man who looks a horrible death in the face and knows that he cannot possibly escape from it.

There were sounds of a violent struggle, another wild cry of despair, and then an ominous silence which was broken only by the rush of the wind and the gentle slap of water against the yacht's sides.

Wu Chang seemed to be listening intently. Parkner and Pelican Jones kept silent, wondering what had happened.

There was another jumble of chattering voices, and they thought they heard a splash.

Almost immediately, the two Chinese came shuffling back into the circle of light cast by the largest lamp, their faces wooden. One was holding a knife stained with fresh blood.

They bowed before Wu Chang, and one muttered something. Wu Chang gestured, and they retired again.

"It is well," he said. "The man Baxton will make no more annoying errors."

CHAPTER III

The Caged Beast

THE incident did not seem to disturb Wu Chang to any appreciable degree. He merely wafted more incense smoke into his nostrils and settled himself in his silk cushions. His face remained a yellow mask.

Parkner and Pelican Jones fought off their feeling of horror, trying to match the inscrutability of the Chinese. They felt that this was not a time to exhibit symptoms of fear. Perhaps Wu Chang was waiting for just that.

Parkner tried to keep his voice firm as he spoke:

"Can't you put back and land us, Wu Chang? We'll lose the jobs we've got promised us, if we don't show up on time—and jobs are hard to get."

"I'll see that you have jobs for life," Wu Chang said. "Your future is assured."

"We'd rather you'd put back and land us."

Wu Chang smiled slightly.

"I'm sure, gentlemen, that you're kind enough to credit me with having common sense," he purred. "Put back and land you, after what you have witnessed? I feel certain that you could not avoid talking about it."

"Yeah, and I suppose we can expect a dose of the same kind of medicine, when you get around to dishin' it out," Pelican Jones put in.

"Not unless you give me cause, gentlemen."

"What are you goin' to do with us, then?" Parkner wanted to know.

"Take you to the Island of Soha, and keep you there. It is a paradise. The climate is good, the food plen-

tiful, the natives brew an excellent potent drink, and the brown women are charming. What more could a man ask of life?"

"It ain't our fault that we're here," Pelican Jones pointed out. "Can't you take us back if we promise—"

"Not that, gentlemen. But I'll do my best to make amends otherwise. I'll even begin at once, by furnishing you with some amusement. Sit in those chairs over there, please. I hope you enjoy the performance."

Wondering what was coming, Parkner and Pelican Jones sat down as directed. Wu Chang motioned to Snebley, who disappeared. On a table before them, Parkner and Pelican Jones found liquor and cigars, and some little cakes; and at Wu Chang's gesture they helped themselves.

"Have you gentlemen ever heard of a man called Sam Hagadan?" Wu Chang asked.

"Sure!" It was Parkner who replied. "Everybody knows about him. He's a tough guy—modern pirate. Owns a dirty little schooner and prowls around in her."

"THIS Sam Hagadan is jealous of my success along certain lines," Wu Chang explained. "He has annoyed me on several occasions. Now, he has become unduly interested in my mysterious island. And he has foolishly played right into my hands. Listen!"

From forward came sounds of a terrific battle. A gun was barking, and the shrill and angry cries of Chinese mingled with the stentorian roar of a male voice on the rushing wind. There were grunts and gasps, a scream, the sounds of blows, then a peculiar sound as of chains clanking.

Parkner and Pelican Jones sipped their drinks nervously, and glanced at each other in apprehension. Then, along the deck and toward where

Wu Chang was sitting beneath the silk canopy, came a strange procession.

A huge man with red hair, his face cut and bruised and half covered with blood, his clothes almost torn from his body, was being forced along between Snebley and another man, and with some of the Chinese of the crew behind.

The red-headed man was loaded with chains. A foot of heavy links connected the old-fashioned handcuffs with which he had been manacled. Another foot of chain fastened his ankles together. There was a heavy chain around his waist. But, despite the shackles, and the terrific fight through which he had just passed, he was walking erect and with a look of defiance about him.

Parkner had seen him once in Singapore, at a gambling table with stacks of gold coins before him, roaring drunk, flinging his money broadcast, making seemingly impossible bets and always winning.

This was Sam Hagadan, who had the reputation of being guilty of almost every crime known to law. He had served two short prison terms. Pearl poaching, slavery, woman stealing, open piracy and wanton murder were attributed to him.

THE unusual procession came to a stop a short distance in front of Wu Chang. Sam Hagadan's bruised lips were twisted in a sneer.

"Well, Wu Chang, you yellow rat, your bums caught me," Sam Hagadan said. "I sent a couple of 'em to hell before they did it, though. And I notice that you wasn't takin' any part in the fightin' yourself."

Wu Chang ignored the insults.

"I fight only with worthy and honorable opponents," he replied. "You are very foolish, Mr. Hagadan. Curiosity has brought you to this end—an eagerness to see my property."

"Yours? Maybe it's yours—and

maybe it belongs to anybody who can handle it."

"Your poor schooner is unable to trail my yacht to *Soha*. Three times you have smuggled one of your men aboard, but none lived to return and tell you where *Soha* is located, and what I have there. Now, you have tried it yourself. Foolish of you, Mr. Hagadan! We knew when you sneaked aboard, and where you hid yourself—and, when we were ready, we simply hauled you out."

"**W**ELL, what are you intendin' to do about it?" Hagadan asked.

"Not have you killed instantly, as you probably expect. You are so eager to see *Soha* that I'll take you there. Afterward—we shall see. Snebley, is the cage prepared?"

"The men are just finishin' puttin' it up."

"Excellent! Mr. Hagadan, you cannot expect me to let you run loose. You have an evil reputation, sir. It is said that you delight in killing persons, and I have no wish to die at your hand. So, you must be caged."

"What blasted nonsense is this?" Hagadan roared. "If you're goin' to have me shuffled off, do it! It's what I'm expectin'. You'd better kill me now, Wu Chang, while you've got the chance. If you don't, I'll get you!"

"Sometimes, Mr. Hagadan, death is preferable to life," Wu Chang hinted. "It may be so in your case. When we get to *Soha*, perhaps we'll play a little game. But, just now—the cage."

Wu Chang gestured again, and the men started to take Sam Hagadan away. Though he could have no hope of victory, he began putting up a fight. They laughed at him, mocked him, tripped him, pulled him along the deck and forward like a lifeless thing.

Parkner and Pelican Jones had re-

mained silent, and continued to do so. Presently, one of the Chinese slipped aft and whispered to Wu Chang, then slipped away again like a shadow. Wu Chang arose, and beckoned Parkner and Pelican Jones to accompany him.

FAR forward, a big steel cage, probably fashioned originally for the confinement of some jungle beast, had been fastened to the deck. In it was Sam Hagadan, the manacles and chains still on him. Wu Chang went close and looked at the prisoner.

"A beast in a cage—very appropriate," he said.

"I'm tellin' you again, Wu Chang—you'd better kill me now, while you've got the chance!"

Wu Chang turned away.

"Snebley, do not forget to feed and water the beast," he smiled thinly. "I want him in good condition when we reach Soha."

Wu Chang turned and strolled aft again, with the lurid oaths of Sam Hagadan following him. Snebley walked over to where Parkner and Pelican Jones were standing.

"You can get along now, gents," he said. "You know where to find your cabin. Make yourselves comfortable—you're guests for the present. Prowl around all you like, except in Wu Chang's private suite. And just a hint—better keep away from this here caged wild animal."

Parkner and Pelican Jones strolled aft a short distance and stood at the rail. Two members of the crew were at work swabbing the deck. Remembering Baxton, the man who had made one mistake too many, Parkner and Pelican Jones did not need to be told why they were so engaged.

They talked in low tones for a time, but there did not seem to be much to say. Wu Chang had said it all in a few words—they were going to the Island of Soha, and they were not coming back!

Joe Parkner's Texas blood was boiling again. But he knew that this was not the time for a display of wrath. It was a moment for remaining quiet—and planning.

"No Chinaman who ever lived, or white man either, can keep me on any island if I don't want to stay there. Not unless he kills me first!" Parkner muttered.

"Maybe that's the way he aims to keep us there," Pelican Jones suggested.

"We can't do anything about it now, Pelican. We can't very well grab the yacht, just the two of us, and put back to Singapore. We aren't that good."

"I'd sure hate to be in Sam Hagadan's place," Pelican Jones said. "Wu Chang will be thinkin' up some special things to do to him, and they won't be pretty. They've hated each other for years."

"Our own case is plenty bad enough," Parkner reminded him. "There ain't as much as a pocket knife on either of us. We've got to get hold of weapons. It'd be foolish for us to make a move now. We'll just act pretty—and wait."

CHAPTER IV

Bullet-Proof



FOR several days the yacht *Soha* plowed the green sea, with nothing unusual occurring.

Parkner and Pelican Jones found themselves ignored except by the man who carried food to their cabin, where they ate alone. When they spoke to anybody, they received only the shake of a head in reply. They knew that they were being watched continually, and were careful in speech and action.

They did not see Wu Chang, who

seemed to be keeping to his cabin. Snebley was the yacht's navigator, they found. The crew were Chinese. There was but one white man besides Snebley, now that Baxton had paid for his mistake—the chief engineer, a dour man named Lorch.

Sam Hagadan was kept confined in the cage like a wild beast, and subjected to continual taunts. There were times when he seemed to be going almost insane, and howled curses into the wind. The yacht ran into heavy seas, and the cage was deluged repeatedly and Sam Hagadan half drowned.

"That baby's just storin' up hate," Pelican Jones said to Parkner. "If he ever gets a chance at Wu Chang—"

"But Wu Chang isn't fool enough to give him the chance," Parkner replied. "Maybe, if Wu Chang is busy fightin' his private war with Hagadan, he'll grow careless about us."

"What are we goin' to do, lad? I don't aim to stay on that island of Soha all the rest of my life. It wouldn't agree with my New Hampshire constitution."

"It wouldn't fit in with my Texas temperament, either, Pelican. But we don't want to get in a hurry and make a wrong move. We'll have to watch for a chance to do somethin' about it."

IT was evening, and they were standing at the rail smoking. From somewhere forward suddenly came a screech of fear from one of the Chinese, then the bark of a gun. There was a scream, a groan, then silence again.

Members of the crew began calling to one another in voices of excitement. Bare feet pattered along the deck. The stentorian voice of Snebley could be heard as he demanded to know what had happened.

"Sounded to me like that shot was near the cage," Pelican Jones whis-

pered to Parkner. "You don't suppose that somebody's shot Hagadan, do you?"

"Not when Wu Chang wants him alive."

And now they knew that nobody had shot Hagadan, for they could hear him roaring:

"You come here, Snebley, and let me out of this damned cage! Come runnin'! If you don't—"

"**H**E'S got a gun!" somebody forward was yelling. "Stay back! Hagadan's got a gun!"

"How could he get a gun?" Pelican Jones whispered to Parkner. "We can't get one, and we ain't caged."

"Stay here," Parkner cautioned, as Pelican Jones would have started forward. "We don't want any of this. We've got troubles of our own."

A gun cracked again, and a scream of pain answered the shot. Bare feet pattered along the deck once more, as one of the Chinese hurried past the pair at the rail and disappeared down the companionway.

"He's gone for Wu Chang, I betcha," Parker whispered.

Hagadan continued his bellowing, damning his enemies and roaring a general challenge. The members of the crew were jabbering wildly. Parkner slipped slowly a short distance along the rail in the semi-darkness, with Pelican Jones close behind him, until they got where they could see.

Two members of the crew were stretched on the deck, their bodies sprawling lifelessly in the moonlight. Snebley was crouching behind a ventilator, and others of the crew had sought cover where they could find it.

"Snebley, make one of your confounded rats come here and open this cage, if you're afraid to do it yourself!" Hagadan bellowed. "If you don't, I'll plug everybody I see!"

Parkner suddenly pressed Pelican Jones back against the rail, into a darkened area. Wu Chang had appeared. He was walking forward slowly, as though taking an evening stroll, passing through the shadows of moonlight. He stopped within plain sight of the cage, and Hagadan grew quiet.

"What is all this tumult, Snebley?" Wu Chang called. "It disturbed my meditations."

"Hagadan's got hold of a gun somehow. He's shot two of the crew. Better get under cover."

"I do not run from a rat," Wu Chang said.

His voice carried, and Hagadan heard. From the cage came a streak of flame, and the gun cracked. Evidently, the bullet failed to strike Wu Chang. He did not make a move to dodge to cover even then.

"How did he get the gun?" Wu Chang demanded.

"Don't know," Snebley replied. "I caught sight of it—it's an automatic. He didn't have it on him when he was put into the cage."

"Then somebody aboard this ship gave it to him. The guilty man must be punished. Who has been near the cage?"

"Several men," Snebley answered. "Trouble is, we don't know when he was given the gun. Maybe tonight—maybe yesterday."

THE gun cracked again, and one of the Chinese gave a yell. He had carelessly exposed a leg, and Hagadan had demonstrated his marksmanship.

"We must get the gun away from him. He is hurting too many men," Wu Chang said.

"He'll shoot anybody who gets in range," Snebley warned. "I'll have the steam turned on him."

"But I do not want him cooked," Wu Chang protested. "It is my wish that he reach Soha in good condi-

tion. Two things must be done at once, Snebley—disarm Hagadan, and find the man who gave him the gun."

Hagadan began howling again:

"Get me out of this cage, Wu Chang! You're standin' out in the open. I can drop you—"

"You cannot harm me," Wu Chang interrupted, his voice ringing. "I am coming straight to the cage."

THE yacht wallowed on. None of those on deck watching the scene spoke now. Parkner and Pelican Jones bent forward to watch closely. Wu Chang commenced walking slowly through the shadows, the wind whipping his robes about him.

Hagadan ripped out a curse, and the gun spoke. Wu Chang walked straight on, neither quickening stride nor slowing. Through the eerie shadows cast by the moonlight and the ship's lamps he went. Hagadan fired again.

It seemed to Parkner and Pelican Jones that Wu Chang reeled slightly and they thought that he had been hit. But he did not fall, did not even falter. He walked on.

"You cannot hurt me, Hagadan! Your gun is useless against me. No bullet can harm me!" Wu Chang's voice rang.

A stream of curses volleyed from Hagadan's lips, and a stream of bullets from the gun he held. Wu Chang was so close to the cage now that it seemed impossible for the infuriated man in it to miss. Snebley was pleading with Wu Chang to get under cover. The Chinese of the crew were muttering, superstition heavy upon them.

Hagadan began screeching like a wild man. They could see him lift the gun again in both his manacled hands, and aim it carefully. It barked, and spat flame and bullet again—and Wu Chang walked on calmly toward the cage.

"I hit you, blast you! You're dead,

and still walkin'! Fall, curse you! I hit you twice—"

Hagadan was screaming, shouting like a maniac.

Again the gun cracked, and then: "His weapon is empty now, Snebley—I have counted the shots. Get that gun away from him," Wu Chang ordered. "Bring it to me aft."

Snebley bellowed orders, and men rushed to the cage. They waited until Snebley unlocked the door. Then they pulled Hagadan out, tore the empty gun from his grasp, roughed him up, and tossed him back and locked the cage again.

Parkner and Pelican Jones had remained in the shadows at the rail, watching and listening.

"Wu Chang's sure got nerve," Pelican Jones whispered. "I'll give the yellow devil credit for that."

"There's somethin' mighty funny about it," Parkner declared. "Blamed strange he wasn't hit even once. Thought sure that he'd got it one time."

"Maybe he's wearin' bullet-proof underwear," Pelican Jones suggested, laughing.

"Pelican, maybe you've guessed it. Even so, he sure took a chance. Suppose Hagadan had aimed at his head, his face? Bullet-proof underwear wouldn't do him much good then."

"Speakin' of faces—" Pelican began.

"**H**IS was like a mask—I noticed it. But he was in the shadows most of the time. Kind of set expression on his face, what we could see of it. Like he was concentratin' his mind, or somethin' like that."

"Some of that Oriental mystery stuff, huh? Whatever it was, it sure wrecked Hagadan's nerve."

"And Hagadan's wreckin' the crew," Parkner pointed out. "Killed two of them in that first fight when they caught him, and killed two and wounded one just now."

"Lad, I don't like this layout at all. We're up against somethin'. Even that danged island is a mystery, and what Wu Chang does there. And we sure don't aim to stay on it the rest of our lives."

"We sure don't," Parkner agreed.

Snebley summoned them aft, where Wu Chang had gone to sit in his big chair beneath the canopy. All were there except the man at the wheel and those of the engine-room crew.

"**W**WE have a traitor among us," Wu Chang said. "Somebody gave Hagadan that gun. Until that man is found, we cannot trust one another. I have examined the gun. It does not belong on the yacht, nor is it one I ever issued."

"How about these two men?" Snebley asked, pointing to Parkner and Pelican Jones.

Wu Chang shook his head negatively.

"Don't be foolish, Snebley," he murmured. "Study human nature. If either of these men came into possession of a gun, he certainly would not give it to Hagadan. He'd use it himself."

"One wise guy!" Pelican Jones muttered.

The identity of the man who had given Hagadan the gun remained a mystery. Hagadan only grinned when asked.

No evidence was found to point to the guilty one.

The yacht wallowed on through the green sea.

On another evening, Parkner and Pelican Jones were standing at the rail when Lorch, the dour engineer, stopped beside them and asked for a match.

"We'll be at Soha tomorrow," Lorch said, as he lit his pipe. "It's right queer how you gents got mixed up in this. Baxton was sent to get a couple of men, and all he had to

go by was a description. Somebody must have pointed you two out to him by mistake."

"And he had his gang grab us. It was a sad mistake for Baxton," Parkner said.

Lorch lowered his voice.

"Baxton was my friend," he said.

"I'm understandin'," Parkner told him.

"You'd better understand this, too—Wu Chang is absolute master at Soha. He's got the power of life and death—in Soha and on this yacht as well."

"So I noticed in the case of Baxton."

"Baxton's mistake made Wu Chang lose face, so it called for quick action. Other cases might be handled slower."

"Meanin' that somethin' may happen to us, if we don't be careful?" Parkner asked.

"Maybe not somethin' exactly like that. There are other ways. Human bodies are scarce sometimes—and the monsters must be fed."

"What are you talkin' about?" Pelican Jones demanded.

"I'm talkin' too much about everything, and that's right dangerous hereabouts. Remember what I said, gents—Baxton was my friend. And I ain't feelin' exactly happy at the manner of his takin' off."

Lorch walked on along the rail and disappeared.

PARKNER whispered to Pelican Jones:

"There's a gent who'll throw in with us when the proper time comcs."

"Yeah, I gathered that much. But what's all that talk about monsters havin' to be fed?"

"Don't know, Pelican. But I've sure got an idea now about one thing. I think I know the name of the man who slipped that gun to Sam Hagadan."

CHAPTER V

The Island of Soha



EARLY the next morning they sighted, far ahead, a swirl of mist along the horizon, with a dark streak extending along the bottom of it.

"That'll be the Island of Soha," Parkner said.

But it was late in the afternoon before they finally neared it, for the speed of the yacht was greatly reduced, and a man in the bow heaved the lead continually. The yacht seemed to be weaving in and out through a maze of treacherous reefs.

Soha was similar in appearance to scores of other small islands. There was the usual lagoon, and on shore a group of buildings like those of an ordinary island trading station, a distance back from the beach.

The yacht did not enter the lagoon, but was anchored outside close to the mouth, which puzzled Parkner and Pelican Jones. A power launch was dropped overside, and Wu Chang got into it with some of the crew. It sped into the lagoon and toward the shore, where the natives were gathering.

Then Parkner and Pelican Jones saw something which startled them. The water of the lagoon suddenly was churned into a froth. Those in the launch seemed to be heaving something into the green depths. The launch sped on to land.

"This here situation begins to look hopeless to me," Pelican Jones said to Parkner, sure that nobody could overhear. "This island ain't on any chart, and nobody's ever been able to trail Wu Chang's yacht here. Some people think that there ain't no such place."

"But here it is," Parkner replied;

"and nothin' is hopeless, Pelican. I'm right down surprised at a New Hampshire man havin' sentiments like that. Wait till we find out about things before you start cryin' about it bein' hopeless."

"Who in blazes is cryin'?" Pelican Jones demanded.

The launch landed Wu Chang and returned immediately to the yacht. Snebley approached the pair at the rail.

"Come along, gents," he ordered. "You're goin' in this trip, with me. Don't worry about your baggage." He leered at them.

They got into the launch, and it was cast off, turned and driven toward the beach. Parkner was thinking that Lorch, the engineer who had been Baxton's friend, was the only white man left aboard with Sam Hagadan in the cage. That might result in something, if the Chinese of the crew were not watching too closely, and the two had a chance to talk.

The launch was being driven slower this trip.

"Look down, gents," Snebley said.

They looked overside. The water was crystal clear, and they could see bottom except where depth caused darkness. Down there was a beautiful marine garden studded with castles of coral, with schools of brilliantly-hued fish playing through it.

"This here is called the Lagoon of Monsters. The natives named it that," Snebley explained.

THEY saw what he meant. Scores of gigantic man-eating sharks were swimming below, surging up toward the launch at times as though anticipating food.

"This is their little playground," Snebley said. "And that ain't all, gents. Under them submarine cliffs are some of the finest and biggest devil fish in the old sea. This spot is filled with interestin' things like

that. Wu Chang encourages them to stay here. They might take a notion to go travelin'—if they didn't get morsels of fancy food now and then. Watch, gents!"

Snebley took the paper off a package he had brought from the yacht, and showed a chunk of ship's pork. He stood up and threw the meat as far as possible from the launch.

From a score of directions, and from far below, the monsters darted through the water to get the prize. The sea was churned into a froth as they fought for it.

"**S**'PEAKIN' of morsels of fancy food, I didn't mean ship's meat, exactly," Snebley continued. "I trust you understand me. A fine chance a livin' man would have in that water, huh? Yeah, a fine chance! They'd tear him to bits. He'd be gulped down almost before he knew he was dead. Better remember that, gents!"

Then the launch came to the beach and ran its nose into the sand, and they went overside and splashed ashore. Parkner and Pelican Jones shivered when they thought what would happen to a man in the waters of the lagoon.

And they realized that the demonstration had been staged for their special benefit.

The natives had gathered before Wu Chang's bungalow, the largest building, and he had been speaking to them and giving them presents. Parkner had noticed the absence of canoes on the beach. There was no craft at all except the *Soha's* launch, and a clumsy raft of some sort moored a distance away.

Snebley conducted the pair to the foot of the veranda steps, and Wu Chang motioned for them to ascend.

"Welcome to *Soha*, gentlemen," he said. "This is Mr. Barwright, my manager here." He introduced a middle-aged, surly brute who bobbed his head. "I've explained to him

about your misadventure. And this is Mr. Bill Donland, my diver."

"Diver! So it's pearls! That's the mystery," Parkner said.

"And such pearls! The greatest pearl oysters in the world are on the floor of this lagoon, guarded by monsters of the deep—yet we gather them."

"Seems to me the divers take a big chance," Parkner suggested.

"We have but one diver—Mr. Donland. In some queer manner, he conquers the monsters. With him, they are as playful as kittens. At times, to make it interesting, I have him take some other man along. But none ever comes back. It is regrettable."

Parkner and Pelican Jones shivered again. They did not need a fuller explanation. They understood all too clearly Wu Chang's conclusive method of punishing recalcitrants in this island kingdom of his.

"That small hut," Wu Chang indicated, "is yours, gentlemen. Make yourselves at home. The natives will serve you. Tell them what you wish, and they'll get it."

"Come along," Snebley growled at them again.

Parkner and Pelican Jones sat in the shade while some of the natives cleaned the hut. Food was brought them, and a potent native drink, and curious brown damsels stood a short distance away and made eyes at them.

"**H**ERE we are!" Parkner said. "Thousands of men would howl with glee for a chance at a life like this. Yet what we're thinkin' of is gettin' away."

"It makes a whale of a difference when you've got to stay in a place," Pelican Jones replied.

"When the *Soha* goes away from here, we're goin' to be on her," Parkner declared. "That's settled!"

"Just like that, huh?"

"Just like that! This here is Texas talkin'!"

"New Hampshire is trailin' right along."

The soft tropical night came down, and *Soha* grew quiet. The lights had been extinguished in Wu Chang's bungalow. Parkner and Pelican Jones decided to go into the hut and sleep.

But Bill Donland, the diver, came strolling toward them through the shadows. He was tall, lean, a man with a face not easy to read. He seemed to want to be friendly, yet was plainly on guard, feeling out the pair of newcomers and being careful what he said.

"**T**HIS here *Soha* ain't a bad place," Parkner suggested.

"Unless a man wants to get away," Donland replied.

"Won't Wu Chang let you get away?"

Donland shook his head.

"No. I'm the only man who can get out the pearls for him, so I have things pretty much my own way. He sees that I get particularly good care. But, even so, I wouldn't dare go too far."

"A man ought to be able to get away, if he feels like it," Parkner persisted.

Donland shook his head again.

"This island is unknown," he said. "Not even a gunboat ever comes prowlin' around here. Wu Chang won't let the natives have a canoe—it's death to be caught makin' a boat. Perhaps, when the pearls are gone, he'll kill all but his favorites of the crew, and sail away."

"How are the pearls holdin' out?" Parkner asked.

"No need to worry about that. If I worked hard every day for fifty years, I wouldn't be able to get up all the shell. So I've got a life job at no wages. You never saw such pearls!"

"How'd you come here? Wu Chang

fetch you to do his divin'?" Parkner asked.

"Shipwreck. I was here for several years, livin' with the brownies, before Wu Chang happened to find this island on one of his cruises. I'd collected some pearls, and I tried to trade him some for passage to Singapore. That was my mistake. He learned how I got them, and he wouldn't take me away. Took charge of the island and kept me here to get up the pearls."

"Why don't you strike?"

"I'VE been hopin' that he'd market so many fine pearls that they'd attract attention, and he'd be followed here by somebody who'd rescue me. Then there's another reason—the girl."

"Girl?" Parkner questioned.

"A white girl, here with her old father. Wu Chang gave orders that they weren't to be harmed, because he's superstitious about 'em for some reason. But he may change his mind, so I'm standin' by."

"What's a white girl and her father doin' here?" Joe Parkner then asked.

"The old man is Dr. Marchard, a scientist studyin' tropical diseases. His daughter is named Lottie. 'Bout a year ago, they were travelin' between islands and got caught in a storm. Their boat lived through it. Got blown far off the course and landed here. Wu Chang protected Dr. Marchard and the girl, and tossed the natives into the lagoon. The Marchards live in a little bungalow down the beach."

Parkner got up to stride back and forth restlessly.

"It's a lot of confounded nonsense!" he exploded. "The idea of this Wu Chang lordin' it over everybody! You're entitled to the pearls you get, Donland. You made the discovery, and this island is uncharted and unclaimed."

"That doesn't help me any," Donland said. "Him tellin' men they have to stay here the rest of their lives! If the three of us aren't men enough to lick a bunch of Chinamen and the white renegades with 'em, and get away, and save that girl and her father—"

Out of the soft night came a disturbing chuckle. Through the bright moonlight and toward them walked Wu Chang, with Snebley and Barwright close behind him like bodyguards.

"A chivalrous thought, Mr. Parkner!" Wu Chang said. "But, as a friend, let me caution you to curb your tongue, and advise you not to indulge in silly mutiny. After you've been here a few days, you'll realize the futility of it. And the monsters in the lagoon are always hungry, remember."

CHAPTER VI

Doomed



WITHOUT further remark, Wu Chang returned through the shadows with his bodyguard. Bill Donland spoke to Parkner and Pelican Jones in soft tones.

"Better be careful," he advised.

"Wu Chang will have you watched now. That yellow devil can be everywhere at once, and he sees and hears everything."

Then Bill Donland departed, and Parkner and Pelican Jones went into their hut and got to sleep. They slept soundly that first night on shore; and awakened only because of a din down on the beach.

The sun already had popped up out of the sea. Two native women were waiting outside the hut with their morning food. The launch was

in from the yacht, and almost everybody on the island had gathered at the landing.

"What is it?" Parkner barked at one of the women.

She grinned at him and rolled her eyes, feeling a superiority because she knew some English.

"Big beast in cage," she said.

"That means Hagadan," Pelican Jones muttered.

"Yeah! And it means that we stay right here and eat breakfast and 'tend strictly to our business. The less we call Wu Chang's attention to us, the better. We'll mix in the fringe of the crowd later."

They ate, while the two native women served them and jabbered at them until Parkner told them to be quiet.

But from their hut they could see what was happening.

The big cage had been brought in on the launch, in sections. Hagadan, in chains, was in the launch also, closely guarded. The natives, urged to it by some of the white men, were taunting the prisoner.

The sections of cage were carried ashore, and it was erected again in the clearing, fastened securely to the ground. Hagadan was taken from the launch, fighting like a wild man, and hauled up the beach toward the cage.

They had some difficulty getting him into it, despite his shackles. But finally Snebley locked the door, and gave the key to Wu Chang, who in turn handed it to Barwright, his Soha manager.

PARKNER and Pelican Jones finished their meal and drifted down toward the cage, the native women following. The few whites were grinning as they listened to Hagadan's profane threats, and the natives were laughing and chattering, and hurling sticks at the bars.

Then they were quiet, for Wu

Chang had come forward. He peered in at Hagadan, and spoke:

"You wanted to see Soha, Hagadan, and here you are. From that cage, you can see the colony and witness what goes on. You'll learn what interest I have here."

"I ain't dead yet, Wu Chang," Hagadan raved. "You'd better kill me now, while I'm chained and helpless. If you don't—"

Wu Chang lifted a hand for silence.

"SPEAKING of death reminds me, Mr. Hagadan," he purred, "of the pleasant little game I have arranged for you. To kill you immediately—that would be nothing. Your suffering would be over too soon."

"What's your game?" Hagadan snarled.

"You are to die, but you will not know the time or method of your death. Perhaps a shot when you are least expecting it. Perhaps a knife-thrust as you sleep. Perhaps poison in your food or water. Perhaps today, perhaps not for weeks or even months."

"Blast you—!"

"I am interested in watching a strong man like you under such a strain," Wu Chang continued. "I wonder how long before you break and beg me to have you killed? You'll dread to eat or drink. You'll fear to go to sleep. Every time a man approaches your cage, you'll wonder if he is the executioner. I promise you one thing, however—death will not be in your first meal. Feed the beast well, Snebley. He'll need strength."

With Hagadan's oaths ringing in his ears, Wu Chang went on toward his bungalow. The two men who had slain Baxton, Wu Chang's executioners, remained on guard.

Parkner and Pelican Jones drifted away when the crowd began breaking up. The native women still followed

them, until Parkner drove them away.

"Speakin' of cruelty, this here Wu Chang is a master at it," Parkner said. "But we ain't got any call to feel sorry for Sam Hagadan. If a man ever merited death, I reckon he does. Just the same, it's a devilish layout."

"Shows us what we can expect to get, if we ain't careful," Pelican Jones replied.

"I reckon our game is to keep quiet. But we want to get hold of some weapons if we can, and maybe hide 'em till they're needed."

"That's goin' to be a job, lad. You can lay a bet that Wu Chang don't allow guns and knives to be scattered around promiscuous. All numbered and accounted for, maybe."

They glanced toward Wu Chang's bungalow, and saw that the natives were drifting in that direction. Snebley and Barwright were with Wu Chang. Two natives carried a big chair down from the veranda and put it at the bottom of the steps, and Wu Chang sat in it.

"What's comin' off now?" Pelican Jones muttered.

"Looks like he was goin' to hold a session of some kind," Parkner said.

"Glance at what's comin'."

Parkner turned quickly to look where Pelican Jones indicated. Then he had his first glimpse of Lottie Marchard.

SHE was coming along the beach, clinging to the arm of an elderly man who stumbled as he walked. The girl was about twenty-five, Parkner judged — tall, lithe, graceful. Her brown hair was blowing about her face. Her scant clothing, whipped around her by the wind, revealed a charming form. "Dr. Marchard and his daughter," Parkner whispered. "The old gent looks about all in."

"Comin' to welcome Wu Chang home, I suppose."

"Double blast that old pirate for orderin' around folks like them!" Parkner growled. "They're our kind, Pelican. We've got to help 'em if we can."

"Oh, sure!" Pelican said. "I s'pose you'd be just as keen about it if the girl happened to be bent and old and ugly."

"They're white folks," Parkner persisted. "It's got my Texas blood boilin'."

"I'm feelin' a little itch in my New Hampshire veins, too," Pelican admitted.

THE Marchards were coming directly toward them along a path that curved past them and went to Wu Chang's house. Parkner and Pelican Jones stepped aside. The girl was helping her father, who was evidently extremely weak. Her clear eyes surveyed the newcomers to Soha.

Parkner reached to remove a hat that he had forgotten was not on his head. He flushed, and bowed.

"I'm Joe Parkner, miss," he said. "This is my friend, Pelican Jones."

"I'm not interested, sir." The girl's voice was like ice.

"Don't get us wrong," Parkner said. "We don't belong to this crowd. We were brought here against our will."

"Yeah, and we ain't goin' to be kept here, either," Jones added.

"If the chance comes, and we can help you—" Parkner began.

Her lips curled with scorn.

"I suppose Wu Chang told you to speak like this, try to get us into some plot to escape, and then say we've violated his hospitality," she said. "He's promised punishment if we're caught breaking rules."

"You think me and Pelican Jones would have any part of that yellow devil's schemes?" Parkner barked at her. "I'm from Texas, ma'am! I'd help a nice woman any time, anywhere—yeah, and her father, too."

"Even if you are sincere, you can do nothing," she told him. "And I don't think you are sincere. We don't have many gallant knights coming to the island on the *Soha*."

Parkner would have protested again, but there came an interruption. From the thick jungle and into the clearing rushed a scattering of excited natives. Then two of Wu Chang's Chinese guards appeared, dragging a native along between them. Parkner and Pelican Jones heard Lottie Marchard give a cry of pity, and turned quickly to find her eyes bulging and her face chalky.

"They've got Nugago," she was saying to her father. "Oh, we must hurry!"

"What's the trouble now?" Parkner asked.

"Nugago—he's been kind to us, has tried to help us. The guards have him. If you only knew—"

Then she was urging her father to hurry on along the path. Parkner and Pelican Jones followed slowly. From every direction, natives were hurrying toward where Wu Chang sat in state, with the white renegades of *Soha* at his back.

The screeching native was pulled roughly along the ground by the two guards. Parkner and Pelican Jones quickened their step and got to the edge of the throng. The native prisoner grew quiet when he was taken before Wu Chang. All spirit seemed to leave him. He looked around at the others wildly, then bowed his head.

"WHAT is the man's offense?" they heard Wu Chang say.

Barwright replied:

"This is the man I spoke to you about, Wu Chang. We've been holding him since yesterday in a hut back in the jungle. The guards caught him in a cove on the other side of the island, building a boat."

"Building a boat? We have a pen-

alty for that. Can there be any question of his guilt?"

"He's guilty," Barwright replied. "He was watched a couple of days. Buildin' a canoe big enough to carry several people. Had it almost done."

Wu Chang gestured, and the guards hurled the native to the ground at his feet.

"Are you guilty?" Wu Chang asked. The native nodded confession.

"Why should you want to get away from *Soha*? You're a *Soha* man. Your people are here. Were you building the boat for somebody else?"

THE native said nothing, did not move. One of the Chinese guards kicked him cruelly, but still he would not answer.

"You know the penalty," Wu Chang said. "The monsters must be fed."

The native gave a wild cry and prostrated himself in the dirt. Other natives began whimpering, but a shout from one of the guards quickly silenced them. Then Lottie Marchard had thrust her way forward to a position in front of Wu Chang.

"He was doing it for me!" she cried. "For me, and my father. We want to get away from this dreadful place. It's my fault. I begged him to do it. He's Nugago, the best canoe builder on the island."

"So you, too, are guilty," Wu Chang said.

"I'm as guilty as Nugago. I paid him to do it."

"That does not excuse him. He knew the penalty. He must be fed to the monsters."

She began to plead for the native's life. Parkner gripped Pelican Jones' arm until the latter flinched. To see such a girl pleading with a yellow pirate—

"Enough!" Wu Chang ordered. "I cannot change the law."

"Throw me to the sharks, too. I'm

as guilty as he," the girl was crying.

Her father was clutching at her, fear in his old face, trying to get her to be quiet.

"You are too valuable to be tossed to the monsters," Wu Chang said. "You must live, yet you must be punished. I shall give you in marriage, by lottery."

She reeled back from him, looking wildly around her.

"Married to a man of Soha, you will not be so eager to get away, perhaps. Your husband, home, interests, all will be here then," Wu Chang purred. "Out of special consideration, however, only men of your race may compete for you."

"Men of my race!" She laughed wildly. "Scum of the earth! Renegades! Disowned by their own kind and looked down on by yours!"

Parkner glanced at the men behind Wu Chang, all of them leering, grinning. The giant Snebley, the beast Barwright, Bill Donland, Lorch the engineer.

"I'll kill myself!" Lottie Marchard cried.

"We'll have you guarded carefully until the affair is settled," Wu Chang said. "Afterward, it will be your husband's task to keep you alive. But we attend to this man first."

CHAPTER VII

Death—and a Bride



THE doomed native, his wrists lashed behind his back and ankles tied together, was carried down to the beach. Wu Chang walked there with his bodyguard, white and Chinese, around him. The natives of Soha, silent now, followed. Lottie Marchand and her father had been taken away under guard.

Parkner and Pelican Jones followed the crowd, a little behind. Pelican Jones was growling something that could not be understood.

"Careful," Parkner warned. "We can't stop this, Pelican. The native knew what he risked, I reckon. But that girl—we'll have somethin' to say if—"

"And we'll die if we make a move," Pelican cut in. "Lad, how I'd like to get a chance at Wu Chang!"

"Maybe we'll get one. Just got to wait, Pelican."

THEY passed close to Hagadan's cage, and he was howling curses at Wu Chang. Hagadan looked as though he had spent a terrible night. He eyed Parkner and Pelican Jones askance, possibly wondering if they were to be his executioners. The Chinese guard motioned them to keep their distance.

The launch had been started, and had picked up the clumsy raft Parkner had noticed the day before. Now the raft was being towed a hundred feet behind the launch. It was swung toward the shore, and men caught and held it.

The doomed native was tossed to the middle of the raft.

Not a sound came from those on the beach as the launch started slowly out into the lagoon, towing the raft behind it. Two men in the launch began tossing out chunks of some kind of meat. Fins cut the surface of the water as the monsters fought for the tidbits. The launch circled the lagoon, the sharks following it.

Now the sea monsters were around the raft, churning the water. The launch cut the raft loose and let it drift.

Those on the shore could see the terrified native as he crouched in the middle of the raft, helpless, his wrists and ankles bound.

The sharks seemed to be in a

frenzy. The raft began tossing and tipping as they nosed it, swept against it, cut the surface of the water so the doomed man could see their little, beady eyes. The native tried to keep balance, finally dropped to his knees.

The launch had turned again, and now it went forward slowly until it bumped against the raft, and the monsters of the lagoon were swirling around it, too. One of the men in the launch put a boathook against the corner of the raft, and depressed it.

The native screamed as he slipped toward the depressed end, his bare feet sliding on the soaked surface of the raft. He screamed again as the man with the boathook gave a quick shove. An instant he balanced there, then lurched over into the water, his last wild cry ringing to the shore.

There was a wild tumult in the churned water, a maze of tails and fins and snouts. The surface of the lagoon suddenly was stained. The launch caught the raft again, and towed it back to its resting place.

On the shore, the natives filed away silently, going to their huts. Nugago, their friend, was gone, food for the lagoon monsters. Parkner and Pelican Jones would have slipped away, but Wu Chang called to them.

"You gentlemen are eligible for the lottery," Wu Chang announced. "So are Snebley, Barwright, Lorch and Donland. Notice that I put five black pebbles and one white one into this bowl. I hold it above my head—so. One by one, you will draw. The man who draws the white pebble wins a bride."

"I DON'T want any of it!" Pelican Jones said.

Parkner gripped him by the arm. "Oh, take a chance, Pelican," he said. "If we've got to stay here the rest of our lives, we might as well be settled right. White women are go-

in' to be very scarce, I can see that."

The Chinese were grinning. Snebley was laughing raucously; Barwright looked eager; Lorch and Donland's faces were expressionless.

"Draw!" Wu Chang ordered.

Snebley drew first, got a black pebble, cursed and tossed it away. Barwright had no better luck. Donland and Lorch drew black pebbles also.

"One of our newcomers is to win the prize," Wu Chang said, smiling slightly. "Draw, gentlemen!"

PARKNER drew — and got the white pebble.

"Congratulations!" Wu Chang said. "You will claim your bride, Mr. Parkner, and move into the Marchard bungalow. No doubt your friend will not be lonesome long. He can find a companion among the brown women."

"Come along, Pelican, and help me get settled," Parkner said.

Lottie Marchard and her father had been detained at the edge of the clearing, and Parkner started toward the spot with Pelican Jones beside him.

"Some good luck!" Parkner whispered. "Gives us a chance to protect her. And a chance to find out all about this island of Soha, before we make a move. And the sooner we make a move, the better."

Two of the Chinese were guarding the girl and her father. Parkner tried to flash her a message as he approached, but the Chinese were watching closely. Wu Chang called to them to let the girl go, that she now belonged to Parkner.

"Which one of you—?" she began, as the pair stopped before her.

"Oh, I'm your new husband!" Parkner said, motioning for the Chinese to leave.

"If you think—" she began.

"Act up!" Parkner hissed at her;

"put up a fight, so Pelican will have to help me take you home. Don't you understand? This is a good break for you. I won't harm you any. But we've got to make it look good to Wu Chang."

Her eyes flashed as she understood, and her father began whimpering. She pretended to fight when Parkner grabbed her and acted as though trying to kiss her. Pelican Jones put on a show of helping his partner carry home his bride.

Holding her by the arms, they took her along the path, her father following.

From the distance came the laughter of those who watched.

The Marchard bungalow was a small, neat affair in a grove of palms. As they went toward it, Parkner talked swiftly, telling of what had befallen him and Pelican Jones.

"We're goin' to get away, all right, and we'll take you and your father with us," Parkner said.

"It's useless to try it, I'm afraid," she said. "It'll only mean for you what Nugago got."

"We know a few things that I ain't tellin' now. And we'll have help," Parkner assured her. "Fast as you can give it to me, I want all the information you can peddle out. All about how Wu Chang lives here, how he's guarded, what he does. There's only one way—get control of the yacht and sail away, leaving most of them here, and send a gunboat back."

"GET control of the yacht—you two men?" she asked.

"But I'm from Texas," Parkner told her.

"Yeah, and I'm from New Hampshire," Pelican Jones added.

Dr. Marchard began whimpering again. His daughter urged him to keep quiet, and to say nothing of what he heard.

"He's breaking fast," she whispered to Parkner. "He's in continual

fear—especially for me. His health isn't good—tropical fever once."

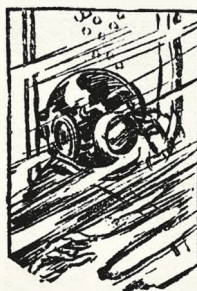
"We'll get him away in time," Parkner assured her.

But he knew he had a job ahead of him. In the bungalow, while Lot-tie got a meal ready, and Dr. Marchard sat on the veranda to watch if anybody approached, Parkner held speech with Pelican Jones.

"We've got to get in touch with Lorch, Pelican. I know he'll throw in with us, on account of what happened to his friend Baxton. And don't forget that he's chief engineer of the *Soha*. We'll need him."

CHAPTER VIII

The Mask



LATE in the afternoon, Parkner strolled down toward the beach. Pelican Jones had gone there long before, and had been circulating with the men, laughing about his partner's "marriage." He flirted

with one of the brown women, and strove to create the impression that he and Parkner had no thought of getting away.

The natives were taunting the caged Hagadan. Snebley and Barwright had been drinking heavily. Bill Donland was out in the middle of the lagoon on the raft from which Nugago had plunged to his horrible death.

"That baby's sure got nerve!" Pelican Jones commented. "He's been divin' and fetchin' up shell. Sharks don't seem to bother him."

"That's just another peculiar thing about this place," Parkner said. "Have you seen Lorch?"

"Saw him go into the storehouse, but didn't get a chance to talk to him."

Parkner went to the storehouse and negotiated for a pipe and some smoking tobacco. Lorch was there, talking to one of the natives.

"So you're gettin' to be a regular citizen, married man and everything," Lorch said.

"That's the way of it," Parkner replied, grinning. "Not bad for a starter. Soha ain't such a bad place, after all."

They strolled outside, and went down to the beach. Parkner pretended to be interested in Bill Donland's diving.

"Do they leave the launch ashore nights?" he asked.

Lorch glanced at him swiftly. "Sometimes. I'm goin' aboard to spend the night, but the launch will come back, to be here in case Wu Chang wants to board the yacht. The Chinese engineer sleeps in her when she's ashore."

"You handle the engine-room gang, don't you?"

"I can always get along in the engine-room—if the deck is bein' handled."

"Three men ought to handle the deck, and the crew, if Snebley was ashore, huh?"

"Yes," Lorch said. "Which three?"

"Me and my pardner, and maybe that diver."

"I see. There's Sam Hagadan to be remembered, too. If he was loose, he might keep some folks busy."

"Yeah, if he was loose," Parkner agreed. "I wonder how much you can be trusted?"

"Baxton was my friend."

"CHECK!" Parkner said. "I've got a notion to spend my weddin' night prowlin' around Wu Chang's bungalow. And—anything might happen."

"Two Chinese on guard there at night," Lorch warned. "Good luck, Parkner! Maybe I can do somethin' before I go aboard. And I'll be boss-

in' the engine-room—in case anybody wants to take a sea trip."

Parkner had no definite plan. He wanted to get into Wu Chang's bungalow, explore its possibilities. If he and Pelican Jones could get weapons, and seize the launch, they would have a chance of getting out to the yacht and leaving the more dangerous adversaries ashore.

He believed that Bill Donland would help. He guessed that Donland had not turned in to Wu Chang all the pearls he had taken, but had saved a nest egg for himself, and was eager to get away. There was the problem of Lottie Marchard and her father, too. They must be taken out to the yacht.

PARKNER was not underestimating the perils of the situation. He realized what failure would mean. He was thinking of that as he joined the group around Sam Hagadan's cage and stood beside Pelican Jones. One of the Chinese had just brought food to Hagadan, and Wu Chang was standing in front of the cage.

"Are you afraid to eat, Mr. Hagadan?" Wu Chang asked. "It may be poisoned, you know. Did you sleep well last night, Mr. Hagadan? Were you not afraid that a bullet or knife might come out of the darkness and put an end to you?"

Hagadan replied with a volley of lurid oaths, and wolfed down the food. There was a wild look in his face, and his eyes were bloodshot. Wu Chang laughed a little, something unusual for him, and went on to his bungalow. His two Chinese guards shuffled along at his heels.

Lorch approached the cage now, bent over, and squinted as he looked at Hagadan.

"Here's a plug of tobacco, you bloody pirate!" Lorch said, tossing it through the bars. "I'd be careful usin' it, if I was you. Might be poisoned, you know. If it ain't, may-

be chewin' it will help you keep awake tonight, so's you can watch nobody slips up on you."

Parkner felt the significance in that speech, and wondered at the tobacco. Sam Hagadan cursed Lorch the same as he had the others, but retained the gift. Lorch laughed and walked on, and Parkner went with Pelican Jones toward the path that ran to the Marchard bungalow.

"We'll get together late tonight, Pelican. We're goin' to pay Wu Chang a visit."

"There's nothin' like fun," Pelican Jones said. "I'll prowl around meanwhile, and see if I can learn anything important."

"The launch will be in, and the yellow engineer sleeps in her. If we can get weapons, and get out to the yacht in the launch—"

"It's a big order, lad, but maybe we can fill it."

"You turn in at the usual time. I'll drift along some time durin' the night."

"Careful, lad! Don't let your hot Texas blood run away with your common sense."

"And don't let your New Hampshire conscience keep you from smashin' this offal if we get the chance."

"You don't have to worry about my conscience. I put it away in moth balls years ago."

Parkner explained his plan to Lottie Marchard. He did not know what might happen, he said. But he wanted the girl and her father to get up and dress when he called to them during the night, and slip down to the beach unseen, getting as close to the launch as possible. If he called, they were to hurry to the launch. Otherwise, they were to get back to the bungalow.

IT was past midnight when Parkner knocked on the door of the girl's room. He heard her answer,

then got quietly out of the bungalow. In the darkness, he crouched silently for a time, watching and listening.

He was afraid that Wu Chang might have put a guard over the bungalow, but he did not see or hear anything to indicate this was so. But he crept stealthily through the deeper shadows to the jungle's edge, and circled toward the hut where Pelican Jones was living.

Pelican was awake and waiting. They went together around the edge of the clearing, and approached Wu Chang's bungalow from the rear.

"Two Chinese guards," Parkner whispered. "We've got to locate 'em and put 'em out of business. And we can't make any noise doin' it."

THEY were unarmed save for clubs they had picked up on the way. The Chinese guards, they knew, would be heavily armed, and probably would shoot at the first indication of anything wrong. It was the task of the advancing pair to dispose of the guards without awakening Wu Chang and giving him a chance to prepare to defend himself.

They got against the wall of the building where it was pitch dark. Keeping close to the wall, they crept to the corner of the veranda. One of the guards was pacing back and forth on the veranda silently.

Pelican Jones tapped lightly with his club on the wooden floor. The Chinese slipped swiftly along the railing, bent over to investigate. Parkner's club crashed down upon the back of his head. Pelican Jones reached up and pulled him over, straddled and throttled him to insensibility.

They bound him swiftly with pieces of rope Parkner had brought from the Marchard bungalow, and gagged him with a length of cloth. Then they rolled him against a veranda post and lashed him there.

"That's one of 'em," Pelican Jones whispered. "We're on our way, Texas."

"Let's get goin', New Hampshire."

They went up the steps; crossed the veranda to the door. As they reached it, it was opened. The second guard was coming out, probably to visit with the other.

Again, Parkner's club crashed. Pelican Jones caught the man as he fell, and eased him to the floor. The guard was bound and gagged swiftly, and tied to another veranda post. Then Parkner and Pelican Jones slipped inside the house.

They were on dangerous ground now, they knew. They had no light, nor did they care to make one. They wanted to locate Wu Chang and subdue him, and also get weapons.

Along a narrow hallway they crept, toward where a door stood open for a few inches, with light streaming through. Parkner reached it first, and peered in. Wu Chang was sitting beside a table, reading. This room seemed to be a sort of study.

There were some books, chemical apparatus, a small safe, a workbench strewn with miscellaneous items.

Parkner touched Pelican Jones on the arm, and their eyes met. There was a wild dash as Parkner kicked the door open wide. Startled, Wu Chang sprang from his chair, his hand going toward an automatic pistol on the table. Parkner's club struck him down before he could reach the gun.

They bound and gagged him swiftly. Parkner closed the door. Their victim was propped up in a huge chair, to take his time about returning to consciousness.

THEN the pair began a swift search of the room. They broke open a cabinet, and found arms and ammunition.

Taking two guns each, they stuffed

them in their pockets with cartridges.

"Commencin' to feel human again," Pelican Jones said. "A gun makes a heap of a difference when you've got it yourself."

"We've only started, Pelican," Parkner reminded him. "We ain't out to the yacht yet."

"Look!" Pelican's gasp caused Parkner to whirl toward the cabinet again.

He, too, gasped in surprise. Pelican Jones was holding up a mask of Wu Chang's face. It was a perfect likeness, made of bulletproof metal and padded on the inside.

The exterior was tinted the color of flesh.

"That's why he wasn't afraid of bein' shot," Parkner said. "Wearin' that thing, and bulletproof underwear, maybe, he could take a chance."

"He's wakin' up, lad."

WU CHANG had opened his eyes. Parkner strode over to the chair. "Can you hear me, Wu Chang?" he asked.

The Chinese nodded, his eyes glittering at them.

"We gave you a chance to take us back to S'pore, and you wouldn't. So we've got to use our own methods. Maybe we'll send somebody back for you and the others, Wu Chang—a gunboat, maybe. Then you'll have a lot of explainin' to do."

"Let's get goin'," Pelican said.

"I've got an idea how to make the job easier," Parkner said. "Me, I'm goin' to be Wu Chang. I'm goin' to make a few lordly gestures and have my way for once. With this mask, and some of his robes—"

Pelican Jones gasped as he caught the idea. Parkner put on the mask and fitted it into place.

He dressed in some of Wu Chang's garments.

"Turn up the collar of that robe," Pelican said. "The devil wears a queue, remember. Lad! Passin'

through the moonlight and shadows, you look enough like the old boy to give me the shivers."

Wu Chang was glaring at them. They took him from the chair and tied him to the leg of the massive table.

"Somebody'll find you in the mornin'," Parkner said. "You're marooned, Wu Chang. Your own orders are bouncin' back at you. Now don't you wish it hadn't been against your law for anybody to go ahead and build a boat?"

"Let's get goin'," Pelican Jones said, restlessly.

They slipped out into the hall and closed the door. To the rear of the house they went, and got out there, to keep in the shadows listening for a time. A few natives were around Hagadan's cage, and the one Chinese night guard was squatting a short distance from it. None of the white men were to be seen. Lorch was aboard the yacht. Donland, according to word Pelican Jones had got to him, was to be near the launch. Snebley and Barwright probably were sleeping heavily because of the liquor they had taken.

"Walk beside me, and have a gun ready, Pelican," Parkner said. "I'm Wu Chang, and I've decided to take you aboard the yacht."

THEY walked slowly forward, Parkner imitating Wu Chang's stride as well as he could. His head was bent slightly, but in the mixture of moonlight and shadows that mask made it appear that the master of Soha walked there.

Hagadan caught sight of them, and began cursing Wu Chang. The Chinese guard sprang to his feet and stood ready to receive orders. The few natives fled.

"Straight to the launch," Parkner whispered to Pelican. "Start talkin' about somethin', and I'll pretend to be listenin' to you."

CHAPTER IX

Disaster



IT had been an unusual plug of tobacco that Lorch, the engineer, had given to Hagadan.

Some time prior to the gift, Lorch had been drinking with Barwright. The latter always relaxed and drank

heavily when Wu Chang was in Soha. And it had not been difficult for Lorch to get from Barwright the key to Hagadan's cage.

He had purchased the plug of tobacco at the storehouse, gouged it out and inserted the key, made it look like a perfect plug again. Sam Hagadan had known there was something important about that tobacco, from the way Lorch had spoken, and because Lorch had slipped him the gun on the yacht.

Hagadan had found the key and secreted it. And now, when Parkner appeared and was taken for Wu Chang, and the guard was watching him and the natives had fled, Hagadan swiftly and unseen unlocked the cage, hid the lock and key in a pocket of his ragged trousers, and waited for the proper moment.

He had no weapon. But he thought possibly there would be help, once he was outside. His eyes burned as he watched the man he thought was Wu Chang. His hatred for the Chinese surged through him. His humiliation had half-crazed him.

The guard's back was turned. Sam Hagadan threw open the door of the cage and sprang out. As the Chinese guard moved, Hagadan crashed against him. His fury gave him added strength. In an instant, he had choked the guard into insensibility, and had torn out of his belt cutlas and revolver.

"Now, Wu Chang, blast you—!"

Parkner and Pelican Jones heard that wild cry as they neared the water's edge, where the launch was waiting. They were near victory, they thought, but did not quicken their steps. They saw Bill Donland slipping toward them through the patches of moonlight, and Parkner was about to make a signal which would attract Lottie Marchard and her father.

Hagadan's wild cry caused Parkner and Pelican Jones to stop and turn quickly. It rang over the clearing. The gun Hagadan had taken from the guard barked, and a bullet whistled past within inches of Parkner's head.

Then events occurred so swiftly that they were bewildering.

Snebley and Barwright suddenly appeared from one of the huts. They saw Hagadan free and charging down toward the beach, a blazing gun in his hand. They saw a man they supposed was Wu Chang, with Pelican Jones beside him, in danger of being shot down.

Snebley whipped out a gun and fired, and Hagadan turned an instant to return the fire. Barwright was howling as he rushed forward.

"Get to the launch," Parkner whispered to Pelican Jones.

The Chinese engineer of the launch had been awakened by the tumult. Parkner made a gesture at him, not wishing to speak if it could be avoided, and hoping the man would take the gesture to mean that he wished the launch started.

Sam Hagadan fired again at Snebley and Barwright, then began running toward the water.

"You won't turn bullets aside this time!" he screamed.

PARKNER did not know whether to tear off the mask and show Hagadan his mistake, or hold his peace. Perhaps the infuriated man

would not realize the set-up in time, and join their forces. And Parkner did not want to shoot Hagadan if it could be avoided.

It was a bullet from Snebley's gun that cut Hagadan down as he fired at Parkner again. He reeled, and dropped the gun he held. Then Snebley and Barwright were on him, beating him, throttling him.

"Get to the launch," Parkner whispered to Pelican Jones again.

"They'll think that's funny. They will be expectin' Wu Chang to give orders about Hagadan."

"We've got to get away," Parkner said.

"Donland's hangin' back because he thinks you're Wu Chang. And that girl and her father won't come now, thinkin' the same."

Back at Wu Chang's bungalow a shrill voice began cutting through the night.

"It's that lousy Chinese pirate! He's got loose," Pelican said.

"Quick! The launch!"

WU CHANG, miraculously free, was screeching at Snebley and Barwright. They heard him, understood, and charged down upon Parkner and Jones. The pair turned toward the launch. Parkner flashed his gun at the Chinese engineer.

"Get her started!" he barked.

The strange voice, seemingly coming from the body of Wu Chang, startled the superstitious engineer to a state of inaction. His eyes bulged, his jaw dropped. Parkner and Pelican Jones were splashing in the water, trying to get aboard. Parkner fired once at Snebley and Barwright, and Pelican Jones added a shot of his own. But neither scored a hit.

Then Wu Chang's men were at them. Evidently, Wu Chang had given orders to take them alive, for Snebley and Barwright risked bullets to clash with them. Each fired once. Pelican missed, but Parkner's shot

hit Barwright in the shoulder. It did not prevent the clash. There was no doubting Snebley's strength or ability in a rough-and-tumble fight. He clashed with Parkner, knocked the gun from his hand, fought him back to the ground. Hindered by the robes he wore, Parkner was at a sad disadvantage. Snebley crashed through his guard and put across a blow that sent Parkner to the ground, unconscious.

Pelican Jones and Barwright were on even terms for a moment. Then Snebley came to Barwright's assistance. Pelican Jones, too, was soon stretched on the ground.

Wu Chang came running down to the beach, half dressed, his usual inscrutability shattered. Swiftly, he explained what had occurred. He got possession of the mask, issued swift orders.

"Put them in the storehouse and guard them. Let them not be harmed. They shall both fish for pearls with Mr. Donland tomorrow, while we watch. Look to Hagadan, and save him if possible. Call some of my countrymen—and have them slay the two guards at my house, who failed to protect me."

Then Wu Chang marched back across the clearing.

CHAPTER X

The Shark Master



"PELICAN, I think we're done for now," Parkner said.

Dawn was stealing through the windows of the storehouse where they had been confined. Outside the door, armed guards made sure they could not escape. They had no weapons, not even tools with which to commit suicide had they wished to.

"It's a terrible end, lad," Pelican replied. "But it'll be over quick. I'm wishin' we could have gone on. We'd have been great pals."

They looked at each other an instant; then their hands clasped in a tense grip. Then, side by side, they faced the door, which was being opened.

Armed Chinese were there. They rushed the prisoners, hurled them back against the wall, bound their wrists behind them, then led them forth.

Everybody in Soha had gathered at the beach except Lottie Marchard and her father. Parkner supposed they had learned what had happened. He felt sorry for the girl.

SAM HAGADAN was in his cage again, a bloody bandage across his shoulder. He was still howling curses and insults at Wu Chang, probably hoping that Wu Chang would order him killed and make an end of it.

Wu Chang, dressed in his finest robes, approached the pair where they were being held.

"I congratulate you on your courage, gentlemen," he said. "But I cannot congratulate you on the outcome of your attempt. You would have made good citizens of Soha. Here you could have lived in peace and plenty, in a lazy happiness. But the outside world called you—to death."

"Cut it short!" Parkner growled.

"I have decided that Mr. Donland shall take you pearl fishing. He will conduct you, one at a time, to that little hut you see far out on the coral. That is where he prepares for his pearling. You will conform to the ceremony he uses. You'll be stripped of clothing, and taken out on the raft—and dive for pearls. You first, Mr. Parkner. I am truly sorry, but nothing else may be done. It is regrettable."

A feeling of utter helplessness assailed Parkner. It would avail nothing to attempt a fight. He could not hope to gain much, with his wrists lashed behind him. He caught of a sudden a peculiar look on Bill Donland's face.

"Good-by, New Hampshire!"

"Good-by, Texas! It's tough, lad!"

"Come along, you!" Bill Donland growled.

He grasped Parkner roughly by the arm and hurried him down the beach. Those left behind made themselves comfortable to watch.

There was a little hut far out on the ledge of coral, and toward that they went.

"Do just as I say, Parkner, and don't make any mistake," Donland said, as they hurried along. "Pretend to pull back once in a while—that's it! Now, listen! There's a trick about this stunt. I learned it when I was a kid. My dad was a no-good guy gone native, but my mother was white, too. He got bumped off when I was a young one, and the natives raised me. They taught me this stunt."

"What is it?" Parkner asked.

"You'll see. Do just as I say. Everything will be all right. I'll save you and Pelican Jones."

"Save us? How can you, with that crowd watchin' back on the beach?"

THEY reached the little hut, and entered. A stench assailed Parkner's nostrils. Working swiftly, Donland untied Parkner's wrists.

"Strip, quick," he ordered.

Donland began removing his own clothes, which were few. Parkner, wondering, stripped also. Donland shifted a few planks and some chunks of corals, and unearthed a battered old bucket filled with a greasy, sticky mess.

"Glad I've got enough," Donland said. "I suppose you're a good swimmer?"

"I can swim like a fish."

"Great! Listen, now. We go out on the raft. I'll pole it along the edge of the lagoon. See these chunks of rotten fish? I slip 'em over the side, and that gets the sharks fussin' around. Hold your hands behind your back, like they were still tied. I'll give the raft an extra hard shove, and you pretend to fall off. I'll dive after you—"

"And that's the end for me," Parkner said. "I reckon you're tryin' to brace me up, give me some hope, but it's no good. Thanks, Donland, but I know the answer."

"NO, you don't! Get busy and grease yourself with that stuff, from head to feet. Smear it on thick. Hurry! When you go into the water, drop right down. Then come up slow. Don't worry if the sharks brush against you. They won't try to make a meal."

"Why won't they?" Parkner demanded.

"It's an old secret of the natives. They've got a word for this stuff—make it of decayed shellfish and vegetable oils. When you're in the water, it gives off a freak phosphorescence. Maybe the sharks smell it, too—some say they can. Funny stuff—doesn't scare 'em exactly. They'll come close, but won't attack. Can't you take my word? I use it all the time gettin' out shell, don't I? Hurry and grease yourself!"

Half dazed, Parkner did as he was ordered. He smeared himself with the smelling mess, while Donland did the same.

"Hurry, or they'll be wonderin' what's keepin' us," the diver said. "Nobody ever comes to this hut, and I don't want 'em to. Wu Chang's orders now that they keep away."

"But I can't stay under water—" Parkner began.

"Slip off the raft where I show you. Swim around the lump of coral

and crawl out and hide. I'll tell Pelican Jones the same. Stay there until night. I'll come to you—and we'll swim out to the yacht. No need to worry about the sharks. No devil fish on this side of the lagoon."

"If you're tellin' me the truth—"

"I am. We'll swim out and grab the yacht, or maybe take the launch if she's ashore. I'll get word to Miss Marchard and her father. We'll get 'em away, all right. Anyhow, we can try. I'm willin' to take a chance—sick of this. I've got some pearls cached away. Come on!"

DONLAND took him by an arm again, and Parkner put his hands behind his back. They got on the raft, and Donland put the chunks of fish near the edge, where he could kick them off.

"Look to the left—that big hump of coral. Swim around it," Donland said again, "and crawl out. You'll be safe there till night. It'll be plenty hot—"

"I won't worry about that, if I ever live to get there."

Donland shoved off some of the fish with his foot as he poled the raft along the edge of the lagoon. Up came the monsters, to churn the water as they fought for the bait. But they did not seem to be trying to get at the men on the raft, as they had done in the case of Nugago.

Parkner began having some hope. But he could not convince himself that he could get out of this alive. He felt sick as he watched the monsters playing around the raft.

"Now's the time," Donland said, "when I give the word. Swim where I said, and crawl out."

He shoved off the remainder of the fish. He pretended to lurch toward Parkner as the sharks surged upward again.

"Now!" he said.

Parkner felt that his heart was standing still. It took courage to

drop into that crystal clear water. But there was nothing else to be done. It was a chance, and he had no possible hope otherwise.

With the idea that Donland had been trying to make it easy for him, he slipped off the raft. Down he went, eyes open and watching. Two gigantic sharks swooped at him—and swerved. Another did the same. Parkner began coming up slowly, kept just below the surface, and swam.

Each instant he expected to feel the bite which would mean the end. He swam as slowly as possible, letting out little bubbles of breath. Another shark dashed at him, and away again.

He made for the hump of coral, and found a tiny inlet around it. Into this he went, breaking to the surface. The water grew shallow suddenly. He cut his knee on the sharp coral. And then he was out, sprawled on the rock in the hot sun, panting and almost exhausted.

CHAPTER XI

A Ruined Career



THEN he waited. He could hear distant shouting on the shore, but did not dare lift his head above the lump of coral to see what was happening. Gradually it grew quiet. He wondered whether Pelican Jones was passing through the ordeal. Pelican was a stubborn cuss. Maybe he would refuse to do as Donland directed, or be foolish enough to put up a hopeless fight.

Parkner drew down to the edge of the water and watched. And, after what seemed an eternity, he saw Pelican Jones swimming toward the hump, saw him come into the tiny

inlet.

inlet and break the surface. A moment later he had Pelican by the arm and was pulling him to land.

They were speechless for a moment. Pelican broke the silence.

"Didn't expect to see you again, Texas, this side of Heaven or the other place. Got a new lease on life," he growled. "Wu Chang and his gang think we're in sharks' stomachs by this time. How in the world did that Donland guy do it?"

"Some trick he learned from the natives. I've heard of it," Parkner said. "Never believed it till now. It's that mess he smears himself with. Nobody but the natives know what it is—the natives and Donland."

"It sure smells," said Pelican Jones agreeably, "but it does the work. And now what?"

"Nothin', except to lay low and wait for night. I could do with some food. But I reckon we should not complain."

IT was the middle of the night when Bill Donland finally came to them over the coral.

"They think you're dead," he reported. "I got word to the Marchards that you're alive. Wu Chang was makin' fun of the girl bein' a widow so quick, and sayin' that he'd raffle her off again in a few days."

"What are you plannin'?" Parkner asked.

"We've got to seize the yacht. I've got one automatic—had it hidden for a long time, waitin' for a chance. And a couple of good knives. It may be hot work."

"We can do it," Parkner said, "if we can get to the yacht."

"We'll swim out. Here's a bucket of grease. You needn't be afraid, gents."

"If we can get to the yacht, Lorch will help us," Parkner explained. "He'll handle the engine-room crew. Pelican is a navigator. There's probably charts in Wu Chang's cabin, so

we can get the ship through the reefs. But, how about that girl and her father?"

"Get command of the yacht first," Donland suggested. "The launch is ashore. Maybe they'll come out to see what's wrong."

THEY greased themselves again, and each of the partners fastened a knife around his neck with a thong. Donland wrapped the automatic and an extra clip of cartridges, all he had, in a length of cloth, and fastened it around his head, turban fashion.

"Just take it easy, and follow me," he said. "And don't worry any."

They were in the water again, swimming slowly and easily through the mouth of the lagoon. They could not see into the depths now, but a couple of times Parkner fancied that he felt a body brush past him.

The phosphorescence worried Parkner. He was afraid somebody aboard the *Soha* would see the trails they made through the water. But no hail came from the yacht. Discipline there had relaxed while the craft was in port.

Finally, the three men were resting beneath the bow, holding to the anchor chain. No sounds above them told of a member of the crew being on watch.

A loud jabbering came from the forecabin.

Parkner went up first, slowly, laboriously, and got aboard. He crouched in the shadows until the others were beside him. They rested a moment, and got their weapons ready.

"Let's get to Lorch's cabin," Parkner whispered. "Let him know what's up, and we'll have that much more help. He's got a gun, probably."

They were almost to the companionway when they bumped into one of the Chinese. His squawk of fright was cut short when Pelican

Jones knifed him. But it had been heard.

Chinese came tumbling on deck. Donland began firing at them, and they scattered. Parkner plunged down the companionway, howling for Lorch, and the engineer, half-dressed, came rushing out, rubbing his sleepy eyes.

"We're here—the three of us! Get a gun and come runnin'!" Parkner cried.

He rushed back to the deck, and Lorch came bellowing after him. The two blazing guns drove the Chinese into the forecabin. Lorch led the way to where the engine-room crew was coming up from their quarters below. He bellowed orders, and they rushed below again.

"We've got the yacht, and now what?" Pelican Jones demanded. "There's four of us—"

"And the launch is putting off from the shore," Lorch interrupted. "Better let me handle this, gents. I'll coax 'em aboard."

The other three crouched out of sight. The launch came on full speed, circled, came up to starboard.

"What's goin' on?" It was Snebley's voice.

Lorch showed himself.

"Hello, Snebley!" he hailed. "Had a little trouble with the crew. Had to drive 'em into the forecabin. Maybe you'd better come aboard and help me straighten it out."

"I'll straighten them lousy skunks out quick enough!" Snebley roared.

He had come out in the launch alone with the Chinese who ran her. Now he came hurrying to deck. As he sprang aboard, he found Parkner and Pelican Jones confronting him, with Donland just behind them.

SNEBLEY wasted no time in speculating how Parkner and Pelican happened to be alive and on the yacht. He roared a challenge and reached for his gun. They hurled themselves

upon him. Snebley fought along the rail after they had got the gun away from him. He tried to break free, and they took after him.

He could not get to a cabin for another weapon. He turned and raced back, intending to get to the launch. Parkner made a dive for him. Snebley lurched backward, swung a terrific blow, lost balance—and fell.

There was a splash at the yacht's side. Bill Donland and Lorch were tumbling into the launch, overpowering the Chinese. Snebley started swimming toward it.

BUT Snebley had not been stripped and treated to a coat of that mysterious grease. The others saw his arms flash in the moonlight as he swam, but only for a moment. One arm flashed straight up; Snebley's body shot halfway out of the water; one terrible scream came—and then he was gone.

"Sometimes, they hunt at night," Bill Donland was saying, softly. "They're queer—nobody can understand 'em. Don't ever believe anything anybody tells you about a shark. They're always changin' some of their habits."

"Snebley had it comin' to him," Pelican Jones said. "One devil in human form—that was Snebley."

Then it was quiet, except for the infrequent howls of the Chinese imprisoned in the forecabin. There were hails from the shore, but no replies from the yacht.

"We'll wait a little longer, then pick up that girl and her father," Donland said. "I told 'em what to do—slip out along the edge of the lagoon and get to my hut. If they were able to do it, they'll be waitin'."

The men waited almost an hour, then got into the launch and ran slowly into the lagoon. But they did not go to the beach where a curious group was waiting. The launch

turned in to the fringe of coral, nosed it and stopped. And Dr. Marchard and his daughter came hurrying toward them through the shadows.

They were on the yacht when dawn came. Lorch was mastering his engine-room crew. Pelican, Parkner and Bill Donland were on deck. Wu Chang's cabin had been rifled, and charts found, and Pelican surveyed them carefully.

On the shore, they could see Wu Chang, the others grouped behind him. There he and Barwright would remain, completely helpless, until a gunboat came to take them off and to punishment. Wu Chang's own orders were responsible for his being marooned now. The fate he had so cunningly contrived for others was inevitably his own doom.

A derisive screech from the yacht's whistle, and the craft started slowly away from Soha. Carefully, she was nursed through the maze of treacherous reefs. And late in the afternoon she was free, and took up speed.

"**W**ELL be runnin' across a gunboat in a few days," Pelican Jones said. "Lad, I never thought I'd skipper a fine craft like this. This time yesterday, I was figurin' I'd never skipper anything."

"Everything's lovely," Parkner said, grinning. "Wu Chang and his pals, and Sam Hagadan, are where

they can be picked up any time. Donland's got a couple of bunches of pearls that'll make life easy for him the rest of his days. You can go on bein' an international tramp. Miss Marchard and her father can go home and startle the folks who think they're dead."

"**A**ND what do you get out of it?" Pelican Jones asked.

"A chance to work my way back to Texas and see it again. Only, maybe I won't have to work my way. Donland's goin' to claim that pearl bed by right of discovery, and go at his fishin' lawful under government supervision. Nobody can dispute the claim. Wu Chang sure won't be in a position to do so. And Donland's cuttin' us two and Lorch in on the company and profits."

"You'll be needin' pearls—anyhow, maybe a rope of 'em," Pelican Jones said.

"How's that?" Parkner asked.

Pelican Jones was grinning. Parkner turned to see Lottie Marchard walking slowly toward him, smiling at him.

"She thought you might be a scoundrel, and you turned out to be one of them knights after all. She'll never quit till she gets you, Texas. You might have made a fine international tramp like me. But not now. Women—they've ruined a lot of fine international tramps by marryin' 'em and makin' 'em settle down."

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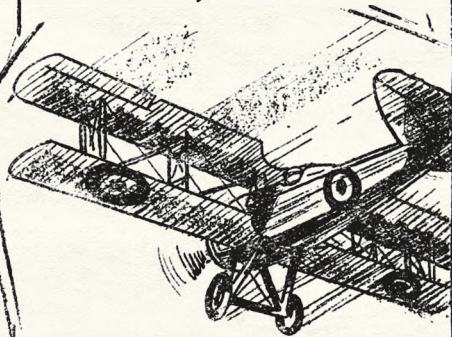
MAGRUDER'S FEARLESSNESS AND DARING AS AN ENSIGN DURING THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR GAINED FOR HIM MANY DECORATIONS AND A PROMOTION TO LIEUTENANCY OVER FIVE SUPERIORS. WITH A FEW MEN IN AN OPEN BOAT AND IN THE MIDST OF CONCENTRATED FIRE WHICH WOUNDED ALL EXCEPT MAGRUDER, HE CUT THE CHAIN CABLES THAT BLOCKED THE ENTRANCE TO CIENFUEGOS HARBOR.

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MAN—TO CAPTURE A PRISONER
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BUT—LAST TO REACH HOME
AFTER THE ARMISTICE.



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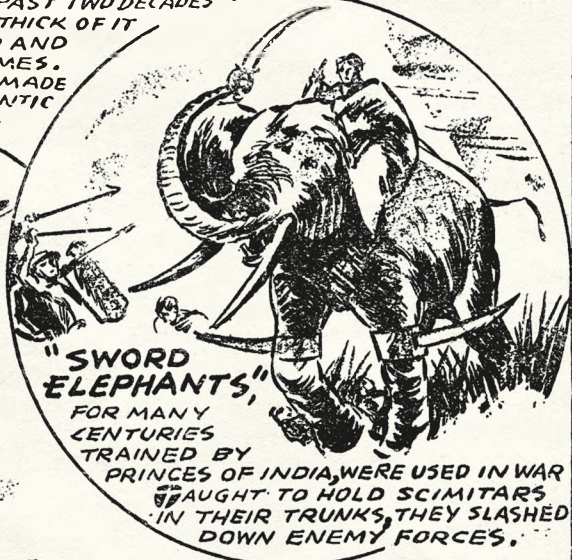
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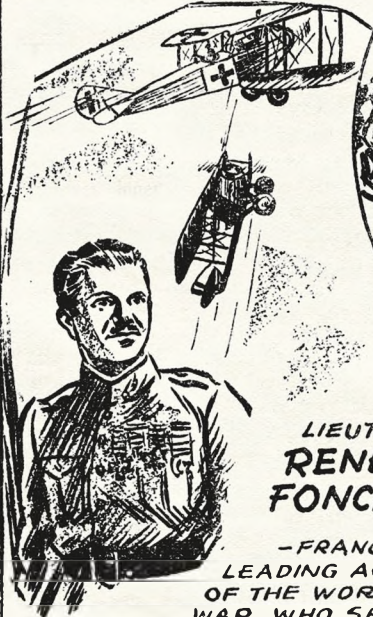
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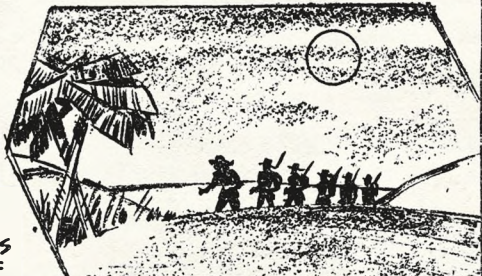
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FOR MANY CENTURIES TRAINED BY PRINCES OF INDIA, WERE USED IN WAR TAUGHT TO HOLD SCIMITARS IN THEIR TRUNKS, THEY SLASHED DOWN ENEMY FORCES.



LIEUT. RENE FONCK,

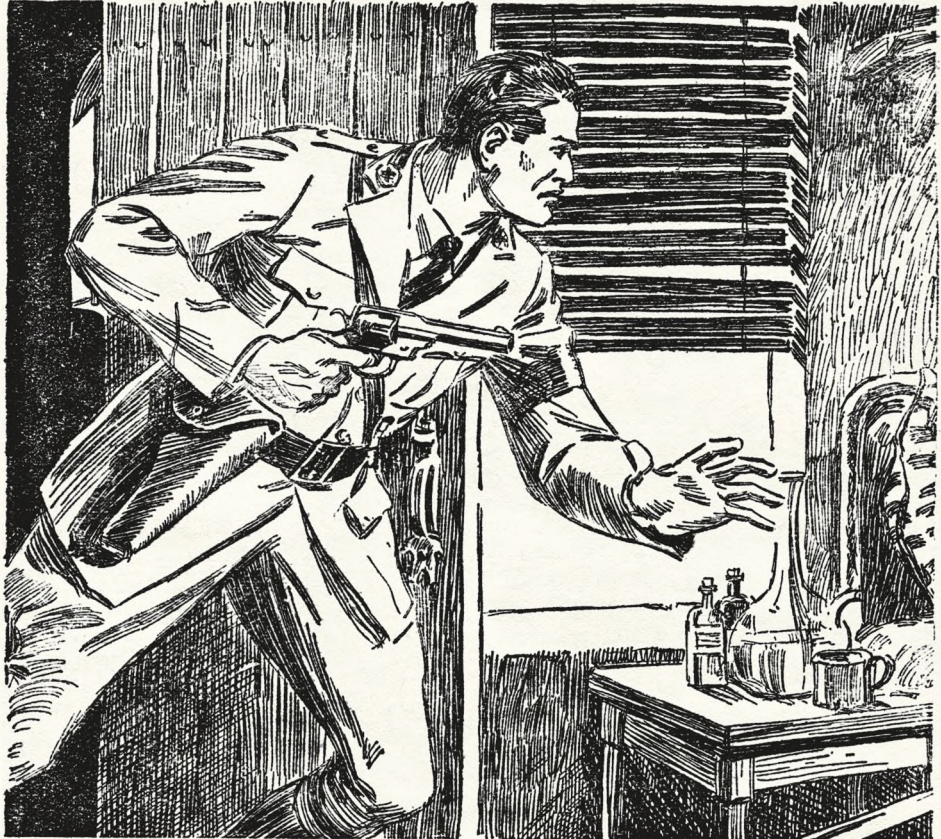
-FRANCE'S LEADING ACE OF THE WORLD WAR, WHO SHOT DOWN 125 PLANES. IN HIS FIRST 50 BATTLES FONCK'S SHIP WAS UNHIT. NINETEEN DAYS AFTER GUYNEMER, THE IDOL OF FRANCE, WAS SHOT DOWN, RENE FONCK AVENGED HIS DEATH BY DOWNING CAPT. WISSEMAN, WHO HAD SENT GUYNEMER EARTHWARD. FONCK CAME OUT OF THE WAR UNTOUCHED.



ONE FIFTH OF THE EARTH'S LANDS ARE DESERT AND FRANCE CONTROLS ONE-HALF OF ALL DESERT LAND.

A
*Complete
Novelette*

POISONED



Then suddenly a pistol roared, and Martin heard the

CHAPTER I

The Knife

THE great room was a place of flickering shadows, lit only by a single electric bulb above the table in its center. About this table were grouped some half-dozen persons wearing long, white robes, white hoods, and masks. One of them was arranging with diabolic precision a row of steel knives that glittered horribly as the light flashed on their polished blades.

The room was very hot, and was filled with sound. There was a low roaring hum as an undertone, and above this, a loud unending wailing shriek, suggesting a lost soul suffering the agonies of the damned. These sounds came from the shadows at the rear of the room, where bulky shapes loomed in the semi-darkness, attended by flitting figures like those of imps dancing at some demoniac rite.

On the table directly under the light lay a naked man. He was already unconscious. At the head of

Follow Sergeant Jack Martin Across the Desert of

CHALICE

By MAJOR GEO.
FIELDING ELIOT
Author of "The Sacred Fire," etc.



bullet thud into the wall behind him. His pulses pounded madly!

the table, one of the figures in white lifted a cone-like affair from the up-turned face, and nodded. Another of the white-robed men made a sinister gesture with one thin hand. Instantly the light went out and the room was in Cimmerian darkness.

A second later there came a brilliant flash of blue flame—a whip-lash of steel-blue lightning; crackling with a savage intensity that might have struck fear into the stoutest heart. Forked tongues of blue light were everywhere, flickering about in

the blackness overhead, while lower down a weird pale-green glow was born, sinister and horrible. Brighter and brighter waxed this ghastly illumination, until it reached the farthest corners of that great chamber.

Its source seemed to be a glass pane in the table where the naked man was lying. Now the man himself appeared to be made of some strange, semi-transparent green jelly, wherein could be faintly discerned the dark skeleton of ribs and breast-bone, and a jumble of moving vague

Sinai on the Exciting Trail of a Ruthless Spy!

shapes within—the heart and lungs of a living, breathing human being.

One of the white-robed figures bent over the prostrate victim. A knife glittered wickedly in his grasp.

HORRIBLE as this scene might have appeared to one witnessing it for the first time, to Sergeant Martin of the Australian Army Medical Corps it was all in the day's work—a mere matter of routine. The room in which he stood was the X-ray room of the hospital; the sounds were those of the dynamo and the X-ray machine; the figures grouped about the table were those of the operating surgeon and his assistant, the anesthetist and *his* assistant, the nurse in attendance, and an orderly—himself, —Jack Martin, late of Massachusetts despite his Australian uniform.

The only reason that any particular importance could be attached to this operation was the eminence of the patient. The naked man on the table was Major-General Sir Alexander Macomb, Royal Engineer, the man whose genius and tireless energy had driven the great pipeline across the Desert of Sinai in the wake of Sir Archibald Murray's advancing army. It was this man who had contrived the myriad details of the great water-supply system which was the life-line of two hundred thousand men fighting their way eastward over those pitiless sands toward the borders of Palestine.

A Turkish sniper's bullet had struck the great engineer down, and already things were beginning to go wrong. Problems which only the mind of a genius could meet were proving too much for subordinates, and Sir Alexander himself, chafing in the comfortable seclusion of his hospital room, knew that he was needed.

Without him, the Army might yet stumble upon disaster.

The surgeons had shaken their heads. The sniper's bullet was in his body, somewhere, and it had to come out.

But they spoke of the climate, and advised more rest, a little time for recovery from the shock of the wound before the knife should be used. Sir Alexander demurred.

"Do it now," he commanded. "Cut the blamed thing out, and I'll be on my feet again in ten days. Not running any foot-races, perhaps, but able to carry on and see to things a bit."

He had his way. And so we come to the X-ray room on this sultry Cairo afternoon, with Sir Alexander Macomb stretched on the operating table, and the ghostly rays revealing, lodged in the tissues close to the base of one lung, a dark, oblong shape that was the Turk's bullet.

The anesthetist had done his part: now for the surgeon's work. He bent over his patient—and Sergeant Martin intercepted an anxious glance from the nursing sister. He knew what it meant.

IN that room every object with which the patient might come in contact had been rendered surgically clean according to the most modern principles of asepsis. But nothing could shut out the heat of an Egyptian summer; and when, in such a climate, you swaddle up a man in a waterproof apron, a heavy linen gown, armbands, gloves, hood and mask, he is likely to perspire rather freely.

Perspiration is highly septic. A single drop falling into an open wound, especially in disease-ridden Egypt, might cause the death of a patient.

Hence the nurse's anxious glance toward Jack Martin, and the sergeant's prompt response. He stepped forward to the surgeon's side, towel in hand, ready to wipe the perspira-

tion from that portion of the surgeon's face about the eyes, which the mask necessarily left fully exposed.

To his surprise, the surgeon jerked back from his outstretched hand with an exclamation of annoyance. Deep within him, Jack Martin heard instinctive trumpets sounding the alarm—he was instantly suspicious.

The operating surgeon for this case was Lieutenant-Colonel Thurlow, a distinguished Harley Street practitioner, whom the maelstrom of war had brought to an Egyptian hospital. Many a time had Jack Martin wiped perspiration from Colonel Thurlow's face, and never had he known the great surgeon's unruffled calm to be disturbed by his administrations.

"Your pardon, sir," he said, in a voice which penetrated even through the infernal clamor of the X-ray machine. "Your pardon, sir—the perspiration!"

The surgeon nodded as though relieved. Martin passed the towel across the man's eyes and forehead. His hand, with seeming carelessness, caught the edge of the mask and ripped the face-flap from its fastenings.

The face which the merciless green light of the X-ray revealed was not the round expressionless visage of Colonel Thurlow.

It was the swarthy countenance of an utter stranger — a countenance from which two dark eyes glittered angrily!

FOR one electric second there was a stupefied silence in the room. Then a clamor of voices broke out, as every one present gave noisy vent to his or her astonishment.

Sergeant Martin stepped swiftly between the dark-faced man and the helpless patient.

"Who are you?" he demanded bluntly.

"Captain Butterfield of the staff of the Director of Medical Services," the other answered in a harsh voice. "I've been specially detailed to perform this operation—"

"That's not so!" interrupted the anesthetist and the assistant surgeon in the same breath. "This is Colonel Thurlow's job—"

Jack Martin grabbed Butterfield by the shoulder and flung him a dozen feet away from the operating table, lest even yet he should do the patient injury. From beneath his gown, the sergeant jerked out an automatic.

"Hands up!" he snapped at Butterfield.

THE dark features of the impostor grew even darker with impotent fury—he started to raise his hands. From the corner of his eyes, Jack Martin was aware of a bulky figure in gown and hood, but without a mask, bearing down upon him.

It was Colonel Forrest, the pompous, red-faced medical officer in command of the hospital, come in person to attend the operation on his distinguished patient, and arriving just in time to witness this startling denouement.

At this critical juncture, the X-ray operator lost his head. He realized that something had gone wrong and knew that his patient should not be exposed to the X-rays any longer than was absolutely necessary. He forgot, however, that the ordinary lights had been turned off. He threw the switch controlling his machine; instantly the room was in utter darkness.

"Turn on those lights, confound it!" yelled Martin, too late. A latch clicked—

Then some one collided with him in the darkness, almost knocking him off his balance. His pistol roared like a cannon in the confined space. As its echoes died, Martin heard the

sound of a door gently closing, and knew that his quarry had escaped.

CHAPTER II

The Test Tubes

AT the same instant, the nursing sister found the electric light switch, and the main lights went on.

Martin, pistol in hand, sprang in pursuit, but the stout figure of Colonel Forrest blocked his way.

"Let me pass, sir!" Martin begged. "I've got to catch that man!"

The colonel seemed to recognize the voice, though Martin's face was still hidden by its mask.

"Confound you, Sergeant Martin!" he roared. "Firing a pistol in an operating room! What the devil do you mean by it?"

Martin was fairly dancing with impatience. "The man who has just gone out that door is a dangerous enemy spy, sir," he explained swiftly. "He meant to kill General Maccomb, and he's getting away! Let me go, sir, for God's sake!"

"Don't get so excited, Sergeant," the colonel said in the exasperating tone one uses in soothing a fractious child. "You seem to have spies on the brain. No doubt there is a perfectly reasonable explanation for all this."

"Reasonable explanation, bunk!" snarled Martin disrespectfully. "Look at this!"

As he spoke, he stopped and picked up a bright object from the floor. It was a surgeon's scalpel, a wicked-looking little knife. Martin held it out to the assistant surgeon.

"Have you ever seen that before, sir?" he asked.

The assistant shook his head. "No," he said, "it is not the type we use in this hospital."

"Exactly," Martin exclaimed in triumph. "It's one that devil brought with him, and if you'll send it to the

laboratory, Colonel, I'll bet they'll find something on the blade that wouldn't have done General Maccomb a bit of good!"

At that moment the door was flung open, and a man clad in white shirt and trousers burst into the room.

"Stop!" he commanded. "Hold everything!"

Then, as he realized that no operation was as yet taking place, he turned to Colonel Forrest, speaking more calmly.

"There is something decidedly wrong, Colonel," he said, "when a surgeon on his way to an important operation can be knocked on the head and shut up in a stuffy linen closet. Luckily, my head is a little bit thicker than the average, so I 'came to' rather more promptly than the scoundrel anticipated!"

It was Lieutenant-Colonel Thurlow, and his words sufficiently explained his absence.

"We can't leave the patient exposed like that," he went on, turning his attention to the work in hand like a true surgeon. "Get me a gown and mask, sister. I'll wash up at once and we will proceed with the operation."

IT was evident by his manner that no more information would be elicited from Colonel Thurlow until his work was done. But his entrance had given Sergeant Martin the opportunity he needed, by attracting Colonel Forrest's attention.

Martin slipped through the half-open door and sped down the corridor, tearing off his gown and head-dress as he went, intent on gaining the main gate and cutting off Butterfield's retreat. His felt-soled hospital shoes made no noise on the stone floor as he ran.

Ahead a door stood ajar, letting a line of light run across the dark corridor. Just beyond were the stairs leading downward to the entrance

lobby; but that open door led to the experimental laboratory. Who would be there at this hour?

Suspicion brought Martin sliding to a halt.

He spun on his heel, took two steps backward, and, close to the laboratory door, listened. He heard the burble of running water, the clink of glass. And, gun in hand, he very quietly eased open the laboratory door.

THE room was brilliantly lighted. Busy at a sink on the farther side of the lab, his back to the door, was a man in the uniform of a R. A. M. C. officer.

The running water drowned the small sounds of Martin's entrance. Deftly, swiftly, the man at the sink was taking test-tubes from a rack on the table at the right of the sink, washing off the little pasted labels, and stowing the tubes away in metal clips fitted to the inside of a small black bandage. On the table and another table behind it stood battery after battery of these tubes; and Martin knew very well what they were.

They represented months of patient research, those tubes; months of unremitting watchfulness and care, to the end that the terrible diseases of the tropics might be stamped out instantly at every sporadic appearance and might not take their toll of death, as in bygone campaigns, among the troops. The tubes contained bacteria cultures, of almost every known tropical and semi-tropical disease. Cholera, plague, typhoid and the parasitic worm of the terrible and incurable bilharziasis, all were represented. There were hundreds of tubes—

Put it was upon the man at the sink that Martin's attention was fixed.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said suddenly.

A tube crashed into the sink as the man whirled.

Again Martin saw the dark saturnine face, the glittering eyes of the false surgeon, the man calling himself Butterfield! The sergeant's gun was already pointing straight at the evil countenance.

"Stand still!" he warned. "Thought you had time to turn one more trick, eh? Game's up, Butterfield."

"So?" smiled Butterfield. "Very well, then—"

Too late Martin heard the stealthy footfall behind him. Something struck him on the shoulder, burst with a faint "pop."

He gasped, choked, as deadly fumes poured into his lungs. Half-turning, he caught one glimpse of a burly man with a queer, pear-shaped head. Convulsively his finger tightened on the trigger of the automatic. He heard a sharp report, and tried to fire again. But his throat seemed closed; he could not breathe.

He lurched forward. Bright spots danced before his eyes. He felt the pistol wrenched from his hand, and a terrific blow across his head finished what the gas-capsule had begun. He seemed to be dropping into limitless space, into a black pit where brilliant stars wheeled in vast blazing constellations; then all the lights went out and there was only blackness.

The man who had struck him down stood over him for a moment, snarling, fingering the pistol with a tiger's gleam in his eyes. Evidently the one shot had passed unheard—but it would be too much to expect equal luck with another. Let the interfering dog live if he must.

BUT far stronger than any physical vigor was Martin's will—his grim knowledge that he mustn't pass out.

Out of the depths he came struggling back to consciousness, fighting

all the time against the agony that sought surcease, against the weakness that asked only for rest.

Actually he had been unconscious not more than a minute when again his eyes opened, his brain began to function. Not yet could he move, but he could see—and hear Butterfield's harsh voice:

"—almost ruined me, you fool. Why didn't you move quicker? Come, I need your help. Quick—no time to lose. Thank God, no one heard that shot."

From the slit beneath his eyelids that was all he dared allow himself of vision, Martin could see a thick-bodied man in the uniform of a British private moving across the room. That was the bird that had knocked him out with the gas-capsule. The pear-shaped head was unmistakable.

Butterfield, holding a small sponge to his nose, moved into Martin's range of vision. He handed his aide another sponge.

"Hold that to your nose and breathe through it," he ordered. "Don't, whatever you do, open your stupid mouth. It'll be death if you forget. Now destroy those!"

He pointed to the ranked batteries of tubes. In his hand, closed and fastened, was the little black bag.

The man obeyed without a word.

CRASH! One sweep of his arm sent a whole battery to shattered ruin on the floor.

Crash! A second rackful went down.

Crash! Butterfield was at the door; and strength was coming back to Martin.

"Hurry!" snapped Butterfield, hovering at the door. Sponge or no sponge, the atmosphere above those broken test tubes was as deadly as any cobra's venom, and he had no desire to venture nearer.

"Come on! Knock down that last rack, and we'll be going. I've another job in hand for both of us."

Crash! The last rack went; and the big man started for the door. Suddenly Martin flung out a hand and caught his ankle, tripping him. Down he went to his knees. Instantly Martin was behind him, twisting one wiry hand in the collar of the fellow's tunic and holding the bulky body as a shield between himself and the gun of the man at the door.

"**H**ELP!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Help! In the lab!"

"Blast you!" gasped Butterfield, springing round to get in a shot from the side. Martin, his head still buzzing, managed to swing his half-choked human shield in the same direction. The big man was striking backward with his beefy fists, awkwardly, doing no damage. His blows grew weaker. He choked audibly. Suddenly he went limp.

The sergeant held him up by main strength. The man with the gun was still circling, weapon ready. Martin gathered himself for a great effort, flung the body of the assistant straight at Butterfield, leaped toward the door.

But he had been tricked; the assistant, the instant the grip on his collar relaxed, came to life with surprising suddenness. He pivoted on one outflung foot; and as he came round, his fist smashed Martin on the side of the head, knocking him against a table. The next instant both men were upon the sergeant.

He fought them off with failing strength. He was a trained boxer, and made his blows count, but twice he had to take glancing blows on the arm from the pistol-butt; he knew he couldn't hold out much longer. Still yelling for help, he bored in, hoping to hold them.

Butterfield shouted to his infuri-

ated aide to stand back and let him shoot. He was getting panicky.

The sergeant dodged a mighty blow from the assistant, ducked under a beefy arm, and drove an uppercut at Butterfield's chin. He saw behind his enemy the heap of broken glass that marked the grave of the test tubes. If the man fell on *that*—and cut himself!

MARTIN felt his blow land, but the assistant jumped in again, and he was not sure which man he had struck. A fist smashed him fairly between the eyes; a kick in the pit of the stomach sent him reeling back, blind and sick. Faintly, as at a great distance, he heard shouts.

"What's up? Come along here, Corporal! There's hell popping!"

"In the laboratory—"

"Double! Who's got a gun?"

Martin was down again. He couldn't think, couldn't see. He heard a crunching of glass, a clatter of hob-nailed shoes in the corridor. Then he realized that men were surrounding him, questions were hammering at his ears like machine-gun bullets. Through a mist of pain, he saw a circle of anxious, excited faces. Water revived him a little.

"Stop 'em quick!" he demanded, as strong hands helped him up.

"Who? Where? We didn't see anybody!" came several voices.

The sergeant swore bitterly. He fought for coherent thought.

The window—there—it overlooked the main gate.

He flung himself at it, leaned far out, shouting to the sentry:

"Close the gate! Stop everybody!"
Too late!

Before the dull-witted sentry could understand, a man came hurrying out of the administration building—a man in officer's uniform—Butterfield! Behind him lumbered the man with the pear-shaped head, carrying a small black bag.

"Stop him!" yelled Martin.

Not likely that a territorial sentry would hold up a medical officer followed by an orderly, on the shouted order of a wild-eyed sergeant.

Outside the gate, a long black car slid easily into view. Butterfield, without so much as turning his head, walked calmly through the gate and stepped into the car, his "orderly" mounting by the native chauffeur.

There was a clash of gears, the roar of an accelerated motor. The car leaped away, turned into the Boulevard Mehemet Ali with a screech of skidding tires, and was gone.

With a bitter curse, Martin turned away from that window of futility. As he did so, his eyes fell upon a heap of broken glass. Crimson stains blotched the glitter here and there. One at least of his two antagonists had fallen—and was doomed.

CHAPTER III

The Plague

SERGEANT MARTIN was "on the carpet."

He stood in the orderly-room of the hospital, facing the bulky colonel across a polished desk.

"I am quite at a loss to understand your conduct yesterday, Sergeant," Colonel Forrest said sharply. "You have made a number of wild accusations, but you have presented me with no proof whatever. I have made inquiries and find that there is indeed an officer named Captain Butterfield assigned to special research work on the staff of the Director of Medical Services.

"He was not at Headquarters this morning, but they are endeavoring to locate him. Meanwhile, you will consider yourself relieved from duty and will await my further orders."

"Am I under arrest, sir?" asked Martin shortly.

"No," was the stern reply. "But

you are not to leave the hospital without my written permission."

Sergeant Martin went back to his quarters to think things over. He had already been to the laboratory, where there was great confusion. Because of the destruction of all the test-tubes, it had not been possible to make a check to discover what had been the contents of the tubes that had been stolen.

THE debris had been cleared away and the whole place thoroughly disinfected and fumigated. Martin, and everyone else who had entered the room after the breaking of the tubes, had been freshly inoculated against both cholera and typhoid.

But his chances of contracting one of these diseases didn't worry Martin especially. He was thinking of the bloodstains on the heap of broken glass, which he had noted the previous afternoon. Some one had gone down on that glass and been cut—either Butterfield or the man with the pear-shaped head.

A good many of the broken tubes had contained the bacillus of plague, which is a disease contracted by the introduction of the bacillus into the blood. Martin had an idea. He went to the canteen telephone and called up an acquaintance of his in the office of the Director of Medical Service.

"Do me a favor, Jim," he requested. "Personal favor. Let me know of any cases of plague that show up in Cairo within the next three days, will you? Especially if the patient's a white man."

A careful sanitary patrol had now been organized in the city by the military, working in conjunction with the health officers of the Egyptian government. Wherever cases of plague were discovered, they were promptly isolated and energetic steps taken to prevent any spread of the infection.

Consequently, plague was a comparatively rare disease in Cairo at the time; and since its symptoms were so well known and the fear of it so thoroughly grounded in every native heart, it was practically impossible to conceal a case of the disease. Even if no physician were summoned, the first native servant who saw the patient after the characteristic purple swellings began to appear, would run screaming with fright to the authorities.

Thus cleverly did Martin plan; nor was he disappointed. The following morning, summoned to the telephone in the canteen, he was informed that a case of plague had been reported by a native physician, the location given being the upper floor of a house near the Ksar-el-Nil barracks. The sufferer was said to be a white man.

"The Egyptian health officer's probably on his way over now," Martin's informant concluded.

"Thanks, Jim, I'll beat him to it if I can," Martin replied. He hung up the phone and dashed for the gate.

To the devil with the colonel's orders! Martin was sure he was hot on the trail of Butterfield, and he meant to follow that trail to the bitter end. A tram-car, Gizeh-bound, took him almost to his destination. Leaving the yellow limestone walls of the ancient barracks on his right, he plunged into the labyrinth of narrow streets beyond, and after one or two inquiries and the dispensing of sundry copper coins, he found the street and house to which he had been directed.

AN Egyptian policeman lounged in front of the narrow door, which was open. Inside, in the darkness, loomed an ascending stairway, faintly seen in the gloom. The policeman made a half-hearted attempt to stop Martin, but the latter held up his left arm, encircled by its Red Cross bras-

sard. The policeman nodded and stood aside. Martin entered the narrow hallway and started up the stairs.

From the darkness above a voice challenged him.

"Who are you? And what do you want here?"

"Sanitary patrol," answered Martin, and continued to ascend.

"You lie!" replied the voice. "If you are a sanitary patrol, where is your haversack, and why are you not wearing a sun-helmet instead of a forage cap?"

"Well informed, aren't you?" retorted Martin, continuing to ascend. He was convinced that he had to do with Butterfield in person and he had already drawn his pistol. The man above had doubtless had a good look at Martin while the latter was talking to the policeman in the sunlit doorway. Now as he ascended, Martin knew he was silhouetted against the light below. But he kept on doggedly.

"Halt where you are!" the voice commanded. "I know you, Sergeant Martin. Go back or die!"

For answer, Martin fired two shots straight at the head of the stairs, and bounded upward in the darkness.

THERE was a snarl of rage from the stair-head, and Martin suddenly felt the burning pain of a knife-stab in his shoulder. He thrust forward his pistol hand, felt the muzzle jam into something soft, and pulled the trigger.

There was a muffled report, instantly followed by a scream of agony, and a falling human body collapsed almost on top of the ascending Martin. It caromed off his shoulder and went tumbling down the staircase. Martin reached the top step. Before him, the dust-filled darkness was silent. That other knives waited there, Martin could not doubt.

Below at the door, the Egyptian

policeman was yelling loud inquiries as to what was the matter, without venturing his own precious hide inside to find out.

"Run to the barracks for help, you!" yelled Martin in Arabic; then, pistol ready, he plunged into the gloom. He came almost at once to a closed door directly barring his path. He tried it. It was locked. Placing his ear to the panel, he heard a murmur of voices within, then a low groan. He located the lock, stepped back, drew up his left leg, and suddenly hurled all his weight forward with leg outflung so that his hob-nailed heel struck the door with terrific force just over the lock.

THE ill-made thing crashed inward, and Martin, carried forward by the violence of his own attack, found himself flung almost into the center of a small room. The sun was streaming in through two open windows. Beneath them on an iron cot lay the man with the pear-shaped head, his face flushed with fever!

A pistol roared, and Martin heard the bullet thud into the wall behind him. A man in native dress was halfway across the sill of the nearer window.

The next instant the fellow was gone. Martin gained the window a second later, just in time to see the fugitive slide down a narrow ladder to the cobblestones of the alley below. The man jerked the ladder to the ground and ran down the alley at top speed.

To jump after him meant broken bones almost surely. Martin fired a shot, missed on account of his awkward position in the window, and saw the fugitive gain the corner of the street and disappear from view.

Butterfield? Martin was sure of it. Disgustedly he swung himself back into the room. At least he had one of the spies—but the man on the bed was muttering in delirium. The

plague had him in its foul grip, and Martin, looking at him, knew that the poor devil probably would not live until sunset. There was no use questioning him; he was too far gone for that.

And then, with a thrill of triumph, Martin saw a little black handbag on the floor near the head of the bed. He pounced on it in an instant, tearing open the fastenings. There were the test-tubes, with the laboratory seals still closing their glass mouths. At last he had some concrete evidence to show for his efforts.

The man on the bed stirred and muttered uneasily. Martin's quick ear caught a word of what he was saying.

"El Kantara—"

El Kantara? The army's base on the Suez Canal—the jumping-off place from which the railway and pipe-line started to cross the desert. What was going to happen at El Kantara?

Every nerve in his body shrinking from proximity to the fearful plague, Martin forced himself to bend closer to hear what the delirious man was saying.

"El Kantara," he said again, and fell to pleading:

"Don't go! Don't leave me here to die like a dog while you go to El Kantara. At least leave Selim to care for me. It's the plague, I tell you—the plague! Don't go—don't leave me—"

HIS feverish eyes stared horribly into Martin's. It was plain the delirious man thought that Martin was Butterfield.

"All right," said Martin soothingly. "Don't worry. I won't leave you alone."

The frightened glare in those eyes died out.

"That is good for you, comrade," the man said, in a voice from which the edge of anxiety had gone, but

which was appreciably weaker. "In any case, there would be no use. The filtration plant is sure to be well guarded. I have always told you so. The desert is the place to work, where no one will see you."

The filtration plant! So that was where they meant to strike. Martin glanced at the black bag and laughed suddenly.

HE had thwarted them, after all. It was plain what their scheme had been. They had meant, under some pretext or other, to gain access to the great filtration plant at El Kantara, where the waters of the Nile were purified before being pumped through the pipe-line for use by the army. They had meant to introduce the swarming bacteria in those test-tubes into the water, after it had passed the filters—bacteria of a dozen pestilences!

A devilish plot indeed; but it had failed, for the instrument with which it was to be executed lay here under his hand, recaptured!

Martin could not forbear a grin of triumph. He snatched up the black bag from the floor and held it before the eyes of the man on the bed.

"You've failed," he announced. "See? Here is the bag your comrade left behind him!"

Into the eyes of the delirious sufferer crept a puzzled look.

"The bag? Yes," he said slowly. "But I thought there was another way—that you would not need the bag save as a last resort. Ah, God!"—his voice rose to a sudden scream—"You are not my comrade! What am I saying?"

He raised himself on one elbow, his other hand clawing spasmodically at the sheet, his eyes staring accusingly at Martin for a moment. Then he fell back, moaning.

But he had taken the heart out of Martin's triumph. So there was another way, was there? Then it be-

hooved Martin to get to El Kantara at once. At that moment he heard footsteps and voices in the lower hall.

Running to the edge of the stairwell, he saw that the hall was swarming with British territorials.

Martin went down, clinging to his little black bag. To the sergeant in charge of the detail which had been summoned from the barracks by the excited native policeman, Martin explained that he was a sanitary patrolman and that there was a case of plague in the room upstairs. He asked them to post a guard at the place until the Egyptian health officer put in his tardy appearance.

Martin made his way back to the tram-line and caught a car going in the direction of the hospital. But before he reached the hospital he had come to a new decision. There was no use asking Colonel Forrest for leave to go to El Kantara. In fact, the colonel might already have learned of Martin's unauthorized absence from the hospital and have issued instructions that he be placed in close arrest as soon as he returned. If he went back now he might jeopardize all he had gained—might even be endangering the safety of Sir Archibald Murray's entire army.

HE knew how hopeless it would be to make a report through official channels and expect it to be acted upon promptly enough to save the situation. There was nothing for it but to go to El Kantara at once, retaining the little black bag as evidence for future use.

Having reached this decision, he swung off the tram-car at the next crossing, hailed a cab, and bade the driver take him to the railway station, whence there were frequent trains for El Kantara. Sergeant Martin had decided to go A. W. O. L.

Had he but known it, at the very

moment Colonel Forrest was leaving the hospital under orders to report for duty at General Headquarters.

But Martin didn't know—so A. W. O. L. it had to be.

CHAPTER IV

The Choice of Death

THE filtering plant at El Kantara had been developed from a small local affair into a huge plant capable of supplying 600,000 gallons of water a day. Not only was this water purified by filtration, but it was also, after filtration, chemically treated so as to free it from any possible trace of injurious bacteria.

Dusk, heralding the coming of the swift-spreading tropic night, was already stealing across the face of Egypt as Sergeant Martin dashed across the last fifty yards of sandy path to the doorway of the long corrugated-iron building which housed the treating-tanks of the big plant. He ran as though for his life; he was running, he thought, for thousands of lives. For by the guardhouse at the entrance to the plant stood a long black car.

Martin had not stood on ceremony, when he saw that car. He'd thrust his precious black case into the hands of the sentry, with a sharp "Hold on to that!" And drawing his gun, he'd started to run, disregarding the soldier's astonished shouts.

Now, as he reached the doorway and looked into the electric-lighted interior, he realized that he had run to some purpose.

A little group of men were gathering beside the nearest of the great open concrete treating-tanks, through which the filtered water was gurgling under the impulse of the pumps.

One of these, very spruce in his well-fitting uniform, was the man known as Captain Butterfield. A second, a boyish-looking officer wear-

ing the insignia of the Royal Engineers, was certainly the officer on duty. The others were Egyptian porters in blue denim; their burdens, three big chests, lay at their feet. One chest was already open; it was filled to the brim with whitish crystals.

"This is the new chemical," Butterfield was just saying. "We have hopes that it will prove so effective that we can dispense with this treating-tank apparatus altogether."

A remark which held a ghastly hidden meaning.

"JUST give a heave, here, and dump it in—"

"Halt!" Martin's stern order cut short Butterfield's complacent directions to the porters.

The man whirled, saw Martin advancing with drawn gun. He could not suppress the vicious curse that ripped through his snarling lips, but an instant later he was quite composed.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

Martin ignored him, addressing himself to the engineer officer.

"Sir," said he, "I have every reason to believe this man to be a dangerous enemy spy. He is not an officer of our Army at all. His credentials are forged, and these cases contain poison!"

"Good God!" gasped the startled lieutenant. "I don't—"

"Ridiculous!" cut in Butterfield. "This man was attached to Number Two General Hospital in Cairo when I was there, Mr. Hunt. He conceived a dislike for me, and later his brain became affected by the climate so that his dislike became a mania with him. The poor fellow is more to be pitied than blamed; but you had better have him watched, as he sometimes becomes violent."

Martin choked back his mounting fury. Any loss of control now would

be fatal. Hunt was plainly hesitating, uncertain what to do.

The Egyptians, at Butterfield's impatient gesture, were again stooping to lift that box.

"Stop!" Martin's voice rang sharply. "Put that box down, quick! If you touch it again, I'll shoot. Mr. Hunt, this man has informed you that the box contains a prepared chemical for treating the water-supply of the army. Is that not correct?"

Hunt nodded. "That is right, Sergeant. But—"

"Your pardon, sir. I say it's poison!"

He snatched a tin cup which stood on a bench nearby, scooped it full of water from the tank, strode over to the open case, and caught up a liberal pinch of the contents. He turned so that all might see the white crystals fall into the cup from his fingers.

Then in an instant his pistol was in his right hand again, leveled straight at Butterfield. With his left hand he held out the tin cup.

"You say it is a harmless chemical, Captain Butterfield," Martin grated. "All right, prove it! Drink!"

BUTTERFIELD'S dark face turned slowly to a pale yellow. Instinctively, he drew back from the proffered cup.

"I'll not be ordered about in this way by a sergeant," he blustered. "Do you permit this sort of thing, Mr. Hunt?"

Hunt looked from one man to the other; trying, with grave anxiety in his frank boyish eyes, to judge between them.

"I think," he said finally, "that just to reassure everyone, you had better drink a little, Captain Butterfield. It is a very grave charge that this sergeant makes; and he does not look or act like a man suffering from a touch of sun."

"Yes—drink!" urged Martin. "It'll

save the trouble and expense of the court-martial and the firing-squad!"

"I'll see you all damned first!" Butterfield exclaimed furiously. "I'll make an official report on your conduct, Mr. Hunt. Good evening, sir."

He turned on his heel and started for the door.

"Stop him!" begged Martin. But the engineer officer shook his head, while Butterfield vanished into the outer gloom.

"I'm afraid I haven't the authority," he answered.

Martin ran to the door; but Butterfield was already halfway to his car. The whirr of the motor mocked Martin as he sprinted for the guardhouse; the car was away long before he could get there.

"Give me my bag," he said resignedly to the sentry; the chase was still on.

The soldier stared at him.

"But, Sergeant," said he, "the captain took it!"

"What!"

"'E saw it lyin' there in the doo-way and 'e said 'twas 'is, so I gave it ter 'im," the man explained.

Butterfield had scored again. What was it the man with the pear-shaped head had said—"a last resort"? Something about making sure, out on the desert with no one to stop him?

The car was gone. Butterfield was gone. And—he had the black bag and its dreadful, deadly contents with him!

BUT Martin was not the man to waste time in silly repining.

Butterfield was away to a good start, but he might still be overtaken. Martin swung down the dark road toward the Canal at a steady distance-eating double.

His destination was the car-ferry dock. Here, if at all, Butterfield's motor-car must have crossed the Canal, and it was here that he must

make inquiries. He reached the railway station without further incident, picked his way across the tracks, and found himself at the ferry-slip.

The ferry itself was just churning back from the east bank after completing a trip. A half dozen native laborers lounged about waiting to secure it when it arrived, under the glare of arc-lights and the bored eye of a corporal of sappers.

TO the corporal, Martin addressed himself.

"Take any automobiles over last trip?" he inquired.

The corporal detached a cigarette from his lower lip, pushed his sun helmet back on his head, and nodded.

"Yes," he said. "We took one—a big black one, with a black driver an' two officers."

So Butterfield was on his way, had crossed the Canal. He had companions, too. The enemy secret service certainly had a marvelous organization in Egypt.

Martin had no trouble in slipping aboard the ferry, and in a very short time it was churning its way back toward the eastern bank. On shore, an inquiry from a railway man elicited the information that the black car had gone up the main road leading toward Base Headquarters. Alongside this road ran the main line of railway, passing through the camp and out into the desert.

Martin climbed the slope to the top of the east bank and started along the indicated road. He intended to go first to Headquarters, report himself to the Base Intelligence Officers, and if possible, get a motorcycle on which to pursue Butterfield. Not that he had much faith in the ability of a motorcycle to overtake an automobile on the loose sand of the desert trail. But it was the best expedient he could think of at the moment.

All around him, as he hurried, were

sputtering arc-lights and the life and bustle of the great Base, working night and day at never-ending tasks. But Martin, intent upon his quest, paid little heed to the busy scene.

So it was that he almost missed the very thing he sought. He had no idea that Butterfield was still in El Kantara. He had pictured him as speeding out into the desert, intent upon his devil's work somewhere along the pipe-line. Then at the door of a low wooden building, Martin's eyes chanced on the black car—unmistakable under the yellow glow of an incandescent. Martin stopped a passing soldier.

"What's this building?" he asked.

"The Provost Marshal's office," was the answer.

Of course! Butterfield would have to have a pass to take the car eastward from the base along the main line of communication, since otherwise he would be stopped by outposts and patrols everywhere. He was doubtless in there now, impressing some young A.P.M. with his cleverly forged credentials, and getting a pass that would take him on his way.

Martin hesitated. His first impulse was to rush in and tell the A.P.M. the whole story; but suppose he wasn't believed? Suppose Butterfield, with his forged papers and glib tongue, could talk his way free again?

NO, Martin's original idea was the best one. He knew that the Base Intelligence Officer would listen to him.

He had better hurry on to the Base Headquarters, locate the Intelligence Officer, and do the thing properly, without any chance for a slip-up this time.

But he must be quick—must stop Butterfield before the latter got out of the base area. There was always delay and red-tape over issuing

special passes—anyway, it was Martin's best chance.

Martin began to run.

He had covered perhaps a third of the distance to Headquarters when, to his horror, he heard behind him the hum of an approaching car. He stopped, looked back, saw its twin headlights swiftly overtaking him.

WAS it Butterfield's car? Martin could not tell. He stepped to the side of the road, and a moment later it shot by. Yes, it was the spy! Before Martin could decide what to do, another pair of approaching headlights showed up; but this time they were coming along the railroad which paralleled the road. He heard the sputtering exhaust of a powerful locomotive, gathering speed as it dragged its heavy train up the slight grade from the yard.

Martin jerked out pencil and notebook, and with frantic speed scribbled a note to the Base Intelligence Officer. This he entrusted to an Egyptian laborer who chanced by. Then Martin jumped across the road to the side of the track just as the train came thundering along.

At first he thought it was going too fast; but he was desperate, and as the front of the engine came up to him, Martin was running at full speed parallel with the track.

He flung himself at the great steel monster, felt his fingers close in a death-grip around the bar of a handhold. His arms were almost jerked from their sockets, but his foot came up and found the narrow step. The next moment, panting with his exertions, Martin was sitting on the bumper of the engine between the headlights, looking out ahead along the twin lines of steel.

The exhaust from the stack came faster and faster—the train was gathering speed. The last buildings of the Base rumbled past; ahead was

only the open desert, silent under the stars.

CHAPTER V

Desert Justice

ON the left of the track was the road—the only road which a motor car could use—and beyond the road, paralleling both road and track, ran the humped ridge of the pipe line.

Occasionally, as the train sped on, Martin saw the gaunt upright figure of a standpipe, where once some temporary camp or outpost had been. These standpipes and their various outlets had been fitted with screw caps when abandoned, so that in case of need they could be used again.

Martin began straining his eyes, watching the road for the first sign of the motor car. The Royal Engineers and the Egyptian labor corps had done their best with that road; but with loose sand continually blowing over it, it could not be kept in shape to allow automobiles to travel it at high speed. Martin knew that the train must soon overtake Butterfield; it was for this reason that he had risked his life to board it.

Far ahead the beam of the headlight flickered on a dark object. Was it the car? Martin drew his gun and held it ready in his right hand, while his left fumbled for the angle-cock of the air-hose connection under the front coupling. One twist of that angle-cock would let the air out of the train line and set the brakes.

Nearer and nearer—now Martin realized that whatever the dark object was, it was standing still.

Near—yes, it was the car, pulled up at the left side of the road. Beyond it, Martin saw the upright figure of a standpipe and the dim forms of moving men. He twisted the angle-cock sharply upward.

There was a hiss of escaping air and a succession of shrieking, ham-

mering jerks as the brakes took hold. The speed of the train was checked so abruptly that Martin was flung from the bumper out onto the rough ballast of the track. He bounded to his feet unhurt, went racing across the road.

The orange flame of a pistol-shot stabbed the night. One of the lights of the motor car had been left on so that the men could see what they were doing at the standpipe; Martin, himself hidden by the darkness, had all the advantage. He began firing, steadily, as he advanced.

One man went down with a shriek of agony. Another started to run for the car, but a bullet caught him halfway, and he went sprawling in the sand. A third, dodging out of the path of light, managed to reach the car.

The motor roared under the pressure of a desperate foot on its accelerator. The car leaped ahead and was gone, just as several of the train crew with flashlights and lanterns came running up. Martin wasted no useless shots on the fleeing car, but ran straight to the standpipe. Close to the point where it entered the ground to make its connection with the main pipe-line, lay the body of an Egyptian in chauffeur's livery, bleeding from two wounds in the body. Beside him, open, was the little black bag.

MARTIN snatched it up. It was empty.

He grabbed a flashlight from one of the trainmen and sent its ray dancing around the ground at the foot of the standpipe.

Something glittered: glass—a test-tube. Gingerly Martin picked it up. It appeared to be quite empty; the seal was gone. There was another—and another. They were scattered all about. Martin swung his light back to the standpipe itself and with a chill of horror saw that the cap had

been removed from one of the short branches on its side.

The deadly contents of those test-tubes had been dumped into the opening—there could be no doubt of that!

It was a full minute before Martin had room in his brain for anything but consternation. Then reason began to assert itself once more.

Since the cap was off, why was the water not flowing from the open connection, under the terrific pressure of the great pumps at El Kantara? He turned the ray of the flashlight directly into the round black three-inch circle of the opening, and the light flashed on water but an inch or so from the rim. The standpipe was certainly full of water.

Martin ran his light up and down, and near the bottom saw the reason. The standpipe was cut off from the main pipeline by a large valve, and the valve was closed!

GRADUALLY Martin began to see what had happened. On reaching the standpipe, Butterfield and his accomplices had opened the valve and allowed the standpipe to fill with water. They then closed the valve, cutting off the pressure from the main pipe-line, and had removed the cap of one of the connections. Thereupon they had poured the horrible contents of their test-tubes into this opening.

If they had been given time, they would have replaced the cap and again opened the valve, allowing the infected water in the standpipe to mingle with the main stream, with the result that within a few hours every storage tank and reservoir east of that point would have been swarming with myriads of deadly bacteria.

Martin had been just in time.

He turned back toward the road; he had an odd idea that the second man he had shot wasn't Butterfield.

His flashlight found the prostrate figure easily enough, and the native trainmen turned it over at his orders.

The cold ray of the electric torch shone full on the dead features of Colonel Forrest!

IN the office of the Base Commandant at El Kantara, the commandant himself, his Intelligence Officer, and Martin sat about a table strewn with papers and reports. Martin had just concluded his story of the events of the preceding night.

"You see, sir," he said to the commandant, "we had suspected this Colonel Forrest from the very first. Army Intelligence in England had learned that his true name was Forstner, and that he was of German extraction, although he had been all his life a medical officer in the British Army. He was one of those agents whom the patient and far-seeing German Secret Service planted in the British military forces years before the war, in the hope that some day they might prove useful.

"He was, of course, really a graduate in medicine, as was Butterfield, though Butterfield later gave up a promising practice in surgery to become one of the most dangerous agents of the *Wilhelmstrasse*. Forrest was aiding and protecting Butterfield all the way through—but the thing had to be proved.

"I was selected to handle the case because, being an American by birth, I was unlikely to be recognized as an Intelligence Officer of His Majesty's Army. It was necessary for me to come out here in the character of a sergeant of the Australian Army Medical Corps and actually to perform duties of that grade for months, never communicating in any way with my superiors in the Intelligence Service or giving any hint that I was other than I seemed.

"These fellows are damnably

clever; one slip might have betrayed everything. When we discovered that they were trying to poison the water-supply system, the remainder of my task was comparatively simple."

THE general commanding the Base at El Kantara nodded a little wearily.

"You have done very well, Captain Martin," he said, "and I shall mention you especially in my report on the conclusion of this affair."

He rustled the papers on the table, and went on:

"The chemist at the filter plant has sent me an analysis of the contents of those cases. They contained a compound which he described as the most deadly and concentrated poison that he had ever encountered. You have had some narrow squeaks, Captain Martin. These fellows came very close to getting away with their devilish scheme on two or three occasions."

"I'm only sorry that Butterfield managed to make his escape last night, sir," Martin said. "It is the one thing that spoils my satisfaction."

"He can't get far," the Base Intelligence Officer declared. "The alarm is out for him and his car. If he stays on the road, they'll nab him at the first outpost; if he leaves the car and takes to the desert, the mounted patrols will have him in no time. You'll see!"

This confident statement was not immediately justified. It was three

days later when a perspiring orderly found Martin in his temporary quarters at El Kantara and summoned him again to the office of the Base Commandant. As before, the general and his Intelligence Officer were present. A little to one side, standing stiffly at attention, was a bearded *dafadar* of Indian native cavalry.

"The officer commanding at Romani sent this sergeant in to make his report in person," the Base Intelligence Officer said, with a wave of his hand toward the dark-faced *dafadar*. "I wanted you to hear it, Captain Martin. It will interest you."

AT the general's nod, the *dafadar* began his story. He had been in command of a patrol of Punjabi troopers. They had come upon the black motor car abandoned on the road and had followed the tracks of a man on foot out into the desert. Five miles from the road, they had found the man lying on the sand, quite dead. The body had been brought in and identified as that of the German spy known as Captain Butterfield.

"And of what had he died, *dafadar*?" the Base Commandant then asked.

Even before the turbaned N. C. O. opened his lips to reply, Martin instinctively sensed what the answer would be. His lips moved in a whispered tribute to the eternal fitness of things.

"He died, General *Sahib*," the *dafadar* said impressively, "of thirst!"

NEXT MONTH: An Astounding Novelette Packed with Action!

WORLD *of* DOOM

By RAY CUMMINGS

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*The Glamorous, Astonishing City of Flaming Swords—
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With Denizens of the Unknown!*

By CAPTAIN JOHN POWERS

CHAPTER I

A Pledge with Death

I SEARCHED Professor Gregory's face carefully. I knew, though he held himself staunchly upright, with the cold sweat streaming from his face, that he had only a very short time to live. Malignant malaria might carry him off at any moment. He had to talk rapidly.

He had, in a few brief minutes, turned back the hands of the centuries almost six thousand years, by Biblical reckoning!

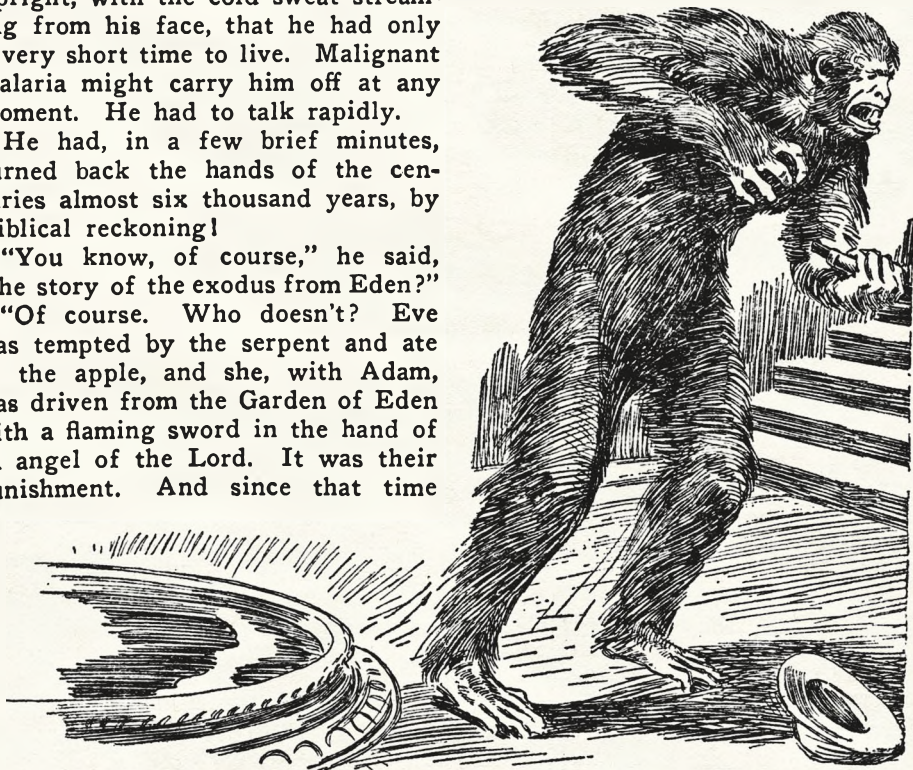
"You know, of course," he said, "the story of the exodus from Eden?"

"Of course. Who doesn't? Eve was tempted by the serpent and ate of the apple, and she, with Adam, was driven from the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword in the hand of an angel of the Lord. It was their punishment. And since that time

nobody has ever been able to locate the idyllic garden of the first man and woman."

Professor Gregory leaned forward tensely.

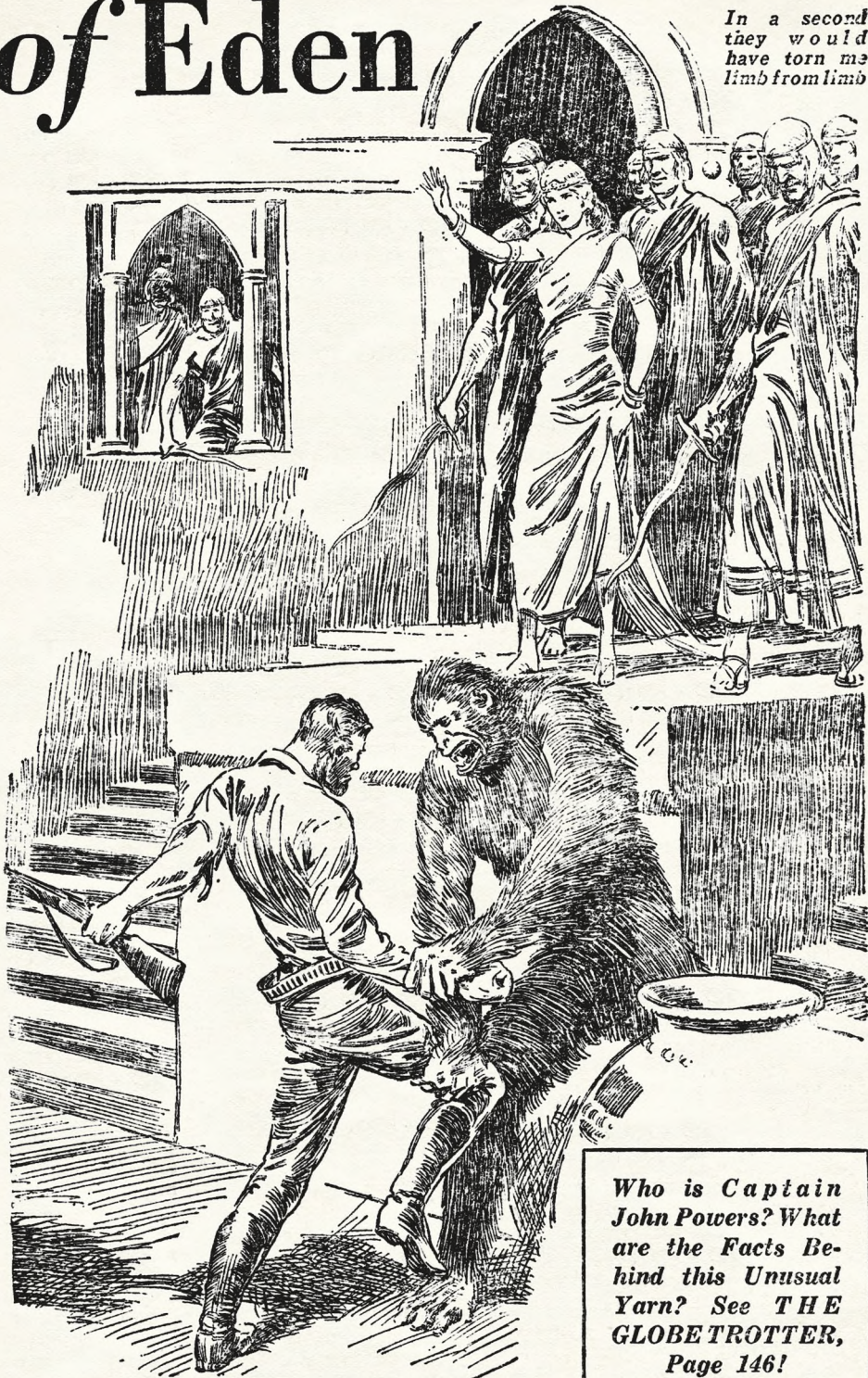
"I know where the Garden is!" he



A Startling, Amazing True Experience Story!

of Eden

*In a second
they would
have torn me
limb from limb*



**Who is Captain
John Powers? What
are the Facts Be-
hind this Unusual
Yarn? See *THE
GLOBETROTTER*,
Page 146!**

told me. "And I know that if Adam and Eve were driven out—and I would never deny Holy Writ after all I have seen—they crept back later, or their children did, and remained in the Garden until their death, leaving it to their descendants to the end of time. They have occupied it uninterruptedly ever since."

NO, the man wasn't mad. He had taken an expedition into the vast lands of Yucatan—lands which were guarded by Indians who never allowed outsiders to spend the night in their domain. Now, the only survivor of the expedition, he came out claiming he had found the Garden of Eden!

I suppose I was the first person to see Gregory and not to laugh at him. I had a hunch, which was why I had called on him in his hotel. Gregory was pitifully eager to talk. The ridicule he had received at the hands of his fellow scientists had eaten into his very soul. If ever a man had been sentenced to die of a broken heart, that man was Professor Alexis Gregory.

"You believe me?" he asked. "I tell you I have seen the city that stands in the Garden of Eden, inhabited by men, women and children as white as you or I. The city is surely the oldest in the Western Hemisphere. It is like a monster beehive, but marked by domes and minarets which glisten like gold in the sun—because they are gold! Their leader is a first daughter of Eve! Their symbol is the flaming sword.

"The city rests in a deep valley which is like an amphitheater. Outside of the valley, guarded on all sides, at every approach, by lost descendants of the Aztecs, are the hills which no outlander, except myself, has ever passed and lived. I have been in, and have come out. I returned to find someone to take up my work and prove my story; I

found shrugs and disbelief. They think me mad. I've been through enough to make me mad."

I looked at him again, and he wasn't mad. My heart hammered with excitement. Gold beyond computing! Diamonds, too, mined through the centuries from the changeless hills!

"I know all about you," he told me finally. "I would like you to go into the place, study it, confirm my stories of it, and make preparations to enter with a scientific expedition, open it to the world. You'll do it?"

It didn't take me long to make a decision. To rediscover Eden! To look upon a city forever lost to man!

I extended my hand to him. He caught my fingers and clung. His eyes stared into mine with fierce intensity. Then, slowly, his fingers relaxed, he sat back—and Professor Gregory was dead.

At that moment, I had the feeling that nothing in the world could stop me from keeping faith with him. I had clasped hands with death and made an agreement.

I STARED at the dead man for a moment. Then I rose to my full six feet, and went to the small black handbag which he had explained held all his data and whatever money I would need. The whole thing was in a big envelope, marked with my name. Gregory had known I would accept his proposal.

I shivered a little, recalling what he had told me of the gift of prophecy possessed by these people. Had he had some of it himself?

I counted the money and whistled softly to myself. There were forty new bills of one thousand dollars each. Enough to keep a man in comfort for a lifetime, but for one thing—that potential storehouse of wealth beyond man's wildest imagining. If I hadn't known of the professor's golden city, this forty thousand

would not have seemed, by comparison, like a few pennies jingling in the bank of a child.

I called the hotel authorities, reported the death of Gregory. As soon as the medical examiner pronounced his death natural, I slipped out. Times Square seemed a place apart, somehow alien, for beyond and through the lights I could see that sun-drenched city of gleaming roofs!

Making inquiries, I found that the first steamer for Puerto Cortez left in three-quarters of an hour. I headed straight for the docks. I had money to purchase what I needed. By going alone, and immediately, I guarded my secret.

THE steamer fairly crawled southward. Many times I cursed myself for not having flown. But I spent the time planning ahead. Of the Yucatan jungle I knew only that it was filled with snakes, poisonous orchids, ocelots, jaguars. But inland, beyond the valley of lost rivers, I knew nothing of the land. Neither did any other known living white man.

I docked at Puerto Cortez, hurried from the steamer, and bumped into a short white man.

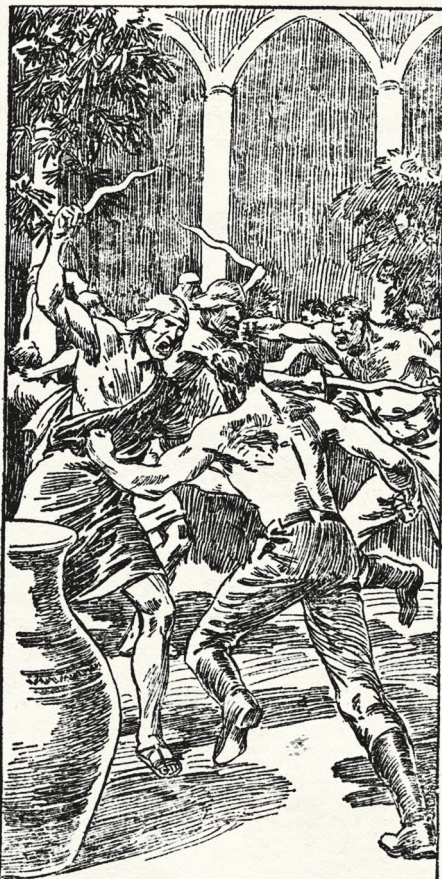
He had blue eyes, fair skin, and yellow hair. The bumping, I thought, was accidental. I started to apologize.

"To go into Eden is to die!" he said softly.

I didn't stop to think. I just grabbed at the man. But many people were moving down the gangplank, jostling me, and he slipped through my fingers. It wasn't a retreat, for there was nothing in the man's eyes even remotely resembling fear.

His eyes warned me. They were malevolent.

I started after him, but he moved away. To run after him would be to court too much attention, to bring



Scores of men poured forth, fiery swords gleaming

my name into prominence. I didn't want any publicity, so I had to let him get away.

How could this man have been there, ready?

How could he have known of my coming?

Dread suspicion gave me cold chills. The "people of Eden," Gregory had said, could see things at a distance! Absurd!

But Gregory had believed in it himself.

The man on the dock had known of Gregory, of course; had seen stories of his death in the newspapers, stories in which my name had been mentioned. Knowing Gregory, the fellow must have guessed what Gregory would do, and had

watched incoming steamers for my appearance.

I wasn't ready to accept people who could see things at a distance. There were plenty of things in the world beyond my comprehension—but then I remembered: had not Jehovah said to Adam and Eve:

"But the tree of knowledge ye shall not eat of it!"

"I must be crazy," I told myself, "to believe in this nonsense!" But what if, as Gregory had said, the first man and woman had come back in the olden time, and eaten of the tree?

My thoughts were leading me into all sorts of mental absurdities. But I couldn't get that white fellow and his warning out of my mind. It stuck to me, and his face went with me in memory, during all my preparations for the trek into the south.

First, I found a beachcomber who had once fought with me in a revolution in Nicaragua. The man's name was Mestizo Jaime, and he might have been any nationality.

"Into Yucatan?" he asked when I told him. "Sure, I'll go. I've heard a lot of stuff about that place. Any fighting?"

"Absolutely," I replied.

"Then I'm on."

"You may get killed," I said.

"What of it? I can't live forever."

"If you are captured you may be tortured or sacrificed to some heathen gods."

He grinned. His mouth was full of gold teeth, his only assets.

"They'll know they've been in a fight!"

TWO days later, with a group of twelve additional men and four burros, we started out of Puerto Cortez and headed straight toward the heart of Yucatan, following a route Gregory's notes had laid out for us. Our crew contained seven blacks and five white men, the latter beach-

comber friends of Mestizo Jaime whom he had gathered together.

From the very beginning we had our work cut out for us. The jungle was matted, and we had to cut our way through with machetes. Mosquitoes descended on us in countless hordes, filling our veins with malaria. I dosed everybody with quinine, including myself, until our heads rang like temple bells. Only the burros did not seem to mind.

MESTIZO JAIME ruled the bearers with a heavy hand. They obeyed him without question.

"Get the lead out!" I kept urging them. "This is a race against death!"

At last, after what seemed endless hardships, and dangers which had taken the lives of two of our men, we stood at the uttermost limit ever reached by any expedition. This was the jumping-off place. I lifted my eyes and peered ahead, debating with myself. That warning rang in my ears louder than ever:

"To go into Eden is to die!"

As I stood beside a tree, scanning the way ahead, I heard a light thud. I turned, startled. An arrow had imbedded itself in the tree. Nobody saw it but Mestizo Jaime, who happened to be with me. There was a piece of paper tied around the haft of the arrow. I unfolded it.

Amazingly, the message was in English, a mere scrap of words that meant nothing. The paper was torn, and ragged. Then I recognized the handwriting. It was that of Professor Gregory! It said:

northeast corner of the Garden of Eden.

It looked to be a page torn from a diary. In itself it meant nothing. The arrow was the warning. The handwriting told me our unseen watchers knew who we were and why we were there.

Mestizo Jaime and I looked at each other in silence. The jungle

was suddenly silent as the grave, as though all the world had paused to listen, and to wait for what would happen next.

There was nothing miraculous about this, I reassured myself. Gregory had kept notes while a prisoner in the city about which he had told me. To himself he had probably called the place the Garden of Eden, and this note was merely something he had written to remind himself of some spot in the city, some location perhaps, or some hiding place.

"Well, Jaime," I said, "do we go on or go back?"

"What do you say?" he answered. I gritted my teeth.

"I go on if I have to go alone."

"I go with you," he said simply. "Let's put it up to the others."

I took the arrow and went back to our resting men. I spoke to them briefly.

"To go on may mean that every last one of you will be wiped out. To go back means only to get through the dangers of the jungles—the normal ones. To go on means plenty of money for you if you live. To go back means to forfeit any rights in whatever this expedition develops. What do you say? Remember, now, once we have traveled ahead for just one hour, you're committed to the trip, no matter what happens. It will be too late to turn back. I give you fifteen minutes to decide."

TO a man—so well had Mestizo Jaime chosen our crew—they agreed then and there to go ahead, and we started.

I expected almost anything to happen. But nothing did, as we went deeper and deeper into the jungles which now mounted toward the peaks of the second range behind the mountains ramparting the sea.

We built a barricade that night and set double guards. The jungle

was silent. I slept. I wakened to hear a mad, wild chattering, in which there was nothing that sounded human. I jumped from my hammock, thinking we had been attacked.

Three men, who had been sleeping were dead. Over the nostrils of each was a poisonous orchid—the Midnight Lady!

CHAPTER II

Lancets of Gold

BUT as I had already told my men, it was too late to turn back, nor would I have done so, even had I been offered all the gold about which Gregory had spoken. I knew that every last man might die before we ever glimpsed the Garden, but that didn't deter me, either.

We pushed on, after burying the three dead men, as we had buried the others who had died. And now I knew why the jungle had not showered us with enemies. They were around us all the time, lying in wait, prepared to destroy us as they chose. I had walked my men straight into their trap. As we advanced, the blacks, with flaming torches of wood, led the way. They fought at the lianas with machetes until sweat poured from their laboring bodies. When the ever-expected onslaught did not come, I cursed our unseen enemies with all the evil words I knew. Not to attack was worse than any attack could have been. The suspense was ghastly.

It was around two o'clock in the morning when we lost our first burro, but we couldn't blame that on human enemies. A boa constrictor swinging from a tree, and looking like a liana, wrapped himself around the animal and squeezed it to death before we could kill the reptile. Mestizo Jaime shot the snake. It might just as well have gotten one of our men.

The boa, however, didn't fall onto

the ground after Jaime's bullets had smashed its head. It merely hung straight down from the fatal tree limb, its loosening folds dropping the contorted burro to the ground.

I looked up and shivered at what I saw. The most dangerous folds of the boa constrictor, the last few feet of the tail, which he had to fasten onto something to bring his other coils into play, were fastened about that tree limb with a liana.

He had been placed in our trail by some human agency.

He couldn't thus have trapped himself.

"They must be all around us!" I told Mestizo Jaime.

I looked wildly into the blackness of the jungle. To me, now, it was peopled with the very imps of Hades. As we went on, we watched for all sorts of traps, for anything the mind of man might imagine. The snake had gotten under my skin, for it made me think again of Eden, in which Eve had listened to the evil counsel of a snake and been banished for her failure to resist.

"Keep going!" I yelled at the men, already traveling their best.

NEAR morning we stood on a cleared space on a shoulder of the last mountain range westward, and looked into the south and east. The sky, in that direction, was streaked by a strange glow. The glow was as if it came from a city lighted with electricity, but I knew that was absurd. Such a glow, I told myself, might have been caused by a vast flame reflecting itself from some smooth substance, say a mighty glass reflector.

Or it might have been reflected from burnished gold!

Gold going to my head: but in that direction, I knew, was the place we sought, if Gregory had been as sane as I thought him, and if his maps and notes were even approxi-

mately correct. We had followed those directions minutely.

That the light was of human origin I knew before I took another step, for the glow suddenly vanished as though it had been switched off, and the night sky, where it had been, became as black as Erebus. I judged the light had been three miles away—three Yucatan jungle miles, each of which was as far as the moon. But I hammered at my men.

WHEN morning came, after hours during which I watched the sky for the reappearance of the light, we stood on another eminence and looked down into a valley. Gregory had said that the true valley was guarded by Indians. We saw no such guards.

On the valley floor—and what a fortress the valley was!—were tumbled masses of rock, which were shaped in what seemed to be beehives of mighty proportions, or like pyramids with abutments of some sort. The buildings looked as old as time itself. They covered the valley floor almost to its edge, where the hills rose. In between them were growing things, gorgeous foliage born of the tropics.

Here was a paradise. It didn't seem to be inhabited. I saw no living thing that moved—and yet, as I looked, the sweat burst forth on my whole body. I trembled and was afraid. Not afraid of anything I could touch, but afraid of a nameless something I couldn't comprehend.

A warning had come to me from this place. I hadn't heeded it. Yet here was power, plainly indicated, which dwarfed my own to pigmy size. Had I been able to conceive of this place, I wouldn't have dared to move against it with less than an army!

There must be people somewhere, for this city showed evidence of in-

tense, inspired cultivation. Near the abutment of one of the buildings I saw something move. It seemed to be a huge man, but it was gone so quickly I couldn't be sure. It was as though it had caught my glance and ducked back.

And then—suddenly—the sun came out of the east, rising like a red ball of fire, and splashed its light over the roofs of the city. I gasped. I couldn't seem to catch my breath, for when the sun's rays struck the city, the city's roofs struck back at the sun with lancets of gold that were brilliant as those of the sun itself. The whole city seemed to glow, a golden glow of unimaginable splendor.

Were those roofs sheathed with gold? I think my men must have thought so, for they swore softly, in low voices, and their eyes did not blink as they stared, as though they feared to miss something for an infinitesimal second.

They got out of hand. They forgot hardships and warnings, and acted like men who had gone mad.

"Take it easy!" I cautioned. But they paid me no heed.

THEY bunched themselves and charged down the mountainside. I wouldn't be left behind. After all, this was the place I had set out for, and I was going down into it at any cost. I became as bad as the rest; I raced after them, took the lead. All of us gripped our weapons. The burros with our duffel and our food were left behind, forgotten.

"Look to your guns!" I snapped.

At the beginning of the city, I managed to call a halt. Before us were streets. There were spots in their cobblestones which glistened when the sun struck them as the roofs of the city did. And there were spots where the ground was not covered by stones at all. In these bare spots showed the footprints of

human beings—bare feet, and feet covered by sandals.

"Good God!" It was an exclamation, almost a prayer, from Mestizo Jaime.

There were people here, all right, but where were they? Not one was visible. I followed Jaime's gaze and read the answer. On the hill where we had stood were men aplenty. They seemed to be soldiers in extended order. I studied them more closely, and knew they were Indians, the guardians of the passes Gregory had mentioned.

YET they had allowed us to pass through. I felt a chill at that. It meant that we were to be handled by the people of the city; that there was no escape for us. I followed the rim of the valley with my eyes, and knew that every foot of the way out was guarded—by men who merely stood, dots against the jungle, and stared at us in silence, bows and arrows gripped in their murderous hands.

"We're trapped," I said flatly. "But we're still alive. Nothing shall stop us!"

I sent two men ahead as point, to give us warning if enemies waited around the next corner. I watched the two men go. They turned a corner, moving with utmost caution. Then we advanced. But when we reached that corner, no more than a minute later, the two advance men had vanished—and there were spots of blood on the cobblestones.

I looked at Mestizo Jaime, and he looked at me. Jaime grinned. He would have grinned at anything. But I didn't feel like grinning.

"Listen, Jaime," I said. "I don't intend to be played with. Here we stay until something breaks."

We leaned against a wall which seemed to shut off a dwelling of some sort, and waited. We waited for two minutes by my watch. Noth-

ing happened. Then, something did. It was a simple thing, until one recalled that two of our men had disappeared as though miraculously snatched into nothingness.

The something was the musical sound of a bell. I listened, and my head swam. The earth seemed to whirl and spin under my feet, like the deck of a boat in a heavy sea. No need to tell me of what metal, or what alloy, that bell was made.

"Listen to it," I told Jaime.

He nodded, his eyes wide. He, too, had guessed.

The bell was made of gold. It was being rung by a man, or woman, of great power. Its great volume penetrated all the mysterious city, all the valley. It was threatening, savage, commanding.

Then a cry rose from the hills—the guardians making answer: an answer which traveled all around the valley's rim, a cry that chilled the blood.

With a creaking sound, many doors opened. White faces peered forth. I looked back the way we had come, between high walls—and the way behind us had been closed by a third wall which had dropped silently into place, or had been raised into place from the ground.

CHAPTER III

Moving Walls

TO say that we were startled, would be to put it mildly. The way back was effectively blocked. We whirled around again, in a body—and there a fourth wall had risen. We were now blocked in by four walls, all of them higher than we could reach with our fingertips when extended to their greatest reach. And two of the walls were closing in on us, to smash us out flat.

The slow moving of the two walls reminded me of the ponderous mov-

ing of the leaves of the great Panama Canal locks. Those walls were heavy; they must have weighed tons. My men were swearing. Their eyes were big with fright.

I stared from one moving wall to the other—and my stomach turned. Those walls were stained significantly with gruesome black splotches which could mean but one thing: other men had seen this treatment before. I fancied I could even see their shapes, painted by the stains of their own blood, on the jaw-like walls closing in to crush us.

THE ironical part of the whole thing was this: we were going to be crushed by gold! The two walls were literally plated with it, and it glistened even through the hideous stains. It was as though the people here had known why we came, and were mocking us by showing us pounds and pounds of gold, before that precious metal spread us out flat and killed us. I could have laughed hysterically over the irony of it—but some action was necessary. I hated to die like a rat caught in a trap.

"Get hold of yourselves!" I yelled at my terrified men. "Form for wall scaling!"

Mestizo Jaime quickly took charge, dividing them into four parties, one for each wall. He formed his men in the usual pyramid, facing the wall that closed on us from the front. I took three negroes and the wall to my right, which was a fixed wall. We climbed up. Jaime got onto the moving wall with his men. Two of them sat astride, reaching down their hands to one man who remained at the base. He took two steps backward, and prepared to run and jump, holding up his hands for his comrades to grasp.

"Hurry!" I yelled at him.

But he missed his grip, and by this time there was no chance left to

jump again. The closing walls were within two feet of each other.

The man himself knew he couldn't make it. His hands were uplifted as though in supplication. His eyes were starting from his head as he watched the tops of the two walls—those tops now so close together that he could see them both at once, five feet above his head.

"Goldlemighty!" moaned Jaime.

Then the opposing walls touched their victim, while his arms were still stretched to their utmost above his head. I stood there, horrified, turned to stone. I wanted to turn my head away and could not. The walls were flattening him out. The resistance of his body did not stay their slow march at all.

A ghastly scream burst from his lips, rose in a terrible agony and died away into the silence of death.

Even then the walls continued to close. When they finally stopped, one could not have inserted a finger between them at the top.

No wonder there were stains on those walls!

"Run!" yelled someone. "Get away from the walls!"

I REGAINED control of myself, I whirled atop my perch to look about me. Things had gone bad indeed for us. Mestizo Jaime's man had dropped beyond the wall they had scaled, or so it looked. I was alone on my wall, for the three whom I had helped out of those ghastly jaws had dropped into a sort of compound beyond.

Now they were racing like madmen toward a tall door in the face of a building. I don't know that I blamed them, for the jambs of that door shone in the morning sun like a thousand eyes.

"Where in God's name did they come from?" I asked myself, as I looked at those eyes.

Diamonds? I didn't know. Rubies?

Perhaps. Whatever they were, whether precious or semi-precious, there were hundreds—thousands—of them set into the stones of that doorway. Were my men racing to twist those stones loose—or were they racing for the door merely because it seemed to suggest a way of escape?

I soon had the answer, for they yanked the door open. They dashed through it and the door slid closed silently behind them. Only silence answered when I shouted,

"Where the devil are you?"

I STEPPED out onto the wall over which Mestizo Jaime had gone, looked down the "street" where, a few minutes before, we had stood before the walls began to advance. Mestizo Jaime and the three with him had vanished also. Then I stepped to the wall which had been to the left, peered over into another courtyard. It was empty of any living soul.

The rest of my men, save only the one whom the wall-paws had caught, had been swallowed up by this beautiful city of gold and precious stones. Prisoners? Who knew, save the inhabitants of the place? I didn't know what to do next.

"Come and get me, too!" I shouted, but only silence answered.

I stepped back to the position on the right wall where I had watched the closing of the doors. I stood there because that spot alone somehow seemed to belong to me. It was little enough to possess, but it seemed oddly like a place of refuge.

"Where are my men?" I raved. "Where is Mestizo Jaime? I've found a city of gold, yet have not one person with whom to share it. And now that I have it, what good is it to me; what can I do with it?"

I gripped my rifle in readiness. I searched the city with angry, sick eyes. If I could spot so much as a moving body, I would fire. I would

teach these people to make a mock of me. But nowhere could I spy a living soul.

Well, one compound was as good as any other. I dropped into the one which had swallowed the three men who had scrambled out of the trap with me. And for the first time I was cognizant of the beauty of that compound. It was planted with all kinds of gorgeous flowers and shrubs, their odor sweet to the nostrils.

Then I stared down at the material of which the winding walks were composed, and felt a little sick. They were made of human bones worked into red sandstone, to form beautiful, brilliant mosaics—so that, I thought savagely, the owners of this place walked always in contempt over the enemies they had slain.

My bitter meditation was broken by a sound I had heard before: the ponderous grating sound of those moving walls. They were drawing apart, their work done. Warily, my rifle at the ready, I started for the door which had swallowed my three men.

I reached the door, and the two broad steps which led up to it. Both steps were slightly hollowed out in the center, as though by the footfalls of the centuries. Then my eyes flashed to the door jambs, and the glistening stones set into them. I wasn't an expert in stones, but I would have sworn that this one doorway—in a city which must have had thousands of doors—was worth a fortune in itself. And some of the stones had been cut! If only those stones could speak!

HOW could I pass the portals of this place? I studied the building. There seemed to be no windows; certainly none I could see. But there were cornices on the roof, and I was startled as I noted their decorations. Animals, done in metal, marched down the ridges on the roof.

Maybe the idea had come from China, or the traditional animals on Chinese roofs had been modeled after these, but there they were—ocelots, pumas, bush dogs—all done in gold, or gold plating! The place must be a shrine of some sort, or the home of some important dignitary.

I knocked and yelled: "Open up, whoever you are!"

Then I drew back the butt of my rifle and banged it savagely against the door, several times. The sound of the banging seemed to ring through the whole city. I heard it boom muffledly through the thick door.

THE banging gave me an idea. I stepped aside, smashed my rifle butt against one of the stones stuck into the doorjamb at the height of my eyes. The stone jumped out with the force of my blow. It was a many-faceted ruby, larger than a big man's thumb-ball.

I thrust it into my pocket, and was instantly conscious of an aura of menace that seemed to flow out at me from all over the city. I could feel thousands of eyes on me. Then, the door slid open noiselessly and I stepped across the threshold and into a room that was as light as day, because the sun came through great skylights in the roof.

Reaching to the roof from the floor was a mighty black figure. It might have been a statue of Buddha, but for one thing—the body of it was covered with coarse black hair at least two inches in length. Directly beneath it, and about four feet from the floor, was a stone basin. Here was a mighty idol to whom the inhabitants of this place made sacrifice.

I had ghastly proof of this, for I was staring, horrified, at such a sacrifice. Lying at either end of the great sacrificial basin, their headless necks slanting into it, their bodies

nude and bathed in the brilliant light of the sun, were two white men. They were my two point men who had vanished so mysteriously!

Could this ghastly place be the Garden of Eden in very fact? If it were, then the sons of Adam who had crept back into it, forsworn by their God, must have forsworn Him in their turn, setting up in His place this mighty black monster whom only human blood would satisfy.

I did a foolish thing, then. I raised my rifle to my shoulder and fired twice, aiming at where the thing's heart would have been had it been semi-human as it seemed.

The thunderous echoes of my firing fairly rocked the place. The result was immediate and horrible.

CHAPTER IV

Sons of Adam?

FROM behind the figure, coming from right and left, lumbered two huge creatures, larger than the biggest man I had ever seen. They looked like apes. They looked like giant negroes. They looked like either, neither, both. Their little red eyes were fixed on me with dreadful intensity. They were tiny replicas of the statue into which I had fired.

With arms outstretched, they plunged at me. I yelled and fired at the foremost. I heard the bullet smash into his body, but the thing came on. His huge hands grabbed my rifle and wrested it from me. In savage anger the maddened brute brought it down across his chest and bent the steel barrel double.

Then both brutes had me down. In a second they would have torn me limb from limb, but there came an interruption. Scores of men, all perfect specimens, poured into the vast audience hall in front of the black statue. They were led by a girl dressed in something white which

looked like a Roman toga, her golden hair drawn back from her forehead with a circlet of gold encrusted with gems that, even in my extremity, made my mouth water. The girl's feet, tiny and beautiful, were shod with sandals, made of golden thread, studded with brilliants.

Her face was grim as she said something in a strange tongue. Instantly the two monsters drew back from me, left me panting and weaponless. One of them lumbered to the sacrificial basin where the headless bodies lay, and dropped my ruined rifle into it. Perhaps it was his idea of offering up a sacrifice.

It was no surprise to me that the girl addressed me in English. Gregory had been a long time among these people, and there may have been others before him. Now, at this writing, I know that these people unsuspected, travel throughout the world as sailors, tradesmen, whatever other white men do, and learn all of its secrets; but that always they return home, and keep their own secrets and that of their abiding places. "What are you doing here?" the girl asked.

IT was a facer. But I could lose nothing by telling the truth.

"I come to open earth's most beautiful city to the world, which has too long been denied such loveliness," I answered.

Her face flamed with anger, the anger of a goddess who listens to words of defilement: "Who are you who dares thus to address the first daughter of the first woman?"

My heart almost stopped beating. What was this woman trying to tell me? That she was a first daughter of Eve?

"But that is impossible," I stammered. "By Biblical reckoning the first man passed to his rest over six thousand years ago."

"Yea, and the God of Heaven did

say to him that he should not eat of the Tree of Eternal Life, lest he, like Jehovah, live forever. But he did not forbid the daughters of him who was called Adam."

"And you did eat, and have lived since that time?" I gasped.

My brain whirled. Did this woman count her age in centuries, her beauty growing with each passing year? For she was the most gorgeous woman I had ever seen. It was absurd, impossible. But could I tell her that she lied?

"I come only to look upon wonders," I temporized.

"And wealth?" she asked.

"And wealth. What good is it to you, who never use it?"

"But it is ours. We mean to keep it. Down the centuries our people have guarded it, protected it. Men of your race have come to us, have despoiled us, have gone among us with flame and sword. We have never seen one of you in our own land that it did not mean death to many of our number."

"I did not come to bring death," I assured her.

"Then why did you come with weapons in your hands?"

I COULDN'T very well answer that one. Her beautiful face hardened. I guessed that she was either a priestess of the temple or the queen of the city.

"And you have violated the temple of our god, the Black Avenger," she continued. "You have raised your hands and your weapons against him. For this you will undergo the greatest punishment we can bring to bear against you. There is no escape. We are guarded by thousands of our Indian slaves. You cannot get through them. They obey us because we are their gods. Had you taken heed of our warnings, which began when you landed in Puerto Cortez, you would been spared this."

I bowed to her. "It is worth dying," I said, "to be able first to look upon a woman so beautiful."

But that didn't get across very well. Her face formed into an imperious, displeased frown.

"It is not proper thus to speak to Mené, priestess of the temple," she said. "It augments your punishment."

"I would not retract the statement if I could," I answered.

A MUTTER of protest rose from the lips of the men who stood around me, clear-complexioned men with blue eyes and the inevitable yellow hair, men who showed signs of unusual intelligence and courage.

"Let him die at once to appease the wrath of the god he has wronged!" one of them cried in English.

I don't think it would have surprised me had some of them addressed me in Latin or Sanscrit. I had discovered a highly cultured civilization, a lost tribe, a lost city, in the heart of a country which was almost on the doorstep of my own!

"Where are my people?" I asked.

"Those who live are prisoners," said Mené. "You will see them soon. They, too, have been condemned to sacrifice. But first they must work out their atonement."

It didn't take me long to understand what she meant by atonement, for half a dozen men laid violent hands on me. I was led from the temple by another way, into what appeared to be a vast hothouse. Towering beams upheld its quartzite roof, through which the rays of the sun came to bring life to the luxurious plants which filled the place.

All around the inside of the vast building were urns which must hold fires at night—and so I knew the meaning of the glow I had seen against the sky, though I wondered why the fires were lighted.

I was soon to know why, for in

that great hothouse I found my fellows laboring among the plants and flowers, stripped to the waist and clothed in sackcloth, and guarded by "angels of the Lord."

That phrase leaped to my mind without thought on my part. I couldn't fail to think of it, for the guards in this place were armed with long swords with snaky blades, and the swords were plated with gold that shone like the sun. When the swords moved, the blades seemed to be of living flame. With such a sword had the first man and woman been driven out of Eden!

I noticed that the backs of my men were bloody, but I didn't wonder about it long. Immediately I, too, was stripped to the waist, and then beaten across the back with the flat of half a dozen swords until I gritted my teeth in agony and fell to the floor on my face, with the sweet odor of gorgeous flowers in my nostrils.

"Oh, God," I prayed silently to myself, "save me from this torture."

LYING on my face for a moment, I was enabled to see under the plants in the storehouse—to see the thousands upon thousands of glistening eyes! Those eyes were precious stones, of a value beyond all computing, and they glistened because, as any man who is familiar with stones knows, life gives brilliance to gems. Actually, those who worked here, worked to keep the stones "living."

The breath of the plants, and the life of them in that hothouse, literally kept the stones alive—so that, since we were slaves of the plants, our hearts' blood, literally, fed the life of the stones.

Here, then, was the lost treasure of Eden. And there was no end to the power of Mené and her fellows, if they had, centuries ago, broken the divine command and eaten of the Tree of Knowledge!

They *must* have eaten, and so learned all things—learned where earth's treasures were to be found, so that their slaves might dig them out of the ground and lift them out of the sea, that all might be gathered here to be kept alive by the exhalations of the slave-tended plants. Since Mené knew the abiding place of all earth's treasures, she had but to fetch them at her whim, and this lost city probably held scores of hothouses like this one, each with its countless hoards of living stones tended by miserable slaves.

MY brain whirled with the fantastic suggestions of it all, even as the flat of the swords were laid across my quivering back.

The guards kicked me to my feet. I fought savagely, and instantly the points of two swords touched my throat. So much did they resemble living flame, I could almost feel heat emanating from those tips.

Then the guards drew back, and one called to me in English what I had to do. I fell to with my fellows. They were carrying huge rocks from a pile at one end of the place, building a big rock fountain in the center of the greenhouse. Each of those rocks would have required the work of three men to lift, but we were forced to lift them, roll them, move them any way we could, one man to each rock. And when we moved too slowly the swords were laid across our backs again.

That night the fires were lighted, turning the whole greenhouse into a blazing, sweating hell. We labored on, without food or water or rest, our eyeballs starting from our heads with pain.

Near morning a man fainted. He was Mestizo Jaime, who hadn't said a word to me since we had been thrown back together. He believed, now, as I believed, that the most fortunate man among us had been the

one whom the walls had crushed. They carried Mestizo Jaime away, and he did not come back.

I heard a whispering among the guards, whispering I was meant to hear, because it was in English. Mestizo Jaime had been taken to the temple to be offered as a sacrifice to the Black God when the morning sun sprayed the broad ebon breast of the statue with its lancets of gold.

Desperately, I attacked the guards, calling on my men to help me, intending to rescue Mestizo Jaime. I was beaten senseless for my pains.

When I regained consciousness I was working. I must have been working while in delirium, for there were just five men left of us. The others were gone. The five told me through horribly cracked and bleeding lips that the missing men had followed Mestizo Jaime, and that we were slated to go in turn. They were driving themselves to keep their feet, because even in this hell there was a certain sweetness in living.

I WAS to be the last, they told me, punished by watching my men being led to the slaughter, because I had brought them here and deserved the greatest punishment. I would go to the temple, too, in time—and for three whole days would be tortured, to lose my head finally in the sacrificial basin.

"We'll stop it," I said. "There must be a way out. We'll each take a guard when I signal by straightening my back. Take his sword away from him or die trying. Then split up, smash your way through the greenhouse walls, and every man will be for himself. Try to meet me on the coast where we started."

They agreed. In desperation they would have agreed to anything. It was days later—I have no idea how many—before I decided that the time was ripe. Near morning, when even

the guards were sleepy with watching, I gave the signal—or tried to. But I had stooped so long over my labors I could not straighten my back. I cried out in despair. Guards came running with lifted swords of flame. "Now, for the love of God!" I yelled. "This is the signal!"

CHAPTER V

Fact or Fable?

WITH hoarse shouts my men charged the guards with me. My hands were hard claws, broken and burning with blisters I expected to carry with me to my grave. I thrust out those claws at the first man to reach me. I was almost a madman, and he couldn't have stopped me with any weapon.

"Strike and die!" I yelled at him.

I struck aside his thrusting sword with my right hand, slid in, kept the sword away from my body with my left arm, and drove a savage blow to his jaw with my right. In that blow went all my hatred for the oppressors, all my eagerness to win free. The man went down.

It was every man for himself. One of my followers missed in his effort to push aside the sword of his attacker, and was run through the body. Next moment I had caught up the sword of the man I had downed, and had lopped off the head of the killer. I got savage satisfaction out of watching his head roll on the floor, as the heads of some of my men had rolled into the sacrificial basin.

I whirled back to the other four. They had somehow eluded the guards. Each was going off in a different direction.

"Follow me!" I yelled.

They didn't turn, didn't hear me. In the city outside I heard the commanding notes of the great golden bell, and knew that the denizens of the place were waking from sleep

and hurrying to aid our guards. I dashed for the nearest wall of the place and went through it head foremost, still bearing the flaming sword in my hand. I cut myself on the glass. Great slabs of it crashed down behind me. If I had been stayed for a second any one of those slabs would have cut me in two.

I dashed straight ahead. I didn't realize that I had managed at last to straighten my tortured back. I just ran. Shouts and cries were rising all over the city. From the hills surrounding the place came a bedlam of weird, far cries, as guardians of the passes shouted promises to their white gods that no prisoners would get past them.

I gritted my teeth and ran on. Once let me get atop one of the walls and I would make my escape, at least out of the city.

BUT the walls were high, too high to reach.

Then I thought of the hilt of my flaming sword, and as I ran I tore cloth from my rough garment, wrapped it about the flaming blade. When I came to the first wall I jumped, holding the blade in both hands, and tried to fasten the sword hilt over the wall's top.

I missed as a thousand lights, signal fires, flamed on all over the place. I jumped again. This time the hilt caught, held, and I clambered up.

Now I stood limned in the light of all those fires, which glowed from a thousand windows like great searchlights. Behind each one was a reflector made of gold and studded with precious stones.

Arrows began to whiz about me as I raced along the wall. Once I stopped and looked around. One of my men was racing along on the wall behind me, a sword in his hand. Then a score of arrows struck him, buried themselves in his body, toppled him off the wall.

Nowhere could I see the others. I whirled and ran on.

"Come and get me, you pariahs!" I screamed as I dropped down into a compound which was dark.

Maybe the building in its center was deserted. I circled it cautiously, ran into a *cul-de-sac* where wall and building merged, went up and over into a street—the same, I guessed, by which we had come to this place.

I RAN like a scared rabbit. Somewhere ahead was one of those moving walls which had trapped us. Suddenly I saw it rising out of the street, of which its flat top had been a part. It was rising swiftly, but I was close.

I cleared the rising wall, yelling as I jumped, while every tortured nerve and muscle cried out in protest at the pain I was inflicting on myself. Behind me a noise as of countless demons shouting inspired me to greater speed.

I was running through dank verdure which gripped at my legs. I stooped as I ran and pulled some of it with my right hand, to stuff the green, wet stuff into my mouth. It tasted like nectar of the gods.

Instantly heartened, I plunged on, knowing that I would still have to run the gauntlet of the guards at the rim of the valley. But I didn't head for that part of the rim down which we had come into the valley.

Once or twice I looked back. The city seemed to be in flames. I knew that the rest of my men were being hunted down, but evidently my escape hadn't been noticed. I hadn't deserted those men, but I couldn't have helped them in any way whatever. They knew it and I knew it.

With a heavy heart, I turned to the right, running the long way of the valley, straining my tortured eyes on the rim, looking for signal fires, or the shapes of Indians against the moon. I saw nothing. The val-

ley was a bedlam of shouting furies. Soon I heard pursuit behind me, and settled to run myself into the very ground if need be, to escape them.

Drops of rain began to fall after a few minutes, and I found time to be thankful for an overcast sky. As I ran I held my mouth open to catch the splashing drops of moisture.

I ran like a man in a nightmare.

When I reached the incline of the valley, leading out, I was panting hoarsely, but I wasn't stopping yet, not even with that precipitous climb ahead of me. With my sword in front of me I started swiftly up.

WHEN I reached the summit, I looked back. I heard men shout behind me, from three different directions, and knew that at least three of my men had gotten out of the city. It would be useless for them to make for me. I raised my voice in a terrific shout that was like the cawing of a crow:

"Make for the place I told you!"

That shout, which was answered from three directions, brought the Indians leaping through the dark. Arrows winged past me as I darted away. I whirled. A man closed with me and I sliced at him savagely with my flaming sword—which even in the dark seemed to glow with a strange fire—and felt the blade bite through bone and muscle and sinew. The man fell. I heard him roll in the brush. Other arrows came, but none touched me. I ran on.

Twice more I had to strike with the sword, and I struck each time as though I myself had been an avenging angel, punishing once more the inhabitants of Eden. Somehow I got through them, though from both sides I heard their shouts and the patter of their feet, as they converged behind me. I banged against the bolls of trees, almost knocking out my brains. I caromed off, ran on.

I decided to race at top speed for

three minutes, then stand and take whatever might come to me. Nobody can imagine what I suffered as I desperately carried out this scheme.

Then I stopped, beaten. I could go no further. I looked aloft. It was hopeless to climb a tree; I didn't think I had the strength, and the pursuers were close behind me. Nevertheless, I started up.

How I got up I don't know, but the branches finally hid me. Rain pelted through the leaves, and I hoped that water, cascading down the tree trunk, would erase my tracks. I crawled to the very top, where I fastened myself to limbs with parts of my ragged clothing until I was almost naked.

There I stretched out with my face to the black sky, with my mouth open and my tongue sticking out, and gloried in the pelting rain against my body, which absorbed the water greedily. It was ambrosia!

I heard men racing through the jungle under me, quartering their tracks. I heard arrows whang into trees all around me, some of them into my own. But none touched me. Then I slept.

HOW long I slept, I have no idea. But when I wakened, my whole body was burned and blistered by the sun, which must have been bathing it for hours—days, for all I knew.

I felt I would die of the pain, but I had suffered so much that sunburn was anti-climax. I straightened stiffly. Slowly and painfully, still grasping my snaky sword, I went down.

The sun was low in the west. I took my bearings on it and started. Nobody followed. Momentarily I expected a trap. Often I went into trees when I detected suspicious sounds. My ears seemed preternaturally keen.

I went on. Again I found myself in the jungle. Vines and brush

tugged at me as I forced my way slowly forward. There were times when I had to use the sword to chop the tangled growth from my path.

As night approached, the jungle became a place of unseen menace that lurked insidiously all about me. The slightest rustling in the brush made me pause more than once and look about me anxiously. I had not forgotten that this was the domain of the Indians, nor could I be sure they were not stalking me now.

BLACK darkness of a cloudy night descended. I found that I could go no further. I sank down with my back resting against the trunk of a big tree. The flaming sword lay within easy reach beside me. For what seemed ages, I sat there.

I suppose that finally I must again have fallen asleep. It was all hazy, almost like a weird dream. But I opened my eyes to find it was once more daylight. My body was a mass of throbbing muscular aches.

I again went on. Finally I reached the trail that had been made by my men when we had advanced toward Eden. It was far easier to travel through the brush from here on, but always there was danger lurking in the shadows all about me.

I circled the sleeping places of boas. Twice I stood like a statue when stalking jaguars roamed near me. Finally I came to believe my enemies had given me up for dead.

Sometime later—I will never be able to estimate it in actual hours or even days, because time stood still—having lived on fruits and water from streams, I stood at the jumping off place, the last shadowy outpost of civilization.

I saw marks of three sets of footprints in the dirt. My men had beaten me out. They hadn't waited. I followed them back to Puerto Cortez, but I haven't seen them to this day. Doubtless they fled as fast and

as far as they could, hoping never again to hear of me or the land into which I had lead them.

TODAY I am a broken man, my body slowly mending. I think that I shall never again be tempted to go adventuring—but I don't know. Adventure is in the blood of men. As I grow stronger, my eyes turn at times to the sword with the curving blade over my fireplace, glowing like the flames below it. It seems somehow like a giant finger, pointing back, as though beckoning me to return to the city of flaming swords. Will I, in the end, heed the call?

I have thought long though lately. How can it be possible, I often ask myself, that Mené be truly a first daughter of Eve? Who has ever known of such longevity?

Once I studied the flaming sword closely, and found an inscription on it, written in tiny letters which seemed to be holy fire. I copied the inscription and sent it away to learned theologians to be translated. The translation came back, but whether in jest I have no way of knowing, and this is what it read:

I am verily that flaming sword of the Angel of Jehovah which drove the first man and the first woman and their children from Eden.

Maybe the translation is true, maybe not. But I think of the fabulous treasure of the city of Mené, and the slaves who tend the plants which give life to the treasure, and I wonder.

Doctors say I wander mentally, but they are liars. And the day shall come when I will prove it to them by opening Eden to the world; or, if it be not Eden, its counterpart—fully as beautiful, thrice as miraculous and filled with such treasure as Eden never knew!

If I live, I shall some day discover the truth—now that I know so much no man has known before me.

Knives at Night



The raiders surged back, many falling under the blast of gun-fire

Bart Steele Faces Grim Dangers and Raiding Vandals Aboard the Steamer "Valbanera" on the Indigo-Hued Caribbean Waters

By L. HARPER ALLEN

Author of "The Hound of Hell," "Death Meadow," etc.

BART STEELE might have been termed a detective, though he never thought of himself as one. He might be called a gunman, or an armed guard. It was his job to accompany valuable shipments—munitions, rifles, bullion, or such precious stores—to and from various

South and Central American ports.

His business tonight aboard the *Valbanera* was known only to its owners and officers. He had come on board shortly after midnight, followed by two sweating *peons* lugging a heavy steamer trunk.

In the seclusion of his stateroom

he quickly unlocked the trunk and raised the cover. Within lay the two sections of a Thompson submachine-gun—black, gleaming, business-like. In compartments below were hundreds of rounds of ammunition for the weapon; also ten heavy automatic pistols and a great supply of cartridges.

Bart had come prepared. He had a hunch there was going to be trouble on board this trip. All indications pointed to such a conclusion.

FIRST, there had been the murderous attack on the pack-train convoy that had brought down the bullion in ingots to the Venezuelan port from which the steamer had sailed the night before—bullion salvaged from an old Spanish hulk, it was rumored. The *guardia civiles* who had discovered the dead body of the guard until the steamer was ready to depart.

Then the skipper of the *Valbanera* has discovered the dead body of the wireless operator—murdered in the wireless cabin. A knife in his back!

Here at Puerto Cabello, Bart had heard of the portentous happenings. He smiled grimly. The killing of the wireless man had been an attempt to cripple the vessel's communication. And though it had clumsily been made to appear that the murder had been done by some one from shore, Bart's guess was that the killer was still aboard—one of the crew, perhaps.

As Bart straightened above the trunk, he fancied he heard a stealthy rustle. He started, turned his head. In the mirror above the wash-basin at his elbow, he caught a movement. Dimly he could see in the circle of the open port above his bunk, a brown, leering face. Stealthily a hand came into view, gripping a long, thin knife.

The hand raised slowly, the knife poised—

Bart's hand flicked to his shoulder holster, whipped out his Colt automatic.

He wheeled and fired, all in one movement. But the face and hand had vanished.

Excited voices called out from the inside passageway. Bart unlocked his door and stepped out. The first mate of the *Valbanera* came running down the passage, half-dressed and gripping a revolver. Behind him came the second officer and Captain Niles, similarly armed.

"Jumping Jupiter! What's happened?" Niles cried, staring at Bart Steele.

"We've got that killer on board—the one that knifed your radio man," Bart explained. "He tried to throw his sticker to me. I fired at his head but the slimy eel squirmed out of range of my bullet."

Captain Niles gripped his revolver tighter.

"We can't leave that killer loose. Come on," he ordered. "We'll go through the foc's'le—"

"You'll never find him," Bart declared, positively. "He's not fool enough to give himself away. If you want my advice, Captain, get under way as quickly as possible. It's my blood he's after just now. And it's my job to trap him—before he goes through with other plans he seems to have in mind. Stand by and watch. We'll hook him when we get to sea."

AT daybreak the trim steamer awoke to bustling activity. Shortly before noon the loading had been completed, and the ship was clear of the wharf, heading out toward the northwest. Bart stood at the forward end of the cabin deck, looking down at the forecastle crew lounging along the port rail. There were a round dozen of them, from all parts of the seven seas, a mixture of various breeds. He wondered which among them was the knife thrower

who had attempted his life a few hours before.

A voice hailed him from behind. It was Bill Palmer, the chief mate. He drew up at Bart's side, eyed the crew below.

"What do you make of last night's business? I gather you're expecting further trouble aboard," he said.

Bart rubbed his chin thoughtfully, Palmer was a regular guy who could be depended upon. He would take him into his confidence. Quietly, he enlightened the mate as to his suspicions and his plans. He concluded:

"Three million dollars worth of gold bullion! Some native gang is after that stuff, Bill. The attempt to hijack the pack-train—the stabbing of our wireless man—the knife thrower who tried to give me the works—they all tie up somehow. Sure as shooting, there's trouble ahead."

Palmer nodded agreement. "The sneaky dogs think they've got us cut off from calling for help. But—" he grinned broadly—"both the skipper and myself can pound brass good enough to get out distress signals and position, if there's need for it."

THERE was a nervous tension in the air as night settled down on the indigo-hued Caribbean. The *Valbanera* still skirted the Venezuelan shore where the sea lane followed the line of the coast.

Bart paced the deck watchfully. Through the swift blanketing haze, his eyes rested once more on the tumbled mass of mountains less than a dozen miles away. Above him on the bridge, he heard Captain Niles flinging nervous barks at the native quartermaster on duty. Then darkness descended suddenly. The little steamer was an island in a weird ebony sea.

A figure sidled out from the shadows, faded back into the darkness near the companionway that led up-

ward to the bridge. Bart was alert, crouching, his automatic drawn. He glimpsed a brown, bullet-shaped head—a leering face that reminded him of the face framed for that tense moment in the port above his bunk. Gun in hand, Bart ran swiftly for the bridge. "Captain Niles," he called out through the murk. "Be on guard! I'm—"

THERE was a terrified cry from the bridge. The skipper's voice—agonized, ghastly. Another cry—a shriek! Then came the deep toll of the engine-room telegraph—the slowing throb of the engines.

Something had happened on the bridge. Bart ran forward, paused. No one was in sight. He looked about, then came to an abrupt halt.

Captain Niles lay there at his very feet, sprawled along the deck, the half of a knife between his shoulder blades. Inside the enclosed wheelhouse, a second man slumped queerly over the wheel. Bart edged to the open door. A swift glance showed that the quartermaster, too, had been killed—the body jammed against the wheel to hold it steady.

The *Valbanera* was moving ahead, but slowly now. The bow was swinging too. From below came a wild shrill yell, the muffled report of a shot, a confused clamor of voices. Bart leaped down to the deck. He called out to Palmer that the skipper had been knifed.

He glanced over the starboard rail, saw shapes there in the blanketing gloom. Rapidly crowding in toward the drifting steamer were a number of small sailing vessels. The harsh voices of shouting men stabbed in through the murk. Other sailboats were on the port side, too. Now one of the vessels slid under the quarter. Bart saw a dozen brown, evil faces looking upward expectantly.

The next instant Bart saw the bullet-headed one below in the well-

deck. He was hurling down ladders, over the rail. Bart started to fire, then paused. This was a job for his tommy gun. He dashed for his stateroom, then swore savagely.

HIS trunk was open—the lock smashed! Machine-gun and automatics were gone! He had been disarmed. Nothing left but his Colt—and a hundred murderous raiders were swarming up the ship's side!

Bart's mind was in a haze. He filled his pockets with cartridges and returned to the deck. As he emerged from the passageway he caught sight of Bill Palmer hurtling along toward the forward part of the ship. He shouted to him, but the first mate did not hear.

A wild tumult was sweeping over the forward deck. He must reach Bill Palmer's side, battle with him against that screaming horde swarming three abreast over the rail from the boats alongside. He ran forward, to the edge of the well-deck

In the uncertain darkness, all was queerly silent. Killing had begun. The crew had mustered to the attack. A shot came, another, an explosive curse. Bill Palmer's voice—Palmer's gun! Voices shrilled.

Mostly knife work, this. It was a ghastly butchering business in which Bart felt himself curiously helpless. It was futile to go into that *mêlée*, to attack that swarming horde without his machine-gun.

He whirled at a sound behind him. It was Boyd, the second mate, gripping a small pistol.

"We can get help in the engine room," Boyd cried out excitedly. "There's Nixon, the chief. We need him—if he's still alive."

Bart said, "Okay." He raced for the iron door that led down below. He was alert, tense. At the foot of the engine-room steps he found Nixon, all unconscious of the shut-out turmoil above-deck.

"Stop her," Bart shouted. "There's a raid going on above—a dozen shore-boats alongside."

"A what?" Nixon said, uncomprehending.

"Raiders! After the bullion! Get your men! Bring 'em up. We need everybody on deck. The skipper has been killed. The crew are being butchered. They got my sub-gun and ten of my automatics."

Nixon's gaze lighted on the Colt in Bart's hand. The sight of it wakened him to action. He sprang to the control platform. The clangor of the engine-room inferno gave place to an unearthly quiet.

"Got three men here on watch—an' myself, that's four—" he said quietly—"an' you make five." He called out loudly: "Fighting top-side! Everybody on deck! Grab weapons—anything you can lay hands on."

BART ran to the gratings. Nixon and the three men followed at his heels. All had knives and iron bars. They gained the head of the ladder. Nixon beckoned, led the way through the saloon to a small cupboard, unlocked it, reached inside. He drew out four automatics, handed a gun to each of his men, passed out boxes of cartridges.

"Come on now," he said. He led the way to the door.

They were in the passageway, the door of the captain's cabin at their left. Beside them was the steel door of the ship's strong-room.

Now a swirl of machete-swinging devils showed at the further end of the passage. A yell sounded—a shot cracked. Above Bart was a light-switch. He pulled it, plunging the passage in darkness.

Bart's sudden action saved the lives of all of them. The narrow passage roared to the ear-splitting drum of shots. Whiplashes of flame flicked toward them. Bart reeled as a searing pain raked his shoulder,

where a bullet grazed his flesh. Then he was firing. Nixon and his men were shooting also. One of the oilers was down.

Bart's automatic raked the head of the passage. He reloaded, fired into the murderous horde. The shooting ahead stopped. Silence fell.

"Come on, Chief," he shouted. "We'll go out through the passage."

BART and Nixon went abreast along the passage. Their automatics crashed twice in quick succession. Huddled bodies lay squirming on the floor. Bart turned quickly. From inside the passage, behind him, sounded ringing blows. The locked door of the strong-room was being furiously attacked. A group of half-naked figures crowded around the steel door. A sputtering torch lighted up the weird scene.

"They got in through the side passage," he said to Nixon. "But that steel door will stand up against everything they can give it."

Bart reloaded his gun. In the group before the door, he saw the bullet-headed killer, working at the lock. He turned to Nixon.

"That whelp in the center—that's the killer. Know him?"

Nixon nodded. "It's Ramirez—one of my men. Took him on yesterday."

The four guns crashed as one. The raiders surged back, many falling, clawing, writhing under the blast of gun-fire. The next instant the passage was empty, except for the heap of dead bodies.

Bart peered at his sweat-grimed wrist watch. He stared at it again. Not ten minutes had passed since he had heard the skipper's gurgling cry—ten minutes of hell that had seemed like hours. He said to Nixon:

"Let's get out of here. We've got to help Palmer and Boyd."

Together the four men reached the head of the ladder that descended to the well-deck. Bart cursed the dark-

ness—If only he could see what was going on! Bill Palmer had gone down that ladder—to what?

Below, in the well-deck, he glimpsed a knot of men, a sea of muscles in action, as figures battled there silently, desperately. Bart's eyes drilled through the black shroud below. There was Bill Palmer—in the scuppers, on his elbow—reloading his gun!

As Bart spied the mate, a machete-swinging shape leaped at the fallen man. Bart's automatic spoke swiftly. The murderous raider crumpled to the deck. Bart made for the ladder.

"They're behind us and ahead—we go ahead!" he called to Nixon.

A thrown knife came hurtling from the rear, the heavy blade slapping into the wooden rail at Bart's side. The two oilers turned and began shooting rapidly. Bart sprang down the ladder, the others at his heels. He headed for the turmoil at the far side around the winches, firing as he ran—kicking—striking out with the bar he had grasped.

FIGURES leaped around him. Nearby was Nixon, screaming mad with fury. He had hold of a heavy bar and was lashing out with it. The man's berserk rage kindled a similar flame in Bart Steele. He found himself stumbling over bodies, cursing, firing at shapes that leaped through the blanketing gloom—shouting like the rest—incoherent—blood-mad—barbaric.

Bart and his three companions reached Palmer and his men at the winches. The well-deck had been cleared. The second mate, Boyd, lay dead on the blood-wet deck. Bill Palmer struggled to his feet, a rude bandage swathed above his knee. He was white-faced, grim, silent.

Bart jerked his thumb aft. "The strong-room! They're giving the door hell. We'd better go back at them. Come on—all of us."

Bart heard bullets rustling in the air. Shots were coming at them from the upper deck. Then came a shout from that direction, rapid orders in Spanish, answered from the boats alongside.

"It's that Ramirez devil calling up more men," he said swiftly. "Let's drill 'em as they come up."

HE started for the port rail. His gun took toll of the first face to show above the rail. The others fired down into the boats alongside. The bitter attack drove the boats back into the shroud of blackness.

Bart groped his way to the top of the companionway. Aft, among the cabins and passages, would come the final struggle. He paused while Nixon and the crew made ready to hoist the mate to the upper deck.

Suddenly, abruptly, a rush of shadowy figures came spewing out from port and starboard passages. They came fiercely, yelling like maniacs. Bart fired coolly, keeping to one side so that the others could get up the ladder—but the rush swept on.

A blood-smeared figure, twice shot, came crashing into him. Bart staggered, was borne to the rail. Sweaty bodies ringed him in, clutching at his gun— They had him down by sheer weight, but somehow he managed to regain his feet. He got his back to the rail—gripped his gun—pulled trigger. The weapon clicked emptily.

The faces closed in. In the press of hellish masks, Bart recognized the leering face of Ramirez. The blood-mad devil plunged forward, clutched at Bart's hips, bore him down. Bart hammered the figure away with the barrel of his empty automatic—struggled to get to his feet. But the force of numbers had weakened his resistance. He felt himself being lifted up by many clutching hands. For a moment he hung suspended

above the rail, then a mighty heave threw him outwards—over the *Valbanera's* rail.

Bart was conscious of turning in air, of seeing a shape come up toward him. Then he crashed. First his knee, then his hip slammed heavily against a soft, yielding body in a boat hugging the steel side of the *Valbanera*.

He rolled to one side, uninjured, but badly jolted by the fall. For a moment he was unable to move. He saw the man he had struck sag limply across the gunwale, back broken by the concussion.

A second figure was clambering over cross-seats, shrieking, waving a long-bladed knife. Bart got to his feet drunkenly, side-stepped, crashed through a powerful right that sent his assailant sprawling. Then the barrel of Bart's heavy automatic landed with a sickening thud. The native collapsed across the thwart.

Bart's mind was clear now, but somehow the strength has oozed out of him. He was panting, sucking air. Dazedly he considered his position. What to do next?

THE black wall of steel that was the *Valbanera's* hull rose and fell lazily beside him. A heavy line held the boat alongside, looped over a wooden peg. Now a long swell lifted the craft against the plates. Bart put out a hand to steady himself—lost balance—sat down heavily in the bottom of the boat. His hands reached out for support—and came in contact with metal. A gun barrel!

There was something familiar in the touch of that metal. His sub-gun! His groping fingers located the two sections, and the pilfered ammunition stock.

Fool's luck, Bart reflected. More luck that Ramirez had been unable to master the intricacies of the tommy gun. He had preserved the gun for future use, rather than heave it

overside; had cached it in this small boat at the beginning of the struggle. Bart stroked the cold steel almost lovingly. With this little baby he could face the blood-mad beasts once more.

Rapidly, he assembled the gun, checked the mechanism, filled the chamber, loped a piece of sail-cloth stuffed with ammunition over his shoulder, seized the line that held the bow of the craft alongside and went up painfully. It was no simple task to climb that rope. When he dropped over the rail on the well-deck, he stood gasping for breath. He staggered weakly for a moment, then went lurching for the ladder.

He gained the deck swiftly, lithely—and came face to face with Ramirez, emerging from the passageway entrance. At the killer's back came his snarling crew. Shrill cries sounded from within. The brutal face contorted into a diabolical mask. The eyes flamed with murderous hate. The knife-gripping hand went up as the creature lunged.

Gasping, Bart jerked up his sub-gun, fired point-blank. A string of blazing, crashing bullets cut into the hurling body, tore it into shreds.

A second burst of spraying lead cleared the passageway of every living thing. Bart stood for a moment,

surveying the awful mess. He wondered how his friends were faring, where they were. He called out loudly. Voices answered from the direction of the saloon. Bart snapped directions, edged down the deck, his gun sweeping the shadows.

THE minutes that followed were bloody minutes.

Bill Palmer, at bay in the saloon, had no desire to show mercy to the treacherous murderers who had attacked them. Niles, Boyd, and four of the crew had been slaughtered. Nixon and Palmer were badly wounded. Bart sprayed lead wherever a brown body showed itself.

When the tommy gun ceased chattering, the *Valbanera's* decks and passages were a shambles. Some few of the murderous horde went floundering overside, to whatever end fate had in store for them.

The bullion room had stood up. The raid had failed.

Bart looked at his wrist watch once more. Unbelieving, he put it to his ear, then stared at it again. It was ticking along just as usual. He shook his head, dumbfounded.

"Twenty-seven minutes," he said to the group about him. "Through hell in the time a guy smokes two cigarettes."



**Hola, Folks! I'm Hyar t' Tell Yuh that
Yuh'll find Real Roarin' Hell-for-Leather**

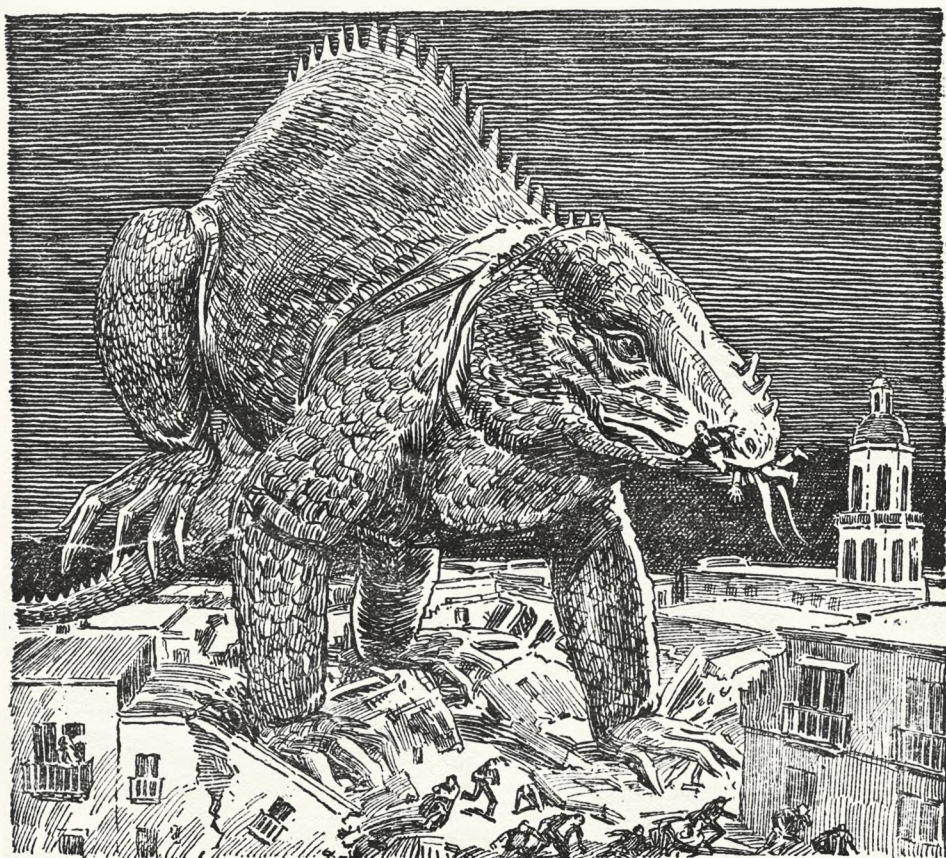
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BORDERLAND



Houses crashed into splinters as though they had been struck by a hurricane

Gigantic Beasts of Death and Destruction Stalk a Mysterious Island in this Tense, Fantastic Story of Santo Domingo

By **ARTHUR J. BURKS**

Author of "Bare Fists," "The Black Falcon," etc.

I HAVE always been immensely concerned about a number of obscure things, especially about what I have come to regard as the invisible telephone wires which connect our conscious thoughts with our dreams, our nightmares, our waking flights of fancy in which we

see things no man has ever seen—at least in recorded history.

Whence come our figments of imagination in which we soar vicariously to heights which no man has ever attained except in similar flights? Where does the subconscious leave off and the conscious

begin? Where is the thin dividing line between waking and sleeping, knowing and dreaming?

I confess that I do not know, and even the incident of Cabritos has not given me a clue. It is set down here in the hope that perhaps where I have failed to find the clue, others may be more fortunate—or, perhaps, unfortunate. I say unfortunate because it may be that it is forbidden for us to know exactly where to set up the invisible wall which separates the known from the unknown.

I WAS doing some work for the Museum of Natural History, and had set up a one-man camp at La Descubierta, on Lake Enriquillo, in the Dominican Republic. The man who had hired me was Curator of Herpetology for his museum, and he was deeply desirous of procuring two things for the organization which had sent him to Santo Domingo.

He wished to procure a crocodile or alligator—I was never even scientist enough to know which was which unless I saw a specimen of each, side by side—twelve feet in length, because such reptiles had been seen in the lake. And he wanted to find a rhinoceros iguana exceeding five feet in length, because native hunters had reported them fairly numerous in the more inaccessible parts of the Republic. There was a story that they flourished in Isla de Cabritos, which is almost in the mathematical center of the lake, opposite La Descubierta.

Lake Enriquillo is some forty feet below the level of the Caribbean, and its waters are said to be four times as salty as the sea. The lake is some sixty miles long, and is separated by a rocky rampart from the much higher lake called Lago Del Fondo by Dominicans, and Etang Sumatre by the Haitians.

Jimani and Las Lajas sit on this rampart and look eastward across

the vast length of Lake Enriquillo, on whose surface it is sometimes possible to see whole processions of palm trees, thanks to the peculiarities of mirage.

I mention this last as, perhaps, being a clue, though I have myself rejected it. For what happened to me happened when the sun had long since dropped into Haiti, and not even a pale moon hung over the tropics.

Set near an elbow of the lake, where the trail comes out onto the shore from the jungle-hidden native village of Columbia, is a vast fountain of water. It is supposed to be the outlet of a lost river that vanishes into the Cordillera Centrales somewhere south of the caves of Hondo Valle. It is bottomless. Hogs, sheep, cattle, even men, have vanished into it never to be disgorged.

I had been told that sometimes at night great 'gators came out of the lake to disport themselves in this uprushing river, waddling along the creek which the fountain becomes on its journey to the lake, some hundred yards to the east. I had made my plans carefully, and they were very simple. I didn't wish to shoot the 'gators, for my boss wanted them without mark or blemish. Besides, 'gators had been shot by natives on the edge of this boiling pool, and they had invariably dived into the depths to be seen no more. I had, I thought, a better idea.

I WRAPPED a heavy charge of dynamite, properly capped and fused, in a waterproof package, and lowered it some twenty-five feet into the pool. Then I concealed myself behind a bush which masked one side of the pool, with my electrical discharge box beside me. All I had to do was push a plunger and the depths of the pool would be blasted asunder. The ground might shake about me, I figured, but that would matter little.

I would do this job when 'gators were floating on the pool, or had dived into it when I startled them. Then, stunned by the explosion, they would float to the surface and I would get the 'gator my boss wanted.

I SAT down to wait. It is an experience to sit on a quick-sandy beach whose subterranean waters seem to whisper in the sands below, greedily sucking at you as though to draw you into the depths; while back of you, as night draws on, there are rustlings in the jungle which may mean anything. You recall the tales you have heard, for example, of the *Kukura*, that mythical half-man, half-beast, in which the natives believe, and with which they frighten their children into staying indoors during the hours of darkness. The sounds become his crashing footsteps as he goes straight through the jungles, seeking what he may devour.

And then, ahead of you, the surface of the lake is troubled, and you can see ugly snouts on the surface of the water, and know that the 'gators, often shot at during the day and so wary of men, are a-prowl. If a man were to fall among them—well, a 'gator takes his food by grasping it in his mouth and spinning over and over on the axis of his body. If it happens to be a leg or an arm which he grasps—you can readily see where fancy could lead you.

I sat there, staring often at the place where the outpourings of the stream entered the lake, watching the sleeping flamingoes, which would give me plenty of warning if the 'gators came too close. They sat moveless, like the storks on the windmills of Holland, mere shadows among the other shadows on the lake. Away to the right the *Isla de Cabritos* looked like the serrated back of an antediluvian monster

whose other parts were under water.

Far to my right, down the curve of the lake, another stream poured into the dirty *Enriquillo*. There, during the day, 'gators often sunned themselves in the fresh water, feeling secure because they could see anyone who approached them for almost a mile. Then the logs, which they appeared to be, became the mammals they were, as they streaked for cover in the evil waters.

I was sitting there, hand on the plunger of the apparatus with which I intended to get my twelve-foot 'gator, and listening to the sounds, the whispers, the talking of the seeping sands, when the unbelievable thing happened. I rubbed my eyes in unbelief.

The flamingoes suddenly removed their heads from under their pink-tinted wings and rose into the night, heading for the fastness of the *Cordillera Centrales*, uttering weird cries. The snouts on the surface of the lake went under with strange grunting sounds, which might have been the bellowing of bull-'gators if the water hadn't taken in the cries.

SOMETHING had come out of the water, directly ahead of me. At first it merely thrilled me with excitement, for I recognized it as my twelve-foot 'gator, en route to his pool. What a monster he was! It looked as though he must be in the shallow water just off-shore, for I could see all of his vicious head, raised well above the water, which meant that his short legs reached bottom with ease. But he stood there for a long time surveying the shore, and I was afraid that he suspected a trap. Wondering, holding my breath lest some vagrant sound disturb him, I studied him more closely—and my heart almost stopped beating.

For a far wider strip of water stretched between the shore and the

beast than I had thought at first. He was fully a hundred yards from shore, where I knew that the water shelved off to great depths, and if his feet hadn't been on the bottom he couldn't have lifted his head so high out of the water.

The natural suggestion of this made my blood run cold. What sort of brute was this to have his head out of water when his feet touched bottom, fifty feet at least, below the surface?

MY eyes did not blink. I was afraid something might happen which I should always regret missing if I closed them, even for so long as that. My eyes burned with horrible concentration as I studied the animal. I made a strange discovery almost at once.

The creature was not a 'gator. It did not have the long snout. The head was close-coupled to the body. The long jaws of the 'gator were missing. Instead there was a blunt, reptilian head with a wide circle of mouth. I could see the eyes, glowing in the dark, set wide apart.

But what astounded me more than anything else was that, set near the end of the nose, upstanding, blunt, suggestive, were curved horns something like that of a rhinoceros. Here was Doctor Keller's rhinoceros iguana—five feet long—with a vengeance.

And as though to show me the depth and implications of the "vengeance," the creature started to move toward me out of the water. Higher and higher it rose from the lake—a great black mass which was first elephantine, then mammoth-like, then like nothing in my past experience with which I could compare it. It was now quite close to shore and towered fully fifty feet above my head.

Unbelievable? Of course. I didn't believe it myself; but consider the

strange denouement before giving your judgment. I am, now, merely the narrator.

I don't think I was ever afraid for myself. This was something over and beyond me, something so much bigger than I, that I became dwarfed to insignificance, even to myself.

I hid behind the sheltering bush while the brute came out of the water and stood on the beach. I glanced quickly right and left and not a 'gator snout showed anywhere on the surface of Enriquillo. The water, though, was troubled, as though deep under it the 'gators were milling, going mad with fear, knowing not which way to turn.

But what made them behave like that?

Were there other things below the surface which could make this one visible animal look like a pigmy? Was some vast voracious creature devouring the sole denizens of Enriquillo's deep? I had lost all perspective now. The monster which was moving up the beach with long strides had become a creature from the dawn of the world; and the world as I knew it—and reassured myself by pinching the back of my hand—together with myself and every other living thing, had been catapulted back down the ages to the very beginning of time.

THE creature's enormous feet made sucking sounds in the sand. After each step his footprint filled with water, and the resultant pool was big enough that a man might have bathed in it in comfort. I could see that the animal was going to pass quite close to me, and for the first time I became slightly concerned.

I eased around the bush, knowing it but poor cover after all since the brute's head was so high above it, and his foot might have smashed me, and the bush, without even the

BORDERLAND

creature's knowledge. But the animal seemed utterly intent on exploring the jungle behind me.

He passed within yards of me and I heard the waters of the sands pour into the holes his feet had made. I turned, surprised that he had not noted me, as he found the edge of the jungle. Trees began to crackle and break before his advance, as though he had been thrice an elephant. We went straight ahead toward the village of Columbia. I opened my mouth to shout a warning, but no sound whatever came out.

THE creature went into the jungle, and his head and shoulders showed above it, as though he swam through the trees. Columbia lay in his pathway. Where was he going? What was he after? Whence had he come?

To answer the last question I looked out on the lake again.

Straight ahead, a mile or so to the east, another monster, seeming even larger than the first, was coming out of the lake. Swiftly he climbed up to the road which connected La Descubierta with Neiba and Barahona, and the scattering towns in between them. The brute reached the road, realized that it offered him unobstructed passage, and started eastward.

Even as he started, the headlights of a speeding automobile came over the ridge there and crashed into him. I heard wild screams from the car, which suddenly rose high into the air, turning over and over. Its headlights, still on, worked strange patterns in the night as the car somersaulted through space, flashing with bullet speed toward the lake. It struck, vanished. The headlights were no more. The screams were gone.

The "iguana" was moving on into the east. He went down into the valley beyond, but his head was still

visible, turning this way and that, as though he sought for other victims. I turned to look to my right. A third beast was rising from the water yonder and striding straight westward, toward Jimani and Las Lajas—and Haiti.

Where in God's name had these creatures come from so suddenly?

I lifted my gaze to Cabritos, out in the lake—to find that the island, which I have likened to the back of some antediluvian monster, was a-crawl with something—something huge, mighty, awe-inspiring. In spite of the distance, they still seemed monsters to my eyes, those things which were coming out of the bowels of the island, and vanishing into the lake. Some went in to the east, some south, west and north, while others entered at compass points in between.

I knew then that all this was happening by virtue of some satanic plan; that the exodus of the brutes was not accident but design—that Cabritos, unbelievable, impossible as it must seem, as it seemed to me then, was creating these monsters out of the bowels of the earth which composed the island.

But why? How? To what end?

AS though in answer to this very question a ghastly uproar rose out of Columbia behind me. I heard houses crashing into splinters as though they had been struck by a hurricane. I heard the startled, fearful screams of men, women and children; heard the screams break short off—and knew the answer, or thought I did. It was the answer, too, I am sure, though later events would seem to disprove it. One must know something of the exact location of that wall which I spoke about, that separates the real from the unreal.

The screaming continued in Columbia, while I remained rooted to the spot, wondering what I should

THRILLING ADVENTURES

40. Poor devils of natives; they were dying like flies before the voracious attack of the "iguana."

Then a strange cry came from the midst of the lake. A cry to which I could give no name, a cry of command, of entreaty. It seemed to be directed at a certain spot on the mainland, and I held my breath to ascertain whether there would be any result from it.

I heard, then, a crashing in the brush behind me, through the jungle. The first monster was coming back, coming swiftly. He fled past me with hurricane speed. Behind him came a dozen soldiers of the Guardia Nacional Dominicana, stationed at La Descubierta, just beyond Columbia. They were firing at the monster with Kragg rifles. Their bullets—I could hear them smash against the creature's body—did no harm whatever. Just as the creature passed me, the legs of a woman disappeared into his cavernous mouth. He snorted with satisfaction.

HE vanished into the lake, and a long arrowhead of water, like the wake of a ship, moved out toward Cabritos. With astonishing speed it moved, ever widening—the furrowed waves crested with dirty foam. I had learned something then, several somethings: that this creature could not be hurt by bullets, that to take the soldiers to help me was useless. I had learned that the creature could not see very well, since he hadn't seen me. I had learned that if there was anything at all to be done I must do it alone—and I must do it on Cabritos where the horror had just now started.

If something were not done—what?

Every village and town in Santo Domingo might be utterly destroyed by the monsters. Their source, on Cabritos, must be destroyed, so that

no others could come forth to work their havoc. There must be some manner by which they could be slain.

There were airplanes in Port-au-Prince, marines in Haiti with bombs and field pieces. But if the supply of these creatures was inexhaustible, what then? I must make sure, alone and unaided, of this.

BUT how to reach Cabritos? To swim was impossible. The 'gators, small as they were compared to the monsters, could yet destroy me as I would pluck the wings off a fly, if I dared to go into the lake. It had happened to others. No boats plied on Enriquillo.

However, there must be some way. Two days before, around this lake's elbow to the south, I had seen the remnants of an ancient dugout. With improvised oars—

I gathered up my electrical apparatus, detached the wire which held the dynamite and—being methodical and recalling that I hadn't yet got the 'gator I had been sent to get—fastened one end to the bush, leaving the rest in the water. I ran swiftly down the beach, looking often toward Cabritos, from whose interior the monsters still came, sliding into the lake and vanishing in all the directions of the compass. Strong fear was in me lest I might be seen and taken, for I was remembering the human legs which had gone into the cavernous maw of the first "iguana."

I came to the dugout. It looked serviceable enough. I broke limbs off trees to serve as unwieldy paddles and as weapons, though I knew they would be worse than useless against the hideous nightmares I had seen. I cached my box of dry cells, about which were wrapped great lengths of thin wire, in the drier end of the dugout, and managed to push the aged craft into the water. The surface of the lake boiled and bubbled, and I knew that if my craft

went under I would never be heard of again. I was, however, intent on my job.

Now it seemed that Cabritos had ceased its strange eruptions. The lake was still, as though it waited. From far to the south, though, came screams from Neiba, from Barbacoa and La Madre, from Los Rios; while from across the lake came other screams, from Angostura and Duverge. The monsters were systematically depopulating the villages and towns which bordered on the lake.

AS I pushed off I studied Cabritos, now dormant—and saw sparks flying from a spot some fifty feet or so above the island, as though a primitive wireless were in operation. Was there some evil human intelligence behind this march of the monsters?

I made tough going with my improvised oars, but the water between myself and the shore widened bit by bit, while Cabritos grew larger and larger ahead. The whole thing began to seem utterly ridiculous to me now, and I wasn't at all certain that I had seen what I thought I had. But when I rested and listened, I could hear the far screams of natives in the towns bordering on the lake. It was real then, at least in part, and not a feverish hallucination or nightmare.

A queer reptilian odor, almost overpowering, covered me as I neared the island. I had noticed it particularly when that first monster had passed my hiding place at the fountain pool. It was terrific near the island, further proof that I hadn't dreamed.

My dugout, after what seemed like hours, grounded on Cabritos and I jumped out. There wasn't a sound on the island; only that strange ghastly odor. I pulled the dugout out so that it wouldn't drift away, for

I had no wish to remain on the island indefinitely, nor to dare the 'gators on the long swim back. The whole thing was so unreal, and continued so, that there were times when I felt like laughing at myself. But I didn't.

The odor kept me from doing that; the odor and the traces along the shore where heavy, huge bodies had slid into the lake.

I left my electrical equipment in the dugout, which was fortunate, and started inland. Now and again iguanas of the normal size fled away from me in the night. A scrubby, crackling underbrush impeded my movements. That sparkling dart of light I had seen had stopped now. The island seemed empty of any occupancy save that of the iguanas.

I walked to the center of the island, which was covered by queer outcroppings, by piles of boulders which looked like the detritus of long-vanished mountains. There were queerly shaped hummocks of stone. I knew that when the sun was out a man could fancy seeing all sorts of things in this queer place. Even iguanas as big as dinosaurs would be seen. Mirage was a strong phenomenon on the lake. However, this was at night, remember.

I stood listening for a long time, and looking about me.

MY heart almost jumped into my mouth when a familiar voice spoke behind me. I whirled to look into the white face of Doctor Keller, the Curator of Herpetology.

"Hello, Cleve," he said. "Did it get you, too?"

"I don't know," I said. "Something damnably queer is going on. Where did you come from?"

"I was spending the night with Juan Herrera at Duverge," he said, pointing to the side of the lake opposite whence I had come. "I had been looking for frogs and snakes in the swamp near Angostura. When

that monster barged into Duverge I figured that he came from here; and I came out in a boat furnished by Juan to see what was going on. What *is*, do you know?"

"I can't believe my eyes, ears or nostrils," I told him. "I've seen monsters tonight, monsters which died before man came onto this earth. It can't be true, and yet if you saw them, too—"

"**I DID,**" he said. "I estimate that **I** there are about fifty of them loose. They came from this island. I'm glad to have you with me while we figure it out. Lord, if I could capture one of these creatures alive—"

That was the insatiably scientific Curator of Herpetology speaking.

"You couldn't capture them with an army," I retorted. "They uproot trees, trample down skyscrapers; at least, village huts."

He grinned. I thought his grin was rather tight and strained. Then he started off toward the west end of the island. I followed him as a matter of course, because he was my boss and seemed to expect it. He seemed, however, to know exactly what he was about and where he was going. He should have, too, I guess, for he had spent four years, off and on, in Santo Domingo, staying sometimes as long as four months at a time.

He was a queer fellow, absolutely indifferent to material things. He'd have slept with his beloved snakes and frogs if his wife, who went everywhere with him—except that she hadn't come to the island tonight—had permitted it. I thought he was a little cracked on the subject of reptiles, but I'm not a scientist.

I gasped as we stopped before the broad face of a huge rock that grew out of the floor of the island. Doctor Keller, a big man, roughly dressed, and always smelling of snakes, placed his hand against the

rock, and it opened to his touch. A door swung back.

The odor I had noticed before came back, more powerful even than before. It came out of a black hole which seemed to lead down into the bowels of the earth. Doctor Keller stepped into the door.

"Come on," he said impatiently.

I stepped forward, too, and utter darkness possessed the universe as the stone door swung shut, behind me. It was then that I began to suspect the truth. Brilliant electric lights flashed on. Keller had pressed a switch somewhere. I could find no words with which to express myself. I followed Keller down and down. He didn't look back, didn't say anything.

Finally we came to a big room—a natural cave which the hand of man had made livable, even comfortable. There were chairs, rugs, tables, boxes. There were benches and tables all but covered with retorts, test tubes, scales, all sorts and designs of scientific instruments.

Here was a modern laboratory if ever I had heard one described, and I was alone with the man to whom it belonged.

KELLER sat down, after tossing his hat on a table, and motioned me to take another chair. I guess my mouth hung open and my eyes popped out as I stared at him. He looked to be as normal as I had last seen him, though there was a subtle difference, born perhaps of my growing suspicions which were so soon to become certain knowledge.

"Well, Cleve," he said, "what do you think of it?"

For a long moment I gulped and swallowed, trying to find an answer.

Then I pointed my finger at him, and my finger trembled.

"You," I managed, "you are back of all this?"

"Yes," he said curtly, "and you

are going to help me out, now that you've penetrated the secret. I'll need a messenger, someone I can trust, to take the word to the *alcaldes* of the nearest towns. After I have subjugated Santo Domingo and Haiti, and brought the Caribbean and the Atlantic within reach of Cabritos, I shall use you as messenger to the mayors of many cities; to presidents, even to kings."

ALL this he said quietly, as though he merely passed the time of day with me, while I stared at him in absolute horror. Here was the man responsible for the loss of I knew not how many lives.

"You're thinking of the dead," he said. "Don't. Death is a biological fact, no more. To slay means nothing."

"But how? Why?" I began.

Keller leaned forward.

"For twenty years I have gone on expeditions all over the world," he said. "I've never had enough money to pay for one. I've been forced to live in hovels, in swamps, in stinking rivers, in native huts, in everything under the sun which no human being should live in. Governments stint their scientists; museums give them scarcely a living wage and expect them to perform miracles without money. I have performed miracles. My museum is packed with my discoveries, while I live in squalor for the sake of science, and eat food that a dog wouldn't eat.

"I even take my wife into such a mess because she foolishly believes that she should share hardships with me. I didn't expect that when I married her. Science is to blame for the fact that her beauty has faded, that she had grown unhealthy—"

I wanted to head him off, but there was no stopping the man.

"I'm a great scientist," he said. "I have gone deeper into unknown, forbidden things than almost anyone

else. I know, for instance, more about glands—"

I was beginning to get it, then, for I had read a lot about glands. Being a small man who had always wished to be a big one, glands had interested me. I knew that it wasn't beyond the bounds of possibility that, through experimentation with glands, little men could be made into giants, giants into pygmies.

Keller rose so suddenly from his chair that I ducked as from a blow. He grinned again.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I trust you. If I have reason to doubt, I can smash you as though you were a fly. I despise you as a man, but wish your loyalty as a helper."

HE led the way toward another rock door, which swung back at his touch. We entered another cave—or part of the first one which had been partitioned off—and lights again went on. I gasped as I looked this place over. There was just one thing in it, besides ourselves, that was alive. It was a rhinoceros iguana, perhaps four feet in length.

It darted to a dark corner as we appeared. Keller went after it. He was fast on his feet for a big man. I'd seen him race after snakes like that, scooping them up in his horny hands. He captured the iguana, which fastened its mouth on his hand. He carried the creature back to me, making no effort to release the hand. The animal finally opened its mouth of its own accord, and Keller pulled his fingers free.

"Watch!" he said.

From a cabinet cut out of the rock wall he took what looked to be a huge hypodermic syringe, whose needle he thrust into the creature's back, just behind the skull. He pressed down on the plunger. The animal straightened out, as though paralyzed, as whatever the syringe contained was driven through the skin

into his body. Keller placed him on the floor. He rolled onto his side.

"Back to the door," said Keller. "This one hasn't been trained. I'm working too rapidly now for that."

WE stood side by side at the door by which we had entered, watching the apparently paralyzed iguana. Horror gripped me when the thing began to grow with amazing speed. Its limbs twitched. Its whole body seemed to balloon into gigantic proportions. Its eyes became alive again, malignant, horrible.

Keller pushed me behind him, partially closing the door, but standing aside so that I could see past him. The brute rose on its feet. It was still growing. Now it towered almost to the roof of the cave. It whirled, dashed at us. Keller shut the door in its face, and the rock supports of the cave literally shook with the impact of the gigantic body.

Keller opened the door a crack.

In the other room the monster was walking up a sort of ramp which led to the surface of the ground—and to the lake. It climbed up and was gone. I turned to Keller.

"Simple," he said, with a wave of his hand, "though difficult for a layman to understand. I have simply learned how, artificially, to induce a miraculous multiplication of the cells of the body. That's all. I could make that creature four times as big, but he—and his mates—are big enough for my purposes now."

I shuddered. They were, in all conscience.

My voice was a croak as I spoke.

"But what's the idea, Doctor?"

"Money," he said. "Wealth. My science has brought me nothing except hard work. But now it shall bring me wealth and comfort. These iguanadons are my weapons, by which I shall force ordinary people to supply me with money, wealth,

power, through the oldest emotion—ungodly fear!"

"But you can't do it. In the end the world will destroy you. Big guns will smash this island to bits. You will be attacked, destroyed. Even your monsters may turn against you."

"They won't. I trained them first. When I increased their size they remembered. I am the only person they won't attack."

"But how can you control them?"

"Simple. They're still iguanas. They know this island as their home, to which they come when they've fed. They'll all be back before morning, to sleep and—though they don't know it—to be re-injected with the glandular preparation I have perfected."

I SHUDDERED again. The whole thing was ghastly, horrible.

"But suppose," I insisted, "you are beaten, this place discovered and destroyed? And what will become of me if I am with you?"

"I'll show you that, too," he said.

What he showed me was a branch of the main cave, bigger than either of the caverns I had been in—and its walls were buttressed by countless boxes of dynamite.

"The electrical machinery to discharge it," he said calmly, "is in the first chamber. If I am beaten I have but to press a plunger. I shall die here, of course, and so will you. My wife will find happiness with some man who isn't a failure. However, I don't expect that. I'll have the Antilles at my feet before their stunned people can realize that what they see and hear is really true. Which means that we must hurry."

I sighed heavily. No need to oppose this man openly. He could have crushed me between his thumb and forefinger. But my mind was racing with lightning speed. "What do you wish of me?" I asked.

"That's the spirit," he said.

"You've got a job to do. I must have a new supply of my serum. I must get to work on it. Your job is to bring me 'patients'."

"Patients?" I repeated.

"Yes. The island is filled with iguanas. You can knock 'em over with a stick. Bring them to me as fast as you can, and keep a sharp lookout for boats. Also, be careful of the iguanadons near morning, when it will be time for them to come back."

I went out. Catching iguanas wasn't a tough job. I'd done it before, though usually with the help of dogs. Keller had no dogs here and I knew why. The monsters had devoured them.

My task was especially easy in the cool of after midnight, for the coolness made the iguanas comatose. I found a couple, about two feet in length each, and tucked them under my arms. On the way back I passed the dugout, gathered up my electrical equipment, thrust it into my clothing, and took it back with me. I left it on the stairs and carried the iguanas in to Keller.

HE rubbed his hands as he took them, carried them into the chamber where I had seen him turn an iguana into a monster. He had all but forgotten me, I thought. But he disproved that by sticking his head again out of the door.

"Bring more. Bring dozens, scores. I need all the weapons possible."

"It will take a little time."

"Work faster!" he snapped.

I worked fast enough.

I caught up my electrical equipment, unfastened the end of the wire coiled about it, and dashed to the room which housed the dynamite. I was adept in this business. I detached the wiring Keller had arranged, substituting my own. My hands trembled, for now all I had to do to blow this island out of the

water, was to press the plunger on my own box of coils.

I was almighty careful as I took the box back to the dugout and left it. The wire was strung from that cavern to the dugout, a turn taken about a nub of rock on the way, so that a jerk wouldn't disconnect the wiring. Fervently I hoped there was enough wire to reach the mainland.

Then I went after iguanas. I needed plenty, to keep Keller occupied until I could reach La Descubierta, which I must do before the iguanadons started home.

I WORKED and sweated. Claws ripped at my clothing, tore at my hands. Keller noticed me once when I returned and said patronizingly:

"Good work!"

"There's a huge one near the west end of the island," I said. "I don't know whether I can handle him in a hurry—"

"Take time. Stun him with rocks, anything, but bring him here. Maybe the biggest ones have greater intelligence—go, get the brute, if it takes an hour. We've got more time than that before morning."

Of course there wasn't any big iguana. I got into the dugout and started for the mainland, rowing like mad, unreeling the thin wire at the same time, making sure that it sank to the bottom—for a 'gator might swim against it under water and break the wire. But I got clear to the mainland without feeling a tug and figured I had maybe twenty feet of wire left over.

I sat down exactly where I had been before, and watched Cabritos. The monsters were coming home. I knew that the newest ones Keller had created had not yet been turned loose. I wondered what he had done with them, and my brain spun at the possibilities. For I knew the legends of some of Santo Domingo's

caverns, in which were mighty branch caves beyond man's imaginings, vast black rivers, huge abysses.

Keller might have such a cavern below his laboratory, filled with scores and hundreds of the monsters. How did I know that, during the four years of his intermittent residence, he hadn't peopled that cavern under Cabritos with countless monsters, not only iguanas, but snakes, spiders—all sorts of horrors?

My hand went to the plunger. I hoped all the monsters were home—

A HAND was placed on my shoulder. I was shaken roughly.

I opened my eyes, if they had been closed, to see a black lieutenant of Guardia standing over me.

"You went to sleep on the job, Cleve," he said. "The post is worried about you."

I stared at the man in amazement.

"Good Lord," I said, "have I been asleep? What happened last night? Is everything all right in Columbia? Did the iguanadons—"

"What are you talking about?" asked Carlos Ramirez, the lieutenant. "You have been having nightmares, perhaps?"

"Lord," I said, "what a silly ending! A dream, no more. I didn't see any monsters last night. I didn't see Doctor Keller—"

"How could you?" interrupted Ramirez. "He is in Duverge. He went there last night from Barahona. I have word by telephone. He will be in La Descubierta sometime today."

"And I haven't even got his 'gators," I said ruefully, still unable to believe I had been asleep and dreaming. "Wonder they didn't make a meal off me last night. Look, two were here during darkness."

Ramirez grinned.

"You're lucky," he said.

"Well," I said, standing up, holding onto the box, "just on the off

chance those two babies are in the pool, let's see what this thing does."

Ramirez had helped me set up my stuff and understood. We both stepped back a pace, just in case the walls of the fountain went down, taking us with them. And I jammed the plunger home.

At that very instant I noticed whither the wire ran—straight toward the shore of the lake.

Then the world was rocked by an earthquake, a hurricane and a tidal wave. I was lifted, together with Ramirez, and hurled fifty feet. My distorted, bulging eyes witnessed a gigantic thing—for Cabritos was lifted out of Enriquillo almost as one piece, to the height of many feet, where it broke apart like a mighty, unbelievably huge firecracker, pieces of which showered the towns all about the lake.

The debris crashed back—and Enriquillo's waters received them. The waters geysered aloft, forming a great wall which shut out the sight of the Bahorucos, south of the lake—and against that wall of geysering water, as against a screen, I saw the mangled shapes of all sorts of things—things which man may imagine he sees in nightmares, in flights of fancy, in everything except reality.

BUT I had no time to catalogue them, for Enriquillo swallowed it all, while Ramirez and I raced for higher ground as a monster wave raced for the shore.

We were both stunned. I had dropped my electrical apparatus, which the wave took back with it when it receded. Finally Ramirez managed a question.

"What in the world," he said, "do you think caused that?"

I gave him the answer. I knew, as a good churchgoer, he would expect—and which I was none too sure was not the answer.

"The will of God!"

Black Treachery



Nolan's rifle cracked! A Boretse screamed, flung up his arms

Red-Headed Sam Nolan of the South African Police Force Mixes it With the Boretse Savages in this Stirring Drama of Jungle Strife!

A Breath-Taking Complete Novelette

By HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

Author of "Night Eagle," "Talons of the Dove," etc.

CHAPTER I

The Wily Barbarians

THE Black African night swooped down, swallowing the meager twilight into its hungry maw. From the jungles, a leopard coughed—an eerie, blood-

chilling sound. Immediately, a colony of baboons began to bark. With the coming of night the denizens of the hinterlands had begun to prowl, to kill.

Young Sam Nolan stretched himself wearily, and shuffled an almost dying fire back to life. A groan is-

sued from the far side of the fire, and Nolan sprang alertly to drop to a knee beside the limp form lying there.

"You're out of it, eh, uncle?" he jerked, scarcely daring to hope for any reply. "You're feelin' some better, huh?"

"Ye-h—some, buddy—some." Old Tom Nolan's voice, though weak, still packed a south Texas drawl. Nolan had been fifteen years in Africa, a member of the famous Police Force. Sam, his nephew, had been lured by letters—lured from a Mississippi home. After a required amount of residence in the British possession, he too had joined the South African Police.

They had come north of the Zambesi, "Father of Rivers", into the land of swamp and jungle, to the edge of an area held by the Boretse tribe. Their assignment was semi-official—actually a hunting furlough, although the Police chief had asked them to scout the rumor that Chindi, chief of the Boretse, was about to commence his savage raids on all whites in that territory. This tribe was cannibalistic. They were bad medicine. But, the Nolans had a way with blacks.

TOM NOLAN was dying, though. He knew it, and was trying his best to keep the fact from his nephew.

Again the king leopard coughed. Something screamed in the jungle. An unwary young baboon had been caught. . . . Sam Nolan shuddered. Though unafraid, the sinister African night got him, as it got most trekkers in this particular area.

"A drink, buddy?" he asked his uncle. "I'll put an extra shot of 'ski in it for you this time. Perhaps you can rest better, then." But there was no answer. Sam dropped low, his ear to his uncle's bandaged chest.

The older man's heart was still pumping, but its beat was slow,

weakening. All at once Tom stirred. His hand reached up and clutched Sam's shoulder.

"It's—no use, Sam," he gulped. "I'm goin' out—cashin' in. Bury—me in the donga, an' see there's plenty of—rocks piled on me—away from those danged jackals. I'd turn back then, if I were you. It was one of Chindi's Black Ostrich Impi that got me. A big mountain of a guy, with one eye—Sam—you can report that—Chindi's outfit is—is—"

Those were Tom Nolan's last words. He slumped back, the victim of a assegai wound in the chest.

Sam's eyes misted. He experienced a sudden creepy feeling up and down his spine. He was alone in the world.

The last of his relatives had just passed along. Worse than this, he was alone in one of the most treacherous parts of Africa's hinterland.

HE slumped to a seat beside the fire, his eyes staring unseeingly into the dying embers. A ground sheet covered the still form of the best pal he had ever known. Soon, before daylight, he must bury his uncle. But just now, he wanted to think, to plan.

His uncle had advised that he return to headquarters. One of Chindi's stalwart Black Ostrich Impi had killed; he had killed a member of the Police Force. It was the black sign of the big chief's defiance. Perhaps, by now, Chindi had given orders for his boys to bring in that second head thatched with fiery red hair.

The sudden unearthly yells of a couple of jackals brought Sam's head up with a jerk. The maverick prowlers of the jungles and veldt had scented death; they were slinking in for the feast.

Sam jerked his .303 Enfield across his knees, and made sure there was a shell in the breech.

"Plunderin' swine," he snarled.

"You'll never get him, though, neither you or those two-legged black jackals. Not while I'm alive. Turn back," he breathed. "Not until I've got that Black Ostrich devil with the one eye."

On his feet, Nolan glared out into the sinister night, his teeth gritted hard. His lips suddenly split open, and moved, though no audible sound issued. He had made a silent vow. Vengeance!

A little later he staggered down into a donga, and carefully lowered his uncle's heavy body to a carpet of long grass. For upwards of an hour he dug and scratched in the sandy donga bank.

With a few words, an improvised prayer, he laid Tom Nolan's remains to rest, and built a cairn of stones above and in front of the grave. With a last look around, he slowly mounted the bank, head set toward his camp.

Suddenly the jungle atmosphere began to throb with the roll of drums. Chindi's tom-toms were drumming their messages and warning into the ominous night.

In the kraals, stockaded enclosures, painted savages were collecting under their headmen, for the general assembly before the great father of chiefs, Chindi.

WHITE men had dared to venture up into the territory of the Boretse, at a time when the Black Ostrich Impi was about to begin its raid of adjoining tribal sectors, in search of heads, plunder and women.

It was written by the father of Chindi that no white must be permitted to enter the domain of the Boretse. Both Chindi and his father had once been victims of unscrupulous traders, blackbirding into the Transvaal. They had learned the ways of these white men. They were wise in the ways, speech and manners of many tribes—many men.

And now the drums were throbbing—calling all adult males of the Boretse to the council kraal of Chindi, an area whose pointed stockade poles were surmounted by rows of glistening skulls.

SAM NOLAN had heard a lot about Chindi. Hunters and traders who were lucky enough to escape from the land of the Boretse had brought with them strange tales—weird and seemingly far-fetched yarns of this stalwart tribe who retained the rites and traits of the fiercest of all aborigines. But Sam had taken most of these yarns with a grain or two of salt. He had never seen the tribe yet which couldn't be cowed with a good demonstration of white man's nerve, and bluff.

Up at the Boretse country there was good hunting—the very best. There were hill lions, big black-maned males; there was also a diamond lode. Plenty to lure such red-blooded adventurers as the Nolans.

"I'm goin' to get a line on that one-eyed black if it's the last thing I do," Sam grunted. "When either he, or I, have passed out, then it'll be time to think of turnin' back."

Back at his camp site, he busied himself slinging kit together. To the north, there was a protected donga, beyond a narrow neck of the immediate jungle. He and his uncle had been investigating that donga two days previously, when Tom had been ambushed. According to a chart Tom had received some months ago, it was in that donga that the diamond lode might be found.

"That's if you're cuckoo enough to think you'll ever get away with any stones, even if you find 'em," Tom's informer had said. "Them Boretse have a charmed ju-ju on everything in their country. If they take it in their heads that a durned hog is blessed with the ju-ju, you couldn't buy that critter for a hundred

pounds. Take my advice an' stay this side o' the Zambesi."

But the Nolans had both smiled. They were due for a long furlough. Getting together a few boys, they had formed a small safari and trekked north. The boys had long since left; but a good cache of food and ammunition was up in the Boretse country. Sam Nolan had two rifles, two Colts, and scads of ammunition. And now—while Chindi's drums continued to roll, the young Yank red-head began his in-jungle trek to the donga of many skulls.

Small life scuttled on every hand, as Sam threaded his way through the odorous scrub. He moved with the tread of a marauding jaguar, lithe, stealthy, pausing now and then, his gun wrist tensed. Eyes, green and amber, watched his every move. He was conscious of the danger which lurked in the jungle undergrowth, but unafraid. He had only one fear: the fear of death before he could draw down on the Black Ostrich warrior who had killed his best pal.

A BLACK-MANED lion, jaws low to the ground, sent a reverberating bellow rolling along the donga as Nolan drew up with his first load of supplies. There followed a swishing of the long dry grass, a thud, and then a deep throaty grumbling attended by the sloppy chortling of hungry fangs contacting with fresh, bloody meat.

"Nice neighbors I'm goin' to have," Sam mused. "By the gods of Limpopo! I'll have to clean house a bit, if I'm to take a lease on this donga." His reflection was suddenly cut short by a violent threshing at the scene of the kill.

The lion had been disturbed, and by his bellow of rage, Sam Nolan knew that human scent had thrown him into that frenzy.

"Boretse," the white man hissed. "He hasn't got wind of me. It's

blacks comin' in." The drums of Chindi had ceased. Save for the coughing of the angry lion, there was a tense hush clutching the African night.

Sam Nolan's whole frame now throbbed with misgiving. He jerked a shoulder gun harness into a position of comfort and gently toyed with the hammer of the big Colt in his right hand.

THE sudden call of a night bird broke the suspensive silence. The call was answered from a point at Nolan's rear.

Stooping, he picked up the huge pack he had discarded, and moved stealthily on.

"Better get my back against some solid rock," he ruminated. "That bird call was well done, but I'm not bein' fooled tonight. Ol' Tom Nolan's nephew, you're on the spot—" He brought his left upper arm in hard against the holster of his shoulder gun, and a mirthless grin played with the corners of his thin lips.

With a coughed roar of rage, a long, sleek lion lifted the remains of a small bok carcass and trotted on along the donga.

Sam lost no time in establishing a miniature fortress high in some rocky crags near the rim of the donga. His eyes were used to the blackness. He saw that both his Enfields were loaded, and placed them across the parapet of rocks he had built.

Then he sat back to wait, to watch—listening with ears bent for every single alien sound.

Suddenly he caught again the throb of drums. Immediately below him, from some point in the jungle trail, the drums of Chindi had commenced to roll. Nolan licked his parched lips. It occurred to him that he hadn't touched a single drop of water since supper, and his hand slid down for his canteen.

A harsh rasping of the long dry grass out front brought him up with a start.

Looking below, he spotted two dark shapes taking form. His rifle came slowly to his shoulder, and his finger took in first pressure on the trigger. But a sudden inward chuckle shook him.

"Nerves," he breathed. "Another minute and you'd have thrown away the works."

The two shadow shapes were two stunted m'pani trees. But, as Sam was quick to realize, m'pani trees do not cause the grass to rustle; nor do they beat drums. Forms, human forms, were closing about him in a circle of death. He tightened his nerve fibres and readied himself for immediate action.

Again the grass stirred, this time much closer to his rocky hideout. He started forward, his eyes trained on the point from which the last rasping had been heard. With a low snarl he flung up his Enfield. But—the warriors of Chindi's Black Ostrich Impi were clever. The stalwart forms at Nolan's back had not rustled any dry grass. They had crept up with the silence of the black mamba, while out front, other members of the tribe had purposely made sound. It was part of the strategem of these wily barbarians. It had been told by the great father of the Boretse, that one or more must become a sacrifice for the good of all.

NOLAN'S rifle cracked. A Boretse screamed, flung up his arms. The sacrifice had been made. But, before the gritty young Yank could pull again, something hard swished through space at his back.

With a sharp grunt he pitched forward, to drape himself across the rock parapet.

His knees buckled and he lay limp—completely out.

CHAPTER II

Father of All the Boretse

SAM awakened with a strong feeling of utter incredulity. As his fogged and throbbing senses slowly cleared, he became more and more amazed that he was actually alive. Weird sounds—shrieks and howls—marked the frenzied pitch of excitement into which the Boretse natives had flung themselves. It was a night for celebration, for one of the great white gods, whose hair was red, was a captive.

Fires shot their flame skyward, casting highlights on the painted bodies of dancing warriors of the Black Ostrich Impi. Nolan stared hard into the bedlam; then his eyes lifted to sweep the top of the stockades, where grinning skulls seemed to champ their skeleton jaws in the firelight.

Suddenly the drums began to beat wildly. A medicine man leaped between two fires and began to gyrate, distorting his frame in contortions that were hideously unusual. As much as he could, Nolan raised himself onto an elbow. The sight fascinated him. He had watched plenty of wild native celebrations, but this surpassed anything he had ever seen. His wrists and ankles were securely bound, but for all that he was not uncomfortable.

The medicine man leaped out of the flame mantle. He doubled his body and then began to stalk about like some strutting fowl, his squat nose well forward.

"Smellin' out evil spirits," thought the American. "Hope he doesn't find any in me. Maybe they don't habitate in a redhead."

Evidently they did not, for the hideously painted old relic moved back. With a wild upward fling of his arms he dashed to the edge of the Black Ostrich Impi and yelled aloud. Instantly the ranks of the

Impi opened, and a tall old native wearing an extraordinary head-dress of ostrich plumes strode into the center of the inner circle. Chindi had arrived—Chindi, the great chief of all the Boretse!

Sam Nolan's bonds were slit. He was jerked to his feet by two stalwart warriors, and propelled to the presence of the old chief.

It was not without a strong feeling of misgiving that Sam faced this fierce headman. Boretse had been known to eat the flesh of their own kind, as well as that of whites. They were known to be the most savage tribe north of the Zambesi. Tonight they were in a high pitch of frenzy, ripe for torture—Nolan realized that his chances of escape were mighty slim. But, instead of wilting, he shook his well-muscled frame, and grinned.

Chindi was speaking, clucking gutturally in a tongue which Sam didn't understand. The American shook his head. For a long moment there was silence, then, to Sam's amazement, the old chief began to cluck in a mixture of Kaffir, and broken, west coast English.

"A-H-H—O-OH! You of the red-head, I'm not make too plenty palaver. You have the ju-ju charm in that red hair, or long time, while you sleep, you plenty much dead. Speak—what like you do plenty time up here in Boretse country? You seek the stones that glitter like stars, the stones of the Sacred Donga of Boretse?" Chindi thrust his evil face close to Nolan's. Sam bit hard at his nether lip.

"I'd like to poke that mug one," he told himself. But aloud, he said, through a wide grin:

"O, mighty father of the great Boretse, I come not for the stones of the Sacred Donga—but, together with my uncle, he of the red hair whom you ordered killed, to hunt

the blackmaned Simba. Chindi, great one, you made plenty time mistake, when you ordered the red headed one killed. He was a great man among his people and a servant of the Father of all whites. One time, plenty soon, white police army come here to look for the two redheads. *Wyanda gashli*, O, great one. Go cautiously. You have been outside. You know the power of the police army boys plenty much."

A SUDDEN clucking off to Nolan's right caused him to turn sharply. A medicine man was talking to a group of warriors, and though Nolan couldn't quite catch what was said, he knew that the old spirit keeper had understood his words, and was interpreting. He saw also, that these men were shooting evil eyes at their chief; and at once, the quick-witted American saw an opening.

"H'm," he breathed to himself. "The old fellow isn't ace-high with all the gang. There's a couple of factions in this camp, if I'm not out. This batch of greasy blacks off here are out to get the old boy's throne, or something—"

"You make palaver to yourself, redhead," suddenly barked the chief. "You one time, all time speak to Chindi, lest an assegai suddenly slit out your tongue. A-h-h—o-oh!—Listen not to the grunting of those jackals. I am the father of all Boretse; and now—redhead, you are to die. What do I care, one time, all time, for police palaver and army boys? I have the great Black Ostrich Impi with me. E-e-eya-ah-h— It is in the signs that you die."

"Yeah? Well, listen, old father of the wise," snapped Nolan. "I don't think this Black Ostrich outfit is so great. Pluck off those baubles, and the feathers, and I'd knock any one of 'em down before breakfast."

Sam Nolan knew that he was tread-

ing on dangerous ice. But he knew also that his only chance was to play on the pride of the old chief to whom the Black Ostrich Impi were great and all-powerful. Inwardly, Nolan hadn't many doubts about the strength of those stalwart warriors, who were the most powerful he had ever seen.

"You speak with the tongue of a goat, redhead," Chindi countered, with a snarl. "You have the frame of a young lion, true. You have the neck of an ox, and arms that are plenty much strong, but I could bring a Black Ostrich warrior from his hut, who would one time, all time, crush you like plenty sponge."

"Well, trot him out, Chindi," Sam jerked. "Listen, I'll make a deal. I'll fight the best warrior you've got—bare handed. If he kills me, well, I won't know anything about it. If I kill him—I go free. Put that up to your witch doctor, O great one, whose tongue never lies. How?"

The chief's eyes caught and flashed back the highlights of the leaping fires. His pride had been touched; as well, his lust for battle had been quenched with the very thought. He suddenly brought up his arms. The witch doctor leaped forward. Chindi spoke to him in Boretse.

NOLAN thought he caught an evil leer spread over the medicine man's face. The ancient dropped back, nodding and clucking to the men with whom he sat. At once, the entire encampment broke out in a pandemonium of sound such as brought a cold shiver down Nolan's spine. Black, painted savages leaped to replenish the fires with fuel. Goats were killed, and a few young calves. But, Sam was quick to note, the famous Black Ostrich Impi took no part in this new outburst. They stood stolidly, grandly, by their chief, watching every move of the witch doctor and his cohorts.

"You agree?" Sam shot at Chindi. "You are going to give me a chance to get clear one time, O great one? I fight a member of the Black Ostrich Impi. If I win, I go free. Have I spoken with wisdom?"

"E-e-eya-ah! With the wisdom of a fool, but with plenty truth. I bring one who will crush you in the first grip. He is my chief headsman—M'nguta. He comes. Prepare yourself."

SAM NOLAN stepped back to the witch doctor. In the same form as he had addressed Chindi, he spoke to the witch doctor.

"O, wise one, I leave my clothes in your care. I want none touched, savvy? Now, bring me a *mooche*, and water."

The witch doctor snapped an order at a lounging attendant who hurried away, to return with a *mooche*—loin cloth—and a gourd of water. Sam whipped the *mooche* securely into place. He took a handkerchief from his shirt lying nearby, and soaked it well with water. This he placed at the waist-band of the loin cloth. He rinsed out his mouth, and bathed his brows. Now he began to dance on his toes, to flex his muscles. For nearly ten minutes he put himself through a muscle-limbering workout. Then he wiped his naked body with a damp cloth and leaped into the fire-encircled ring.

Suddenly the hair on the back of his neck raised; a low grunt escaped him, a grunt he was forced to suppress. For out of the ranks of the Black Ostrich Impi there leaped a tremendously built savage, whose left eye was gone.

Sam Nolan snarled through his clenched teeth. Here was the man who had ambushed his best pal, his last remaining relative on earth. Here was Tom Nolan's murderer—

The young Yank's every fibre danced with the urge to kill. Ven-

geance! He seemed to hear the voice of Tom Nolan calling to him. But in spite of the emotional upheaval which surged through his feverish mind, Sam quickly snapped himself free from all thoughts but the one which predominated from this point on. He had no fear of this man who could have given him forty pounds in weight. He had no fear of death. But he knew that he was going to have the fight of his life. This Black Ostrich headman was one of the most superb figures Nolan had ever seen. As well, he was cruel, a savage at heart. That rippling naked body stood between Nolan and freedom.

Chindi suddenly clapped his hands. M'nguta leaped high in the air toward the red-headed white. Nolan rolled off right, and swung a savage uppercut which caught the savage in under his right ear. He staggered back grunting. Natives shrieked with delight. Now Nolan jerked his body into a crouch. He danced around the natural arena, testing the footing. Suddenly he whipped in a hard left and brought a doubled fist up from somewhere close to his knees.

M'nguta roared with anger as his broad nose squashed almost all over his face. An evil light leaped from his single eye now. And he began to prowl, cautiously stalking the dancing redhead, ready to leap at the first single opportunity.

THE attack came with such suddenness that Nolan was bowled off balance. M'nguta had catapulted his big frame with a speed that was startling. One of his shoulders took Nolan on the left side, sending him spinning. He reeled forward and then a mountain of flesh descended on him. He was flat to the ground. Two savage hands were reaching round to his throat, forward.

Boretse natives crowded in, danc-

ing in their excitement, their sweating bodies, greased and painted, permeating the atmosphere with a nauseous odor. Drums began to throb.

Sam Nolan was conscious of the roll of the native drums. He had his body bridged, tense, expecting each second to feel his head jerked back in a neck-breaking move. But M'nguta, feeling himself to be master of the situation, was grandstanding for the benefit of Chindi; and for the eyes of the witch doctor and his cohorts who hated Chindi and the Black Ostrich Impi with a growing, sinister hate.

TO the amazement of all watchers, Nolan's gleaming body suddenly heaved. All in a flash, he rolled and was on his feet. One of his feet struck out and jammed into the bewildered face of M'nguta in the act of leaping up. Sam had caught him in a half crouch, bowling him over in a backward somersault. Now, with all the fire of vengeance flooding his mind, the red-headed Irish-Yank hurled himself forward. He clapped a hard leg split on the savage, rabbit-punching him mercilessly whenever the black attempted to come up.

Like a pack of wild dogs, the Boretse inched closer in. Their eyes were focused on the rippling muscles of the white man, which now stood out like separate members on his superb body. He was bitterly punishing this giant beneath him, possessed completely by a wild urge to kill. It was either his life or M'nguta's.

But the strain began to tell on young Nolan. He sagged, a little dizzily, not having completely recovered from the blow he had received on his capture. Now he cautiously slipped a hand to the belt of his loin cloth and pulled out the soaked handkerchief. This he squeezed into his mouth, and then

bathed his forehead quickly. But the flash second's respite had given M'nguta the chance to break. The black came out of the hold, a howling demon. On his feet, he charged; but Nolan side-stepped, and began to stall for a breather.

Chindi was clucking at M'nguta in a fast barrage of Boretse. Nolan sensed that he was now about to face the huge black's supreme effort. The tribal chief had thrust himself well forward to the edge of the circle, and was calling on his chief henchman to kill, in the honor of the Black Ostrich Impi.

Sam's brief respite and wash-up had refreshed him. He began to dance again, mincing around the warrior. Suddenly he caught a stealthy movement of the other's hand, up to the back of his head-dress. A tense hush had fallen on the stockaded kraal. The deep breathing of men, and the crackling fires, were all the sounds to mar the suspensive quiet.

Nolan knew that M'nguta was about to spring something devilish. He leaped quickly to one side. In a flash the native's hand struck forward. Almost too late Sam caught the gleam of firelight on the creamy belly of a small snake. He dived, and a spitting black adder missed him by inches. One of the most deadly of all venomous snakes was pounded to death by the club of the witch doctor as its head pulled back for attack.

BREATHING heavily Nolan came around to face his man again. M'nguta's was worked into a terrible frenzy. His great chest heaved in rapid undulations, and the muscles of his painted face twitched hideously. The adder he had charmed with special ju-ju to make his kill had failed him. Natives of the lower order were jeering now.

"E-e-eya-ah-h—" M'nguta uttered his piercing battle scream and leap-

ed high, a magnificent gesture, clear across the human-ringed arena. Sam Nolan again minced out of range of that flying body. He swerved quickly, and swung two straights to the small of M'nguta's back. As the savage howled with pain, and whirled, Nolan leaped in a flying tackle. He was determined to end the fight one way or another right now.

But, instead of hurling his body full at M'nguta's, he aimed slightly off left. And then his powerful right arm leaped out in a hook. The impact was terrific. Nolan had caught his uncle's slayer with the hook, under the chin. The impact carried them both on in a rolling mass of limbs.

DOWN, Sam jerked himself free. His fists began to thrash the other's face and chest and stomach. He was a bruising, red-hot avenger, intending to pound until he dropped. Blood smeared his body, glistening brightly, grotesquely. He sat astride the limp form of the savage, continuing to pound until a hand clutched him and drew him back.

"M'nguta, one time all time plenty dead," crooned the voice of the witch doctor. "Waugh! Death to all men of Chindi!"

Sam Nolan began to see light. He stared down at the limp form of M'nguta. His flying hook tackle had severed the savage's neck vertebrae. He, Sam Nolan, was the victor. He was being hailed as something more. By the gods, he must continue to play up. And he knew what they wanted.

With a grandiose gesture, he stooped and plucked the Black Ostrich headdress from the dead savage's skull. He tossed it to the ground and stamped it with his feet, an odd grin twisting his features as he did so. Then he clapped the headdress over his red-thatched crown and planted a firm foot on the chest of

the savage warrior he had beaten.

"Look Chindi—all of you," he belated. "I—I—" He looked in vain for Chindi. The chief and most of his Black Ostrich followers had disappeared. Drums throbbed, men screeched—Chindi and his followers were being ignominiously drummed from power.

The witch doctor and his cohorts had taken over. They were now advancing on Nolan. He felt himself suddenly seized and lifted in mid-air. For upwards of half an hour he was toted about the entire native village on the shoulders of two towering giants.

Later, when he insisted that he be put down, he was placed in the high-backed rock seat formerly occupied by Chindi. The witch doctor was out before him, making signs, smelling out.

"Here!" Sam bellowed, as the man came strutting in close. "What's all this about? I want my clothes, then something to eat, and a sleep. What's happened to Chindi?"

"Chindi—e-e-eya-ah! The dog of dogs has at last gone, one time, plenty all time. You, O great one of red heads, are now chief and father of all Boretse. You stay, and all is yours, including the star stones of the Sacred Donga. All these are your warriors— E-e-e-ya-a-ah-h—" The doctor broke off with a long piercing scream.

"WELL, I'll be hanged!" Sam gulped. "Chief of the Boretse, huh! Boss of this bunch of man-eaters! If this old medicine maker thinks I'm goin' to camp in his settlement longer than one good sleep, he's a lot more stupid than he looks." Sam's mind was made up to get clear at the first opportunity, but he knew that any unguarded attempt would be fraught with untold danger. It would be well for the young American to watch his step, very carefully.

CHAPTER III

A Task Completed

THE pleasant odor of frying meat assailed Nolan's nostrils. He had slept soundly for more than fourteen hours. He stirred, and rolled over on his side. Two native women kept up the circulation of cool air in the hut by waving reed fans back and forth. At the foot of his sleeping mat a slender feminine form was seated. Her large eyes, turned on his, were like a doe's.

He waved the two women to the door, beckoned to the soft-eyed girl. She seemed strangely alien to the usual type of the Boretse.

"You one time savvy make Kaffir palaver?" he jerked.

The girl shot a startled glance about her, peering out through the hut entrance. Then she stole in close to Nolan and bent her face down, so that her words could be heard as she spoke in little more than a whisper.

"So— I speak all time much palaver as you, redhead. I am not of the Boretse, but a daughter of the L'ngami. Chindi brought me for one time girl wife; now witch doctor say your wife. Chindi good, plenty good. Witch doctor—e-e-eya-ah! Snake—devil-devil."

"Listen," Nolan spoke slowly, disregarding her explanation of her presence there. "What I want is a little more of the low-down on this witch doctor an' his gang. This witch doctor—Chindi—tell one time all about?"

The girl shot another glance about her, then for ten minutes poured out the story Nolan wanted to hear. It was at the medicine man's instigation that Chindi had forced his raids upon the white people. Actually, Chindi was a peaceful leader, interested in the welfare of his tribe. But the witch doctor had great powers

—the powers of smelling out good and bad spirits, and plenty of ju-ju charm.

He had long since hoped to oust Chindi from the headmanship of the tribe.

The physical power of the Black Ostrich Impi alone had held Chindi to his chieftainship. But Nolan had broken that power. With his bare hands, this son of a red-headed father god had defeated the best of Chindi's prized warriors.

But—Chindi was good. The witch doctor was bad. Nolan could feel the sincerity of the girl's logic. He lay back now and stared up into the occasional darts of sunlight which penetrated the roof thatching. Then, with a jerk, he suddenly pulled himself to a sitting posture.

"You one time, all time keep your mouth shut, sister?" he snapped.

"All time, redhead—plenty all time," came the whispered reply.

"**T**HEN just wait—watch. I want my fire pipes and the devil-devil spikes that go with them to make kill, taken and hidden on the road to Chindi's new camp. You will wait for me on the night of the first moon. I will join you, one time, at the neck of the Sacred Donga. You guide me to Chindi. I'm going up and throw some backbone into the old boy, then lead him an' his Black Ostrich Impi back against this witch doctor and his gangsters. E-e-eya-ahh. Go now, daughter of a wise father. Bring water—plenty, with bowl."

Nolan made known by sign that he wanted a biggish bowl. He wanted to swab down his body and clear it of matted blood. Then—well, he didn't quite know what. He'd have to give his new councillors an audience, or some other such mockery. In any case, he intended to watch his step until the night of the first moon. Then—his fate, and the fate of Chindi, lay in the lap of the gods.

Wherever Nolan moved, stealthy forms lurked off in the shadows.

The crafty old witch doctor was determined that this red-headed god chief should not escape. Sam began to fear that he would not be able to carry out his plans for the night of the first moon.

CRAFTILY, he had urged a feast for that night. His men now sat around, smoking a rare dope weed, *dagha*, which already was beginning to work, its effects much like the opium pipe. Nolan had ordered the killing of many small red cattle. He wanted these half doped natives fully gorged.

As he watched them feed, and smoke their weed, his eyes never left those of the witch doctor, who sat squatted, ever making signs with a forked stick in the sand, or casting dried meats of fruit into the flames. But Noan knew, also, that he himself was being watched.

Through the good services of the girl, Nolan had gotten back his Colt and about twenty rounds of ammunition. He could have shot down that hunched, despicable form, but he didn't wish to precipitate any avalanche of trouble.

Suddenly he drew himself to his full height, and clapped his hands for the witch doctor.

"Tonight, I go out to bring down a moon—a moon to light up our feast kraal, O wise one," he intoned, "I promised to show my power with the white spirits which, though not so great as yours, are very great. I bring a moon." Sam knew that there would be a new moon, for he and his uncle had intended to shoot black-maned lion tonight.

"E-e-eya-ah!—But, *wyanda gashli*, O redhead," crooned the witch doctor, with meaning. "Devil-devil ju-ju hides in the shadows. I will see that two of my faithful Black Impi attend you."

Nolan's lower jaw fell. He couldn't shake this old devil charmer. His hand slid slowly into his shirt and rested on the butt of a gun. But he didn't pull. The witch doctor had as good as told him that some of the warriors were not feasting or smoking. Somewhere in the shadows there lurked those assegai wielders who would strike at a sign from their hideous master.

BUT Sam was determined to go. He flung out his arms in a wide, grandiose gesture, and stamped his foot.

"Is it the redhead who gives orders here, wise one; or have you taken the place of Chindi? Waugh! I go to make light out of darkness. Have a care, lest I bring some ju-ju upon you—a fast flame which suddenly eats out your heart. If you send men to watch me—they die! Two may follow at a distance—two only!"

Without another glance at the old medicine maker, he strode grandly from the scene. Ahead, at the edge of the jungles, a slim form flitted into the fastness. Nolan's big chest heaved. He was walking clear of the kraal—clear of the camp. By just keeping his wits about him, and his iron nerve, he was moving toward the gateway to eventual escape. In any case, he was going where he would have the chance to fight his way out of the devil-devil stockade of danger which hemmed him in.

As he entered the jungle trail, he caught the throb of a drum. His heart missed a beat. Was this the mark of the witch doctor's black treachery? Instead of sending two men as a bodyguard, had he posted sentries all over?

Nolan moved on—on—walking with the grace of an ancient mythical god. But, spotting a patch of clearing ahead, he gave a sudden leap. *S-s-swish-h*. An assegai sang through empty air to come up hard

against a tree past the Yank's head. He ducked and skirted a clump of mimosa scrub. Footsteps padded. Sam saw an arm upraised. His Colt came out, bellowing.

Crack! He fired again, and a tall native flung up his arms. Sam could hear forms cutting in from several points. For the moment he was at a loss to know which way to strike. But the sudden beating of a war drum at his back brought him around. At the far side of a small clearing the girl was waiting, beckoning. With a swift glance about him, Sam leaped through space, and the friendly jungle swallowed him and the slender form at his side.

He knew that he had stirred up the Boretse now under the witch doctor's control. If he and the girl could only get to Chindi's encampment in time, before they were assegaied from behind, there was a chance—

Nolan had the girl to thank for the fact that, before long, a detail of Chindi's Black Ostrich Impi suddenly appeared as if by magic, to close in on the pair from the rear. In another hour, or slightly more, Sam Nolan was again in the presence of the scowling chief and father of the Boretse.

"SO, you come again to make plenty palaver, O redhead," the chieftain clucked. "Yuh-wah, if there is more devil-devil ju-ju in your heart, I will slit it out for you. My wife tells me that you bring some plan, some magic palaver. Speak, O white god!"

"Not bad, Chindi, not bad," grinned Nolan. "Now listen: Get some backbone into this Ostrich outfit, one time. The girl's got my guns cached close in for me. I'll make fire through the tubes that kill, savvy? You belong all time, back in the Boretse kraals. I don't. You plenty savvy?"

"Unh! Speak on, white, wise red-head."

"We move at once, silently. No drums. Give me about twenty of the Impi. I go ahead with the guns. We raise plenty hell-fire one time. Then you come up with the main Ostrich group. So. I have spoken. But—I'm to have a bodyguard one time, soon, to get me out through the Sacred Donga, where I pick up a few star stones. You savvy, O great one? Any black treachery, and I shrivel up your heart."

"E-e-eyahahh. Thou hast spoken well, wise one. We are ready. Go—I give you all time plenty Black Ostrich warrior. Death to the witch doctor and his jackals!"

And, before the grey dawn filtered in, Sam Nolan was pumping hot lead from his Enfields. At the head of the yelling Black Ostrich Impi, the gritty Yank burned into the kraals, where half-doped Boretsets made feeble efforts to rally around their screaming witch doctor.

Assegais and long spears swished through space. Nolan took a rap alongside the head from the shaft of a spear which might have cleaved his jugular had it not been for the timely arm of one of Chindi's supporters who shoved him to one side.

HALF stunned, the Yank reeled for a moment. He was suddenly whisked back to full consciousness by a piercing scream. He leaped to one side in the nick of time as a wildly-painted form leaped in before a fire. A blade flashed. Nolan ducked, to come up with his Colts aflame. A henchman of the witch doctor crashed back, to be swallowed by the crackling flames of a feast fire.

Now the Black Ostrich under

Chindi hurled their full force forward. Nolan felt his work was done. He backed against a hut to watch the devilish phantasmagoria he had touched off—painted bodies leaping in the firelight, rimmed by that ever grinning circle of gleaming skulls around the rim of the stockade.

Suddenly the Yank's attention was caught by the tall form of Chindi. The old chief had discarded his robes of office, and was now almost stark naked, magnificent in spite of his age. He had glimpsed the witch doctor. With an unearthly yell, a yell which defied the ju-ju charm of the medicine maker, the chief struck, and his assegai sank deep.

SAM NOLAN sighed, and turned into the hut. His work was done. Tomorrow he would call at the Sacred Donga, pick up a few diamonds of immense value, and with Black Ostrich warriors as his carrier boys, he would move down to civilization.

"And, after this, you'll spend all your furloughs at the seaside," he breathed. "Poor ol' Tom— Too bad you weren't in at the finish, buddy. It was great—one of the best scraps I ever had."

His eyes filled with mist as he thought of his uncle. But he tightened his lids, and choked back the sadness. Tom Nolan had gone out with his boots on. He had always expressed the desire to go that way.

Long before the bedlam of sound had ceased in the kraals where Chindi the all-great was being feasted, Sam Nolan was snoring rhythmically; while, seated nearby, ever on the watch, the daughter of a L'ngami chief fanned a gentle breeze across his face, a face stained with sweat, stubble and blood.

*Arthur J. Burks, Ray Cummings, Johnston McCulley, Robert E. Howard,
Captain Kerry McRoberts and Other Popular Authors in Next
Month's Gala Issue of THRILLING ADVENTURES*

The SAGE of the **SAGEBRUSH**



Anse Apperson's
horse went hurtling
into the
dust

*Cornered by a Gang of Hard-Bitten Desperados, Sheriff
Apperson Plunges into Roaring Action!*

By **SAM BRANT**

Author of "Smoky Guns," "Trail to New Mexico," etc.

"GIT 'em up an' keep 'em
up because there's guns
a-coverin' every last one
o' yuh gents!"

Sheriff Anse Apperson brought his horse to a sudden halt and quickly threw up his hands. The others in the posse, that had just slid down

through the darkness of the night into the bed of an arid arroyo, followed the example of their leader.

"It's all right, Morton," came a gruff voice from the deep shadows ahead of them. "Yuh kin ride away from 'em now an' drop off."

"Yuh're sure yuh kin see me, all

right?" the man addressed asked cautiously. "Yuh won't make no mistake, will yuh?"

"We ain't makin' no mistakes tonight, Sim," replied the voice that had spoken before. "We kin see yuh all right an' see all th' rest of 'em, too."

"Okay, Bunker," said Morton, riding a few feet ahead of the posse and slipping from his horse. "Everything went fine, Bunker—we fooled 'em all around."

"What's happenin', Morton?" asked Sheriff Anse Apperson in a distressed voice. "I thought yuh was takin' us over to Cottonwood to—"

"Thet's jest what we wanted yuh to think, Apperson," replied Morton with a jubilant note in his voice. "An' now, I reckon I'll sort'a collect yore guns."

Sim Morton, like a sinister shadow in the night, passed from man to man among the riders in the posse, wrenching their guns from their holsters and tossing them into the rocks that littered the bottom of the arroyo.

THEN they came weaving out of the blackness, nearly two score of hard-bitten desperados, members of the notorious Bunker Hill gang that had been spreading terror along the Border from some unknown fastness in the wilds.

"Tie 'em up an' we'll be on our way into Gunsight," ordered a grim-faced man whom Sheriff Anse Apperson recognized as Hill. "We'll loot thet place proper tonight."

"It'll be a cinch, toc, Bunker, 'cause most o' the men in Gunsight thet ain't in this yere posse are over to a dance in Corral City," said Sim Morton. "Th' set-up was made to order fer us, Bunker."

"I'll fix yuh fer this some day, Hill!" snapped young Sheriff Apperson. "Yuh fooled me this time with yore man Morton, there, bringin' in

the word that Suarez was makin' a raid on Cottonwood, but—"

"Yuh moo like a yearlin', feller," growled Bunker Hill viciously, "but yuh won't do no more some day than yuh're doin' right now!"

"It's all my fault, Anse," came the tortured voice of one of the posse men. "These gents picked me up whilst I was ridin' toward Gunsight, an' Morton threatened to kill me ef I didn't back up his story. He would have, too, if—"

"**I**T'S good fer yuh thet yuh realized thet, feller," said Morton to Bill Bascomb. "If yuh'd as much as peeped while we were in th' sheriff's office, I'd killed yuh *pronto*. An' Mister Apperson, too."

While the talk was going on, the men from Gunsight, having dismounted from their horses at the gruff command of Bunker Hill, were being rapidly trussed up and tossed to the ground.

"Mebbe we'll come back this way an' untie yuh gents after we've taken yore town apart an' grabbed th' pieces we want," said Hill savagely. "An' then, ag'in, mebbe we won't."

"Yuh oughta leave someone here to watch 'em, Bunker!" warned Morton. "One of 'em might manage to git loose an'—"

"Yuh're right about thet, Sim," agreed the leader of the desperados. "Yuh'd better stay here yoreself an' take keer of 'em."

"Me, I'd like to ride into Gunsight with th' rest of yuh," objected Morton quickly, "an' see th' fun."

"Stay here, Sim, an' keep a watchful eye on them gents," replied Bunker Hill placatingly. "I'll bring yuh back a good-lookin' gal ef yuh'll do jest like I ask yuh."

They rode away, down the arroyo.

In the momentary silence that followed their departure, Sheriff Anse Apperson lay brooding in weary silence. For months he had been on

the trail of not one, but two, marauding gangs which had been spreading terror along the Border. Bunker Hill and his desperados had been striking with monotonous regularity; and the Mexican, Suarez, and his outlaws also had been making frequent forays over the Border.

Sheriff Apperson had spent the day in Corral City, twenty miles south of the county seat of Gunsight, and it had been dusk when he had arrived home, spent and exhausted. He scarcely had entered his office, helped himself to a drink, and rolled a cigarette, when Bill Bascomb had ridden up with Morton, a stranger to Apperson.

They had brought the news that Suarez had descended on Cottonwood, ten miles to the north of Gunsight. The Mexican and his renegades had been driven off, however, and cornered out in the hills; and Morton said, if the sheriff would come quickly with a posse it might be possible to capture them.

APPERSON had listened in silence, toying with a cartridge that lay on his desk, and then he had summoned Red Rutherford, his deputy.

"Stay here in the office, Red, while I go out with Bascomb and Morton here an' round up a posse," he had ordered. "Sorta clean up that desk an' lock it, will yuh, an' git ready to come along with us to Cottonwood."

They had gone galloping out of town a few minutes later, a dozen grim-faced, determined men. And now—

"Well, boys, I reckon that I walked right into th' trap," remarked Anse Apperson ruefully. "Instead o' gittin' Suarez an' his gang, Bunker Hill an' his outlaws got us. That pole-cat, Morton—"

"Don't call me no pole-cat, feller!" snapped Morton angrily. "I'll put a bullet through yore ugly mug ef yuh laid him out cold.

But, as Morton stood there, a figure rose up behind him. The outlaw whirled quickly, but not quickly enough to save himself from the blow of a descending gun barrel that laid him out cold before his finger could even squeeze the trigger of his gun.

"UNTIE us, Mongrain, *pronto*, or yore general store'll be generally all over this yere part of the country!" exclaimed Sheriff Anse Apperson. "We gotta git goin'!"

"But whut's it all about, Anse?" drawled the figure who had so fortunately appeared.

"Never mind whut it's all about, Pat!" exclaimed Apperson. "No time to talk now!"

Three minutes later they were on their way, leaving Morton behind, trussed up so securely that he would be quite as helpless when he regained consciousness. Their horses ploughed up the side of the old arroyo; and, with Sheriff Anse Apperson a little in the lead, they headed back toward Gunsight.

Hill and his men had not had more than fifteen or twenty minutes start on them. But, in that time, well mounted men could cover a long stretch of highway; and, in a few minutes, much can happen in a bandit-ridden town.

The posse forged steadily along through the moonlit, mysterious silences of the desert waste until they could see the dark outlines of the low buildings of Gunsight. Then, suddenly, the crackle of distant gunfire came vibrating through the silence of the silvery night!

"Come on, now, boys!" Apperson yelled, his horse leaping suddenly forward in response to a touch of the spurs. "Come on an' git 'em!"

They swept swiftly along.

"Spread out jest a bit an' surround 'em!" cracked the sheriff. "An don't let a one of 'em git away!"

Bunker Hill and his gang had descended blithely upon the bank in Gunsight, but there they had met with unexpected and disastrous resistance. Sweeping down upon the little structure, they had gone plunging into bayonets of flame which had stabbed viciously into them.

THEY were in a state of amazed confusion when, as silently as apparitions, Anse Apperson and his men came looming down upon them.

"Give 'em everythin', boys!" roared Apperson, drawing his own guns and pouring fire toward the bandits who were scattering for their horses.

Here and there one of the rifle-armed desperados made a stand; and, here and there, they crumpled down.

"There goes Hill!" some one shouted in the ear of Anse Apperson. The sheriff, turning swiftly in his saddle, saw a mounted figure streaking away toward the south.

"Let me get 'im—he's mine!" yelled Apperson, wheeling his horse.

He touched his spurs to the flanks of his mount and the animal, as if sensing the enraged urge of its rider, took wings toward the fleeing Hill. Slowly the gap closed between the pursuer and the pursued.

Suddenly Hill drew his horse to a sliding halt, wheeled in a cloud of dust, threw up a rifle and took slow and careful aim.

But Sheriff Anse Apperson again touched his spurs to his horse and continued his swift flight straight toward the death-bolt that was threatening him.

Anse Apperson's horse, struck by an errant bullet, went hurtling down into the dust and its rider went catapulting through the air. But, even as the sheriff was whirling through space, he had his gun in his hand; and when he landed and went spinning along through the heavy dust, he kept it tightly in his grasp. He held it when he scrambled to his

feet—breathless, shaken, half-blinded with the powdery alkali.

Dimly he saw a vague figure riding away into the night. He pulled the trigger once, for he realized that he had only one shot left.

A hundred yards away, a man rode suddenly into a night far darker than the desert night in which the pale, cold moon was shining. And Sheriff Anse Apperson rode back into Gunsight on Hill's mount, leaving a dead man and a dead horse behind him.

HE saw, at a glance, that the law had been the victor, that the Bunker Hill gang was gone or would be, soon. "A lot of 'em are dead, Anse," Red Rutherford advised him in a satisfied voice. "Only half a dozen or so left fer us to hang."

"Well, don't hang 'em—not now," warned Sheriff Anse Apperson in a tired voice. "I'm sorta weary o' seein' men die—fer th' present."

"I got that note yuh wrote with the bullet in that cartridge, Anse. I did just like yuh told me about slip-pin' th' word to someone to send a couple o' men after us an' to have th' bank guarded," said Red curiously. "But I don't understand—yet."

"I knew that that fellow Morton was lyin' when he said the Suarez gang had raided Cottonwood and I suspected that Hill might have set a trap fer us," said Sheriff Anse Apperson. "Morton was watchin' me all the time in the office an' I knew that, if my suspicions were right, he'd continue t' keep his eyes—an' ears—on me. He didn't think I was writin' yuh a message when he saw me playing with that cartridge."

"That's all right—I can savvy that," said Red. "But why did you think Morton was lying—that Suarez wasn't in Cottonwood?"

"Because Suarez rode into Corral City while I was there today," said Sheriff Anse Apperson, "an' I laid a bullet right between his eyes."

The Thing That Flew at Night

*Terror and Tragedy in the
Wake of a Ghostly
Black Plane with
Bat Wings!*

A Complete Novelette

By **JOE ARCHIBALD**

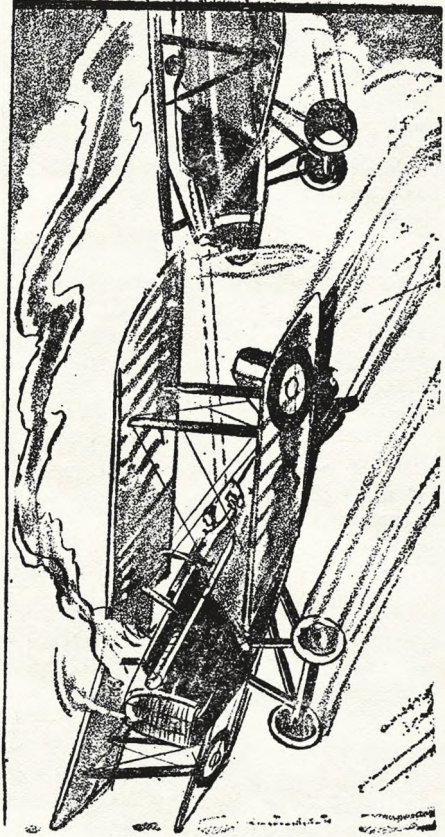
*Author of "Time Will Tell," "The Calico
Noose," etc.*

CHAPTER I

Death in the Chateau

THE old chateau jutted up from the rocky gums of the terrain like a great decaying giant tooth. It loomed, mist-wreathed, a relic of Norman splendor. Great old gnarled trees surrounded it, seeming to cuddle the proud ruin and so to warm its aging bones. But long since, the dust of years and the webs of countless spiders had erased all the many evidences of medieval grandeur.

Life had returned to the old chateau. It had come with the thundering roar of guns, the whine of shrapnel amid the hellish din of flying furies. Boots *clump-clumped* across the old floors, boots of a host from across the sea. In the high-ceilinged banquet hall, around a massive table, sat thirteen men. The wavering flame of a score of candles

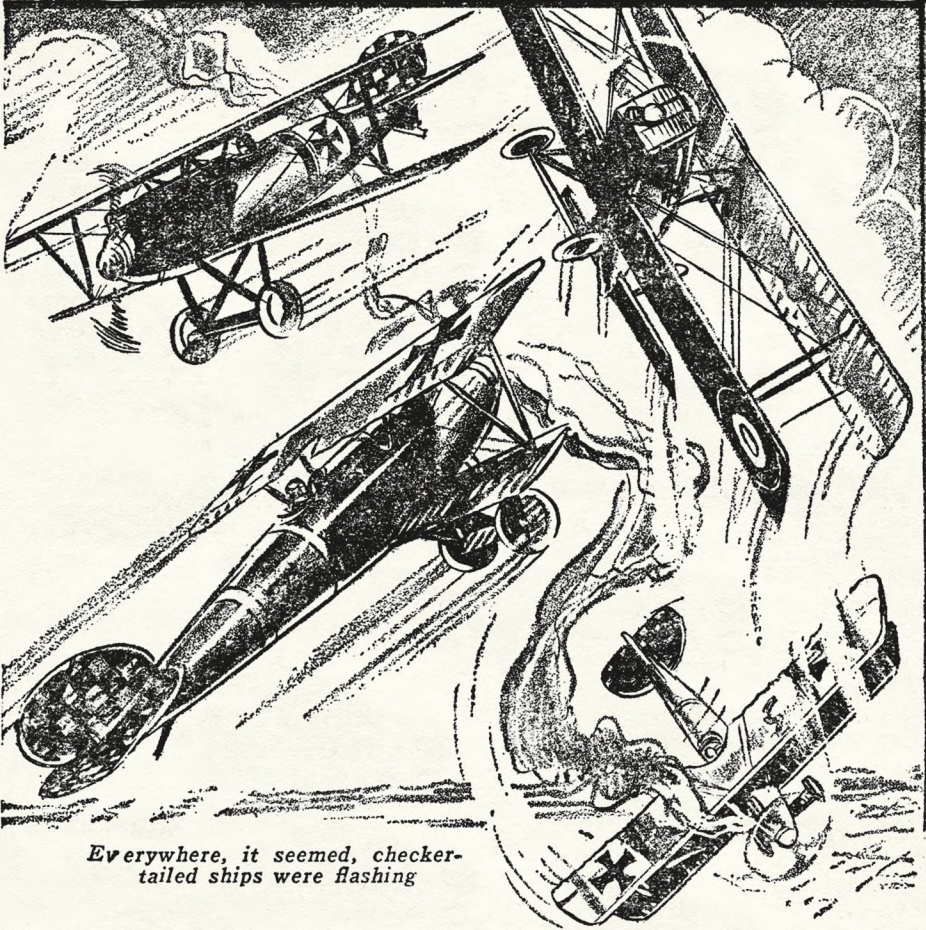


lighted up their faces. The chateau now sheltered the pilots of Squadron 16, American Flying Corps. At the foot of the slope sweeping down from the chateau, there squatted rotting canvas hangars and groundmen's barracks, the field of fire-splitting S. E. 5s.

The squadron's men who crowded the festive board of the old chateau were characteristically synonymous with their surroundings. Thirteen faces so hard they could have been hewn from oak.

Grim-lipped, *keen-eyed* fighters who rode the gale. This was the famous 16th Squadron.

One of the band of buzzards had brought down the great von Mueller two months before. They were a marked group. Boche pilots had served notice on them to expect no quarter.



Everywhere, it seemed, checker-tailed ships were flashing

No untried youngster had ever crossed the threshold of the old chateau. When one of the 16th died, a man who had already been baptized in Mars' seething cauldron came up to fill the gap. And of the eighteen fighting men who had originally made up the 16th group, but four remained—Ballister, Ratoff, Fleming and Devore.

IT was Ballister's personality now that seemed to dominate the group that crowded the ancient table. Ballister was a big hulk of a man with a tumbled thatch of tawny hair. His fists, like huge knots of wood, were placed on the table in front of him. The flight leader's face was broad and square-jawed. A spattering of freckles was barely discernible under

the skin ravaged to swarthiness by the elements.

"Buzzards," Ballister said, "von Mueller was a liar. I'm disappointed in the Prussian. He always said if we got him, it would not be the end of him. Said he'd come back. Well, where is he, eh? I always wanted somebody to show me that the dead can walk. And if they do, this is just the place for a dead man to take a stroll. Ghosts all around us carrying broadswords and shields," he laughed.

Devore grinned. He looked up, stared at something nailed to the wall.

The eerie candle-light played on a picture of the late von Mueller. A page torn out of a magazine.

"Even his own crowd of Junkers

always said he was a little mad, that Hun," Devore clipped out. "I'm not worrying about his ghost. The guys I'm watching close are those bullet-headed Boche he left behind." He lifted a glass to the picture. "Here's to you, Baron. I hope you smother in your shroud."

Fleming laughed and crushed a cigarette into a dish. Ratoff, the well-born Slav, seemed to shiver. A sickly smile played on his lips.

"It is not good to mock the dead," he said quietly. "There are things we mortals do not know, perhaps. Ballister," he said chidingly, "there is nothing you are afraid of, is there—not even the devil?"

The big flight leader chuckled but it was an outburst that echoed weirdly throughout the great room.

"No, Ratoff," he laughed, "for who has ever seen the son-of-a-gun? I've tasted his brand of hell plenty and I still live to laugh at him."

"All the same," persisted Ratoff, his cadaverous face set in grim lines, "one must respect the dead. We have comrades who walk that same shadowy trail, my friend. Do not forget."

A SHORT silence followed. It was broken by the opening of a door. Rusty hinges screeched. At one end of the big room a beam of light cut the gloom where candle rays had failed to reach. The door closed again and another man walked toward the table.

"Attention!" cracked Ballister. The pilots stood up.

"Never mind the formality," a voice rapped out. "How many times have I got to tell you buzzards that?"

Squadron Commander Major Glennister was just such a man as one would expect to find directing the destinies of the hard-bitten group of the 16th. Glennister walked with a slight limp, a lasting reminder of his last battle above the clouds.

"Tomorrow," the major began, as he took his place at the table, "we put on a show. Troops are moving up tomorrow. Trucks and a thousand guns. You can expect to see Boche, plenty of them; strafers. Goehring's Circus—von Mueller's old command, the checker-tailed Albatrosses.

"Both flights go up, Ballister. We ought to have more, but Wing—"

"Can't find replacements that can stand the gaff, is that it? When they sent me up, I thought a Boche had horns and spat fire. It took me a week to find the balloon line and then I took a shot at some of ours. Right, Major, we all go up at dawn!"

Harsh laughs followed his sally.

"A SPOOKY place this," drawled a tall, thin pilot. "Sometimes you hear things in your sleep; like the clanking of chains. Once I woke up and thought I saw one of those dames walking around wearing a tall pointed hat with a veil streaming down from it."

"Maybe you did," grinned Ballister. "Think I'll change bunks with you, Winton. Maybe she ran when she saw your face. Me, now, I—"

Fleming coughed nervously.

"You tough mugs," he complained, "have no feeling for anything. Cut out talkin' about ghosts. With your nerves half frazzled, you'll be getting autosuggestion. Hah, I'll swap this big rock shanty right now for a mechanic's hole. In the daytime I don't mind it, but at night it kind of gets you."

"Rubbish!" Glennister cracked. "You mugs ought to be crazy about a shack like this. You still expecting von Mueller?" He laughed and got up. "Get some sleep," he ordered, his voice grim, "and don't let your imaginations run away with you. Stuff and nonsense. If it were only a lot of dead men you had to worry about—well, Goehring and his crowd are very much alive."

"There'll be more ghosts walkin' by noon tomorrow," grinned the flight leader, a battle light blazing in his eyes. "It ought to be a fine show."

"Perhaps," Ratoff said dryly, "you will be among them, Ballister, no?"

"Ratoff, you—" Ballister's words died.

He stared at Winton. The gaunt buzzard had uttered a little cry. His fingers came up slowly to press against his neck.

"What the devil is the matter, Winton?" Glennister ripped out sharply. "What—?"

"H-huh," the flyer laughed uncomfortably, "it's nothing. One of those ingrown hairs stickin' at me again, I guess. Thought a bee stung me."

"Nerves!" barked Glennister. "Snap out of it. You'll kid yourselves into seeing things, believing that ghosts really are walking up and down your rooms. I've never seen you like this before—like a lot of kids whistling when they walked by a graveyard!" He kicked back his chair, left the table abruptly. His boots sounded hollowly against the floor.

A STRANGE quiet reigned. Ballister said "Huh" and got up. He walked to a table and wound up a phonograph, swung the needle into position and sent the record spinning.

"Come on, quartette, let's hear you harmonize," he bellowed. "Fleming—Ratoff—come on. Get that whiskery tenor of yours out, Devore. It's the old master—'Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield.'"

The four voices struggled to blend. Gloom fled from the old chateau. A pilot kneaded bread into pellets and flipped them at an effigy of Kaiser Wilhelm. The effigy was an inflated toy balloon which strained at its moorings on the back of an old buffet. Someone had painted a caricature of the Kaiser on one side.

Strands of frayed rope served as the Hohenzollern mustache.

One ha-a-a-ad a shovel a-a-and the
o-o-other ha-a-a-a-ad a ho-o-o-o-oe,
Way down, wa-a-ay down yonder—

There came a slight pause for breath-catching. The distant roar of heavy guns cut in for a moment.

—in the caw-w-w-w-wn field."

The phonograph squawked and the needle jerked to a stop.

Again Lieutenant Ratoff shuddered. Time dragged on. Several pilots rose to go, Winton among them.

"That's it," the flight leader chided them, "get your beauty sleep, buzzards. You'll never catch up on it. Ha—"

Ratoff jerked from his seat. Winton stumbled, made a frantic grab for a chair. He sat on the floor, looking up at Ballister with a horrible expression on his pasty face. His mouth was open and he appeared to be trying to force words out of his colorless lips. Splayed fingers groped at his collar. Then the hand went limp, fell to the floor like a lump of wood. Winton dropped over on the floor, his body a contorted heap.

Ballister and Ratoff shook him.

"Winton, old chap," the former said huskily. "Winton, you—" He turned the pilot over on his back. The face was ghastly. Ratoff looked up at Ballister, at the ring of tense faces that hemmed them in.

"He doesn't breathe," he murmured in a scarcely audible voice.

CHAPTER II

The Black Ship

"GET the C. O., somebody," roared Ballister. "Get a medico up here. Hurry, we might be able to do something." He laid his hand on Winton's cheek. The flesh already seemed cold.

Pilots ran out of the chateau. Out

of the Orderly room came Glennister, running.

"Ballister," he cried nervously "Winton—they told me—"

"He just keeled over, sir," said the flight leader. "He did not say a word. Ten minutes before he was laughin' the same as you and me."

RATOFF had wilted against the big table. His eyes stared at the limp bundle on the floor, then strayed into the gloom beyond the lighted area. The latent superstitions of centuries stirred within him. Suddenly he uttered a hoarse cry and stepped back, a shaky finger pointing toward the high-beamed, web-fouled ceiling. "God!" he croaked. "Look up there."

Ballister choked back an angry retort and looked up. A dim shape swept by overhead. There was beating of wings.

"A bat," sniffed Glennister. "Ratoff, grab hold of yourself."

"They're evil things," whispered Ratoff. "Vampires!"

The flight leader sneered and knelt over Winton again. A big door creaked. Boots pounded in the hall outside. Four men entered the room.

"Right here," snapped Glennister, throatily. "Hurry."

The medico examined Winton carefully. He felt of the man's pulse, turned up an eyelid. Dropping the hand to the floor, he looked up at the major.

"Nothing more to be done," he said. "The man is dead."

"B-but," Glennister forced out, "h-how? Speak up man. Winton was young, healthy as Ballister here. A few minutes ago—"

"Heart," interposed the medico laconically. "Perhaps the strain—there're no marks on him. If we arrange an autopsy, Major, per—"

"Listen," cracked Ballister, "an hour or so before he—died, he grabbed at his throat. Look at his

throat, man. There has to be something to—"

The medico turned to his task again. He flashed a light on Winton's throat. There were two tiny red spots, a small distance apart. They were spots similar to those one sees on the neck of a man after a close shave.

"Doesn't tell me a thing," pondered the medical man. "I see no wound. Sorry, Major. Poor Winton—a heart is a funny thing."

"That's all, then." Glennister said in a hollow voice. "Ballister, see if Winton has anything in his pockets."

A few minutes later twelve tight-lipped men watched Winton's body being taken out to the ever available ambulance. Ratoff turned slowly and his eyes happened to be drawn to the likeness of von Mueller. The Slav stiffened. Did he imagine that the arrogant smile on the face had turned to an insane leer?

"Ballister," he jerked out, "I knew—"

"Listen!" Fleming gripped Ratoff by the sleeve and held fast. From out of the night came a great roaring sound. The stuttering of a machine-gun sent the pilots pounding out into the hall. Ballister swung the door open first. He looked up into the murk. A great black shape swung low over the drome. Bat-like wings seemed to graze the pit where the machine-gun clattered.

"**A**NOTHER," whispered Ratoff, the word vibrant with terror.. "A bat! Ballister—"

"Shut up, you gibbering fool!" the flight leader choked out. "It's a Boche ship."

"All black," Ratoff went on, reeling against the door jamb, "with two fiery eyes. And Winton—"

Nobody seemed to hear the frightened Slav. The ambulance which carried Winton's body away was struggling to get out of the ditch. Its

motor roared. Men ran back and forth across the drome. Fainter and fainter came the drone of the nocturnal prowler. Soon it died. The field was deathly quiet again. The mists swirled about the old chateau and the only sound that manifested itself was the weird souging of fitful gusts of wind through the leaves of the trees. Ratoff stumbled back into the grim structure, face white. Ballister and Glennister turned after him.

Ratoff, whose courage in the sky was a legend over the front, shook as if clutched in the grip of ague.

"I—T—TOLD you, Ballister," he intoned in quavering accents. "Von Mueller—"

The big flight leader cursed impatiently, brushed Ratoff roughly aside and strode into the chateau.

"Ratoff," he snapped, "are you ignorant enough to think that that black Taube which just flew over here had something to do with Winton's dyin'? You Slavs never get over those old women's tales, do you? Vampires! Ratoff, snap out of it!" He whirled and faced the likeness of the Hun whom he had shot down weeks before.

"Hear him, von Mueller?" Ballister sneered. "You've got his wind up. Clank your chains for him, you— you—"

"Stop that!" yelled Ratoff hysterically. "You laugh, Ballister, poor fool. You saw Winton die. Something sucked life out of him under our very eyes. Explain that! Somebody—hah, I see you can't. You laugh, do you? Well, I'm waiting for an answer!" The nerve-shocked man laughed jerkily and slumped into a chair.

"Ratoff," Major Glennister thrust into the breach, "you're washed up. You've been carrying on on nerves alone. They've snapped. Morale, Ratoff. Without it we're doomed. Some-

body behind the Jerry lines has jumped on a way to break us. Morale, you hear me, you buzzards? That's what they're out to destroy. Planes can be smashed up, pilots can die, but a squadron carries on as long as it has the will to go on. Without the will, we are licked.

"Vampires, Ratoff? The dead that walk at night—to get blood to keep their bodies during the daytime? Bosh!—Ballister, tomorrow we have a show to put on. We're shy two men. Winton's heart gave out; you know that, don't you, Ballister?"

The flight leader smiled grimly.

"I sure do," he snapped. "Tomorrow we'll show morale, won't we, Ratoff?"

The Slav stirred and set his jaws. He looked at Major Glennister. Rising from his chair, he stood before the C. O., as stiff as a ramrod, and stared his superior straight in the eye. He seemed to grow in size.

"I'll be ready in the morning, sir," he said, his lips scarcely parting.

"That's it," acknowledged Glennister. "That's the spirit, Ratoff. Go get some sleep, all of you."

But as Ballister watched Ratoff turn to go, he knew that the Slav was driving himself. There was that alien look in Ratoff's eyes, a stiffness in his gait.

CHAPTER III

A Fiend Abroad

ANOTHER dawn. Twelve planes were warming up out on the field. Pilots downed scalding coffee, fidgeted like race horses at the post. Teeth chattered. It was always so just before the take-off. After they got into the air, the feeling would pass. So Ballister mused, but he shook his head slightly as he looked at Ratoff. In a little while they were trailing down the slope to the S. E. 5s.

The flight leader got into his pit

and strapped himself in. He tossed the yellowed butt of a cigarette overside and signaled for the take-off. Glennister watched them go, twelve thundering phantoms in the lifting mists of early dawn.

Over the lines Ballister became alert. Through a rift in the low ceiling he spotted a patch of terrain. Along a road which appeared but a stretch of wriggling tape, moved a dark mass, like ants on an hegira. Bigger shapes crawled along. Trucks, caissons, fourgons. Men moving up. Food, for man and death machine. The advance preparatory to a push.

SUDDENLY Ballister stiffened in his pit. He waggled his wings, giving the signal that Huns had been flushed. A little below and toward the muddy conglomeration of trenches, they blazed a trail, Goehring's checker-tails, Spandaus ready to let loose the phlegm of death on the helpless ground troops.

Ballister, the spearhead of the attack, plunged down on the scurrying Albatross scouts. The 16th was outnumbered but they cracked in with the first punch. Vickers lead found a Boche and sent him spinning wing over wing. Flame belched from his motor bays. Ballister had bagged one. Hell rocked the firmament. The sky seemed clogged with twisting, spinning, diving shapes.

Over on Ballister's left two Boche jumped Ratoff. The flight leader blazed a torrid path through a knot of enemy ships and cut one down with a thrust through the pilot's pit. Ratoff gunned away like a frightened quail. In a flash Ballister knew that the man was not right.

The flight leader winged over and dived on a Hun who had knifed out of the mêlée and had gone down low to harass the plodding infantry. The Boche clawed for altitude as the S. E. 5 hurtled down. Ballister counted three for the day even before he

had made the kill. He knew what an S. E. 5 could do. When he tore up to the fringe of battle again, he left a twisted, burning heap on the ground.

Like lightning, the flight leader swept the sky strata with burning eyes. A curse jerked from his lips as he spun out of the way of a falling Squadron ship. Another S. E. 5 was rocketing out. The ship was dipping drunkenly. With effort the nose was lifted again. Ballister belated a name. "Ratoff!" Something was wrong. Morale? The flight leader could hear Glennister's words spitting out again from tight lips.

Into the heat of conflict Ballister threw his ship. His squadron was giving ground. He spotted Fleming and Devore still wading in, carrying the brunt with them. His last fight? The hard-bitten flyer set his jaws and raked a Boche that cut across in front. Three others pounded down. In for the slaughter. Everywhere, it seemed, checker-tails were flashing. Ballister's lips were blood-flecked where his teeth had pressed. His mouth was leathery. He waited for the stabbing burn of bullets but it did not come. More ships had dashed in, a score of them. Spads! The flight leader laughed crazily and stayed by to mop up.

EIGHT ships returned to the field. Three were in when Ballister led four others home. Ratoff was still leaning against his ship, a dead cigarette hanging from his lips, when the flight leader lifted himself out of his bus. He went over to Ratoff whose sleeve was caked with clotted blood.

"Spads came in," he said to the Slav. "That's why we got back, Ratoff. But the 16th was ready to quit. Morale, Ratoff! It's all shot."

The man he addressed grimaced with pain and walked across the field. Ballister looked around, counting

noses. Fleming, also Devore, was there. Four gone. Young, Prudhomme, Varney—he stopped taking toll. Shoulders stooped, he walked toward the old chateau. In the Orderly room he snapped out his report. His eyes seemed reluctant to meet those of the major.

"I understand, Ballister," the C. O. said. "Another night like last—"

The 16th stayed on the ground for the remainder of the day; that is, what was left of them. Prudhomme was heard from, around dusk. He had cracked up on the Allied side and had broken a leg.

"Not bad," Ballister commented to the remnants of the brood at mess. "Only three. Tomorrow—"

Lips tightened. Eyes shifted toward the big windows. The sky outside was coral hued. Night was coming on. Ratoff, arm in a sling, sat huddled in a corner. Night. The rush of wings. Bat's wings. Each wondered who would follow Winton.

Fingers involuntarily reached up to touch the skin of their throats.

Ballister got up and faced the picture of von Mueller. Ratoff rose too.

"Cut that stuff out, can't you?" he growled. "You'll find out you cannot laugh—"

The flight leader swiveled.

"Whining again, Ratoff?" he said nastily. "Vampire, hah! When you go to bed tonight, hang some monkshood on your door. Vampires can't stand that, Ratoff. Or a crucifix—"

"Shut up!" Ratoff screeched. "Answer me, confound you! How did Winton die? Why did that big black ship, that looked like a bat, fly over? All right, Ballister, tell me."

BALLISTER picked up his coat, pulled it on.

"I don't know," he cracked, "but it doesn't chill my nerve! I'm sleeping tonight with an S. E. 5, you birds. Ratoff, I'm going to see that that ship

doesn't fly around here again! Hah!" He strode by the effigy of the Kaiser, spat at the balloon and left the room.

"We're crazy," said Devore. "Ballister's right. Winton's heart gave out, no doubt. Ratoff, you Slavs will kid yourselves into believing anything."

"All right," replied Ratoff. "We'll see. There are things more strange I have seen with my own eyes—when I was a child. I saw—"

The screech of the phonograph drowned him out.

THAT night Ballister slept in the hangar. Alone, he thought of Winton. He tried to reassure himself that he believed what he had told Ratoff—that Winton had died naturally. Yet something kept telling him that a fiend was abroad. The appearance of the Taube could not be coincidence. A vampire, Ratoff called it.

The flight leader dozed off. How long he had slept he did not know, when a white-faced, yelling mechanic pulled at his clothes to arouse him. Overhead the sky shook with the thrumming of a motor. Ballister leaped to his feet and climbed into the S. E. 5. Already its prop was turning. Out of the hangar he gunned and blazed across the field. As he lifted the ship clear of the ground, he looked up to see that big black-winged shape reaching for height.

"You want blood!" the American flyer bellowed as he zoomed into the darkened sky. "Well, you'll get it, you dirty dog." Up and up in a steady climb he sent the ship, and then the black shape winged over and roared straight for his prop boss. Its menacing bat-like wings were like those of an ancient Taube. Tracers knired the ebon ether. Ballister heard bullets thud into his ship, one ricocheting from the bar-

rel of his Vickers. Yet he did not move from the black shape's path.

His own guns flamed just as it seemed that both hurtling shapes would crash. The black plane zoomed, its wheels brushing close to his top wing. Ballister laughed and pulled the stick back into his stomach. The S. E. 5 flopped over on its back, then swept to even keel. But the mysterious black ship, the great flying bat, was gone. Then he saw a flicker of light arch across the sky. In a lightning Immelmann, the menace had eaten up a mile of space in less time than the flash of an eye.

Ballister felt cold in the pit; too disheartened to give chase in the dark. His hand trembled on the stick as he returned to the field. A streak of burning oil lighted the drome and as he rolled in toward an excited group of groundmen, he looked toward the east and saw the first streak of dawn peeping above the horizon.

Like an automaton the flyer climbed out. He was about to speak when a non-com broke in.

"Pardon me, Lieutenant," the man said, "but up at the chateau something's happened."

Ballister cursed and started on the run. The door of the forbidding building was ajar. He ran up the steps, into the dusty hall and up the stairs over their mouldy carpeting. An olio of subdued voices came to him from down the long, dark passageway. A room door was open. Three pilots stood there, transfixed by what they saw inside. The flight leader pushed them aside and entered.

"Lieutenant Devore, Major," a voice was saying, "is dead."

BALLISTER'S heart congealed as the words bit into his consciousness. Then his eyes found the pasty face against the pillow. A medico was drawing the blankets up

over it. Ballister leaped forward and tore the hand away.

"Not you, Jiggs," he choked out. "Not you—not—" His hands fell to his sides and for a long while he stood staring down at the body of his friend. Finally he turned away from the cot, eyes moist and at the same time blazing.

"**T**ONIGHT I took a shot at that black ship," he said through lips that appeared but a slit in his rugged face. "It's some kind of a trick ship rigged up with Taube-shaped, bat-like wings. It got away in one of the quickest maneuvers I have ever seen in the air. Only two men could pull an Immelmann like that—the man who invented it and—"

Fleming's eyes bulged as Ballister paused.

"You mean—?"

"Von Mueller!"

Ratoff's fear-blانched face was twitching convulsively.

"Ballister, I told you," he said. "You'll mock at me now? You'll sneer at the dead, will you? There is Devore stiff and stark. Winton—"

"Quiet, Ratoff," Ballister broke into the tirade, his voice shaking. "Shut up or I'll smash you! If von Mueller is the vampire, Ratoff, he's not wearing a shroud. He's alive like you and me!"

"There's a tiny spot," said Glenister in a listless voice, "on the fleshy part of Devore's shoulder. It might mean nothing—may be a small pimple. The medico can only say that his heart stopped."

Eyes glistening, Ballister, hard-boiled skipper, smothered a sob and strode down the hall, his fists clenched. A few minutes later, down in the big room, he was shaking those fists before the leering replica of von Mueller.

"I got you once, von Mueller," he snarled. "Curse your rotten hide! I'll get you again, even if you are hand-

cuffed to the devil. A dead man who walks, are you? Well, whatever you are, you scum of a Hun, I say I'll get you!"

Glennister walked toward Wing with his scalp lifting. The pilots walked through the hall out into the clammy air. Anything rather than stay under the roof where the dead apparently walked and sucked one's life away while one slept. The morale of the 16th Squadron was indeed shattered.

As the great door slammed behind Fleming, it drowned out a curse from Ballister. For an hour until Glennister came and shook him, Ballister sat hunched over in a chair, his head in his hands.

"Snap out of it, Ballister. I'm depending on you, y'know. If you break, old man—"

"Major," responded Ballister in a hollow voice, "I killed von Mueller. I can see him now, his head a bloody shambles where the bullets pumped into him. I saw his ship crash with him. If ever a man looked dead in more ways than one, it was the baron. But out there tonight, in that Taube, Major—maybe I'm going goofy, too.

"Perhaps I'm cracking—maybe Ratoff is right. There may be things I don't know. I think I'm going bugs. Let me be, sir. Let me go out. I want to get some air. In here—it smells like an open grave."

CHAPTER IV

On the Ground

THE 16th patrolled their sector with nerves raw and bleeding. Ballister and Fleming, the bulwarks of the skeleton squadron, led a flight of S. E. 5s back to the drome in a hurry the next day, with two flights of Boche on their tails.

As soon as the flight leader hit the ground he cursed himself, looked

at Fleming and remained in the bullet-torn S. E. 5. The two went out alone to rub the slate clean.

"They're haywire," one of the returned pilots declared. "They think they showed yellow. Just as if we blamed the fools. They are fightin' on nerve. If they meet the Huns—well—"

AND Ballister and Fleming did meet Huns. They cracked a flight of six Pfalz pursuit ships wide open. The four remaining came in at them.

"Morale is it you're breaking, eh?" roared Ballister. "Well, I'm not betting on you." He caught a Pfalz on its blind spot and fed it steel until the ship went screaming down. Toward Fleming he blazed his way and together they blasted the remainder of the flight back into a sea of snapping and whining shrapnel. Returning to the drome, they rolled the battle-burnt ships up to the line.

Ballister's legs shook as he was helped to the ground. He wiped a smear of blood from his cheek where a splinter from a strut had gashed him. Fleming leaned against his ship and leered at a pair of pilots who had waited on the ground for the outcome.

"We just led you home so's you wouldn't get hurt," the former flung at them. "We showed the Boche. We—"

"Ballister," rasped the C. O. as he came up, "you're a shaking wreck! You're not responsible for that crazy stunt you just pulled. Neither you nor Fleming! I'll overlook it this time, but don't forget from now on that unless you get orders to—"

"Hah!" lashed out the crazed leader. "You wanted morale, Major. We showed it to you. What there's left of it. Come on, Fleming, let's get roaring drunk!" The two men swaggered away.

Major Glennister drew a deep

breath. The lines in his face appeared to deepen. He dreaded the coming of night, knowing how every pilot on the drome would fight against sleep.

Ballister accomplished the feat of getting roaring drunk; and for the first time the pilots beheld their flight leader beyond the control of his faculties. Fleming was in step with him. Other pilots half-heartedly revelled with them, but over the bacchanal hovered the threat of sudden death.

The roots of suspicion threaded through tortured brains. Men looked at their fellows and caught themselves wondering. Ratoff sat in a corner alone, hands tugging nervously at the skirts of his tunic. He jerked to his feet as Ballister, uttering a curse, flung a glass of liquor at the halftone of von Mueller.

"I'm here, you spawn from hell!" the flyer shouted. "Come and get me! You haven't got the nerve. You took Winton and Jiggs Devore, but you don't dare grab at me. Von Mueller, hah! Dead or alive, you can't lick a Ballister!"

"Shut up!" screamed Ratoff. "You're drunk, Ballister. Fleming, stop his crazy yowling!"

BUT the flight leader roared the louder, until at last the effects of the drink began to wear off. With midnight not far away, his brain had cleared somewhat. He stared stupidly at the others and then looked at his watch. Glancing at Ratoff, his face hardened.

"S-so I got drunk, eh?" he said with a yawn. "Feel better for it, guys. You ought to get drunk, too. Stay that way until morning. Yeah—cripes, my head! Who hit me with a hammer? You, Fleming? No, you still look drunk." He rose shakily, still talking at a rapid rate.

"What was I sayin'?" He faced the heavy-eyed, tense pilots and flung

out his arms. "All right, who's hittin' the hay? Put on a show in the morning. A big show. Show the major some morale. Who's with me, eh? Come on, where's the old spirit? You're in the 16th Squadron, boys. We'll show the Huns. Two for me tomorrow, maybe—"

"Bunk!" exclaimed someone.

"Yeah, but we eat it in chunks," Ballister rambled on. "Get to bed, you buzzards. Tomorrow we go up and put on a show that—"

"**N**O show tomorrow, Ballister," a quiet voice said. Glennister stood in the semi-darkness.

"Wha-a-at?" bellowed the man addressed, shaking his tawny mane. "You mean we're washed up? You—"

"Orders, Ballister," the major cracked. "Orders. Another two days and you and Fleming would commit suicide. Until this thing clears up, Ballister, we'll hug the ground unless an emergency arrives. These men here—"

Supercharged lungs let out soughing breaths. Ballister nodded and sat down heavily in his chair. Desperately, his mind still fouled a little by the fumes of strong drink, he had tried to lift these men out of the depths of fear. He knew there was no use, for it was black, depressing night outside. And out there was something that drained a man of his life.

Already the thing might be close. Even he, Ballister might be the next to go. He looked up at that picture on the wall. The eyes seemed to mock him.

An hour passed. Not a man moved. Conversation was sporadic; short, clipped phrases. Lifeless words to calm shattered nerves. At length Ballister laughed.

"Stay here. Prop your eyes open so's you won't sleep. What of it? Winton died in this room."

Ratoff cursed and got out of his

chair. He dragged himself across the room.

"I'm going out," he said. "I won't sleep in this death house. I'm going out."

One by one the pilots deserted the chateau. At last only Ballister and Fleming were left. Each looked at the other. On the mantel a clock ticked off the seconds. It sounded like the beating of a sledge-hammer upon a block of stone.

"I'll go goofy in here," spoke up Fleming. "I'm not yellow, but I feel funny. As if something's watching me. I'm getting out."

And Ballister was alone. He steeled himself and grinned mockingly at the picture on the wall.

"I'm staying, von Mueller," he pronounced. "I'm waiting. If you're a ghost, let me see you do your stuff. I don't believe in ghosts. Von Mueller, you'll never get me!" The flight leader laughed nervously and lighted a cigarette. One drag at it and it followed a dozen others to the floor.

"YOU must be a tough mug if it's you, von Mueller. Your head was a bloody shambles. You crashed from two thousand. Maybe Ratoff is right. Perhaps the dead walk at night and lie in their graves during the day. You lost a lot of blood—you'll have to kill a lot of guys—" Ballister realized that he was babbling. He shut his lips tight and drummed against the edge of the table with his finger tips.

"Ratoff is crazy—"

"Vampires, hah!"

"But Winton and Devore are dead—"

"And as they died, the big black Taube flew over—"

"As they died—"

The flyer leaped to his feet. A thought had occurred to him and he began to pace the floor, beset. Then a strange thing happened. The toy balloon, the effigy of the Kaiser, popped

as if touched by a flame. The sound jangled Ballister's nerves afresh and he stopped dead to stare at the string which dangled from the time-eroded buffet.

He stopped to touch the torn rubber that dangled from the end. As he did so there came another sound, one that sent Ballister down on hands and knees and in this position he crawled under the table, froze there. Involuntarily his fingers flew to his neck.

His blood turned to ice.

CHAPTER V

Wolfbane

WHY Fleming was prompted to return to the big room of the chateau he did not know. The flyer perhaps had felt a vague concern for Ballister. When he came in, there did not seem to be anyone present. Then the flickering candle-light played on Ballister's face. The man was rising to his feet. He had a strange expression on his face. Fleming sprang forward. Ballister's fingers were pressed against his cheek.

"H'lo, Fleming," he grinned, seemingly with effort. "I think I'm goin' to be the third corpse."

"Y-you mean that the bat—"

"Look here on my cheek," replied Ballister. "Is there a red mark?"

Heartsick, Fleming looked close. There was a tiny but distinct puncture in Ballister's skin.

"I'll get a medico, old fellow," whispered Fleming quite hoarsely. "Wait—"

"No use," the flight leader said. "Nobody knows what it is. Some hellish poison, maybe—" He looked up at the picture of von Mueller. "So you got me, did you?" he roared insanely. "I wonder—"

Glennister barged into the room. There was another officer with him from Intelligence P. C. Behind the

two came Ratoff and several pilots.

"Ballister!" exclaimed the major. "You look as if—"

"Major," cut in the stricken man, "you're looking at a walking corpse. I got mine. Ratoff, if there's anything to ghosts walking, I'll come back and tell you."

"N-no, Ballister," croaked the Slav, "you play a joke, don't you? Y-you—Ballister, old friend, stop—stop staring like that. You may be mistaken. Of course—"

"How long does it take?" Ballister intoned. "An hour, perhaps two? Winton lasted—how long?"

"Come on, Ballister," the major fairly yelled. "We'll get you to a hospital. If we're in time, perhaps—"

"No use," interrupted the doomed man, "no use—"

Fleming uttered a surprised curse. He yanked the string of the toy balloon from its moorings.

"The balloon—it's burst. How—?" he muttered.

"Yeah," stammered Ballister, "it's busted. So am I. I'll shrivel up too, just the way it did. Major, I want you to grant me a—"

"Anything Ballister."

A deathly silence filled the room. Wide open, fear-clouded eyes were glued to the flight leader. Alive but as good as dead. Soon he would be with Winton and Devore.

"I WANT to go out right," declared Ballister. "I want to go out with the wind whistling through struts and wires. I want to go out with the pounding of guns in my ears. I want what Winton and Jiggs Devore didn't get—a decent way for a war buzzard to go west. I want a ship, Major, my S. E. 5. In half an hour I want it ready for the take-off. Well?"

"Your request will be granted, Ballister," consented Glennister in a breaking voice. "In half an hour—right! I—" His words died and his

head tipped back. Other pilots stared upward. Ratoff cursed. A bat's wings beat a tattoo against the webbed beams.

Ballister, after a time, climbed the stairs. He returned, dressed for the air. From outside came the sporadic roar of a prop. No one spoke as he pulled on his helmet. He wound a heavy woolen muffler about his throat. As he drew on his gloves he looked once more at that picture on the wall.

"I'LL be seein' you, von Mueller," he promised with a bleak grin. He lifted a hand high, cut an arc through the smoke-wreathed air. "S'long buzzards! Keep your chins up." He walked stiffly toward the hallway. Glennister stopped him, shook his hand.

"Happy landings, Buck," he said in a thick voice. He turned away, set his jaws and looked at Fleming. That flyer was facing the wall, but his shoulders were shaking.

Out into the night went Ballister, down the hill to where the battle bus was ticking over. Pilots watched him from the door of the chateau. He seemed to assume even greater height and bulk as he stalked down the slope with even stride. Mechanics waited for him there.

"Ship never in better shape," a little man said, striving to smile. "Good huntin', sir." He touched Ballister on the sleeve.

The prop spun, caught spark. The motor screamed. On the steps of the old chateau, the pilots were waving good-by. As the S. E. 5 lifted clear of the turf and drilled upward into the night, they remained standing there like men of stone. Fleming suddenly tugged at Major Glennister's sleeve.

"Y-you hear that? A sound like—" he cracked.

Ratoff uttered a hoarse cry and clamped his hands to his head.

"Another prop turning over somewhere," said the major. "No S. E. 5 sounds like that. You—"

"It's the black bat," Ratoff choked out. "Ballister is—is—it came over when Winton and Devore died. Oh, God!" He leaned against the stone wall and sobbed brokenly.

But in the pit of the soaring S. E. 5, Ballister was laughing harshly.

The bellowing mirth rolled into the backwash where it died.

"You bit!" he roared. "You dirty fiend of hell, you swallowed the bait! You're coming at me! I've got wolfbane here. Plenty of it, Mr. Vampire! It's the end for guys who don't lie quiet in their graves."

Toward the S. E. 5 the black shape streaked. Ballister half rolled and dived under as the tracers streaked out. The flight leader climbed and began to circle. Quickly he went rushing off into space to make a wide turn. Bullets cracked through the windshield in front of him; the vampire ship was on his tail. Cursing, Ballister yanked the stick into his stomach and then jerked it to the right. In a half loop he shot upward. Before it made the top, the S. E. 5 quarter-rolled, pivoted about and slipped down.

THE black ship seemed to hesitate in the air. The pilot appeared uncertain of what to expect and this was a deadly mistake to make in the air. Frantically he tried to zoom, and Ballister caught him as he stalled. Teeth set, eyes cold as a cobra's, the 16th's flyer fed the black marauder a swath of steel.

The bat-like crate nosed over into a spin. Two thousand feet down, almost directly over the field of the 16th Squadron, the pilot was pulling up the nose in desperation. But Ballister had spiralled down after the Taube and the black blob loomed up directly in front of his prop boss.

"Take it, you louse!" bawled the

American and let his guns hammer. Tracers bit through the fuselage. Solid steel crept up and knifed through the pit. Yet Ballister's grip still froze to the trigger. The black Taube spun over and over, seemingly clawed at the air like a stricken vulture. The great bat-like wing ripped loose and the stripped fuselage shot down like a plummet. Ballister laughed hysterically as he saw it smash into the ground. He circled above it, then swooped down toward the drome.

MEN swarmed across the field. Groundmen lighted a heap of oily waste. They poured a can of petrol into the dank earth and threw a match at it. In the resultant lurid glare the S. E. 5 appeared. Ballister cut his motor and slid in.

Fleming was up on the stirrup first. His face was pasty but he was laughing crazily. He pawed at Ballister's bulky shoulders.

"You're not dead? What happened, you old brute? What—"

"Hah!" the flyer chuckled and let himself be lifted out bodily. "Me, dead? No! No ghoul can take me. The vampire swallowed the bait. I pricked my face with a pin when I was under the table—I put on a show for him. Gave him time to sneak out and lay for me. He couldn't resist a killing in the air. That balloon, Fleming. That was wolfbane to the ghost. He missed me the first time and punctured the balloon. I ducked just as he shot at me the second time, but I made it look good. Something told me the fiend would wait and find out if his second shot had speared me."

"Y-you mean, Ballister?" stuttered Glennister, "that—come on, spill it. Who was—?"

"I felt that somebody was watching me from some place when I ducked," Ballister replied. He paused to accept a cigarette and a light

from Ratoff. "Darts, Major," he went on, "poisoned darts. Shot from an air gun or something. Somewhere, there is a secret passage in the chateau. There's a tunnel that is perhaps two miles long leading toward the lines. Sometime, way back, a flock of tin soldiers dug it, to seize this place, perhaps—I don't know.

"But that's how the devil worked it. That passage may lead to the room where poor old Devore slept, too. The black Taube made it look spooky. The fellow flew that ship over late at night—got by somehow, Lord knows how. Had it hidden while he came the rest of the way burrowing like a mole. The dirty louse! Breaking down our morale. There's nothing the Huns won't try.

"I'll bet it was me he was after first, but I just didn't happen to get in line, that's all. You see, I measured the distance between the balloon and the wall. A panel must slide up there somewhere. We'll find it. We'll chop that wall loose with an axe."

"Who was it?" stammered Ratoff. "You haven't told us—"

"Why, confound it," replied Ballister, "I don't know. I'm not sure. Let's go out and take a look. It won't be pretty, I can tell you."

It was undoubtedly a mile to where the remains of the black crate lay. The engine had buried itself nearly two feet into the ground. Fleming played a flashlight on the

wreck. He uttered a sickened cry and flipped off the light.

"Good God, what a mess."

RATOFF grabbed at the flash and snapped it on again. The beam played on twisted strands of wire, fence stakes, and crumpled fabric and metal. A limp, blood-stained mass was sprawled half out of the pit. A steady drip, drip, drip of blood sounded as it fell into a pool of muddy water.

The Slav gasped as he reached out and gingerly lifted a black cloth from the face of the thing. Half sick, Ballister stared at the twisted, pulpy lump which had once been a face. It had but one eye which was open, glazed with death but nevertheless staring balefully up at him.

"Von Mueller!" he breathed. "He came back—he—"

"The vampire!" Ratoff whispered hoarsely. "Look. The fence stake. Good God, Ballister, it's been driven right through his heart!"

"I've heard about that," acknowledged Ballister in an awed, almost inaudible voice. "It is said to be the only way to kill—"

"Rubbish!" cut in Glennister. "Rubbish. You don't believe—"

"I—I—wonder," replied Ballister and he turned away. As he splashed through the sodden loam, he murmured to himself:

"I'm pretty sure I killed that Hun once before."

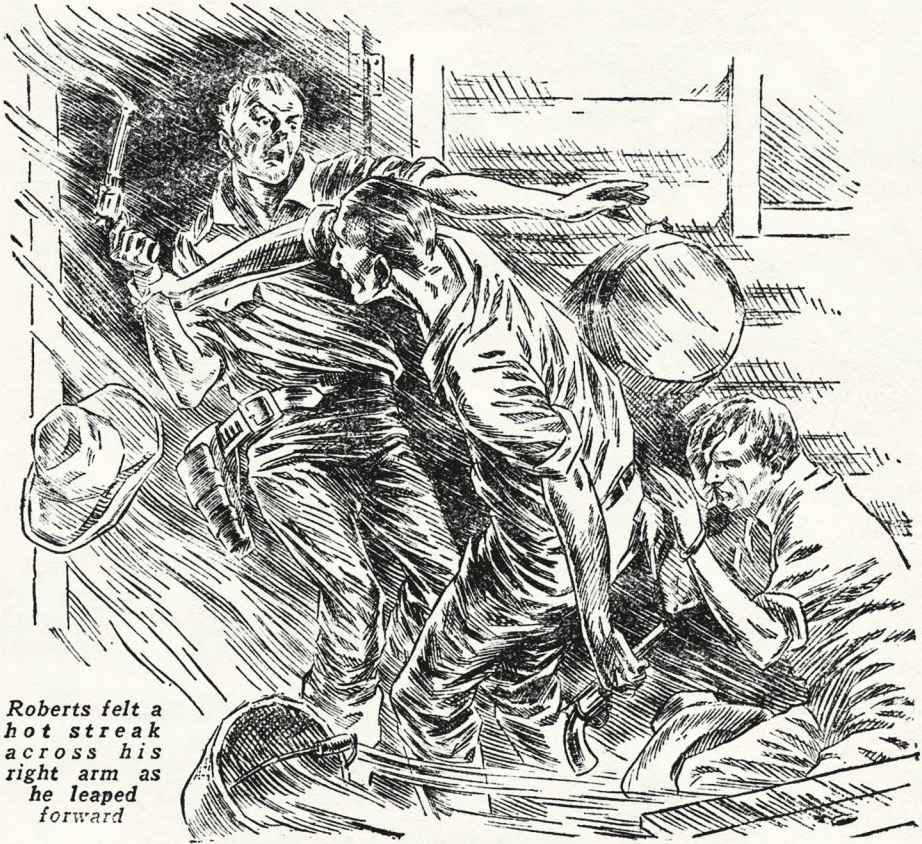
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*Dave Roberts, Ex-Mountie, Gets into a Tight Spot
With the Law in this Gripping Story of the Far North*



Roberts felt a hot streak across his right arm as he leaped forward

SPEARED

By JOHN EASTERLY

Author of "Devil Dancers," "Shen of the Seven Seas," etc.

STANDING up to his hips in the cold, rushing white water of turbulent Tanana Creek, Dave Roberts fought for footing against the pull of the stream, cast his spear into the foaming torrent, and hauled it forth with a fish on its barbs.

He tossed the fish to the bank, where there were a dozen or more

already, and sought new footing to cast again. He was working mechanically, doing a job he often had done before, getting fish that could be frozen and kept as food for his dogs. His mind was elsewhere.

He was remembering the days when he had been a Mountie. He had left the service at the end of his term of enlistment, to take up a

claim on Tanana Creek. Service in the Mounted, with its stern discipline and rigorous duties, was a form of slavery, he had decided. He was going to get rich and be independent!

BUT things had not turned out exactly as he had hoped. The claim had proved good at first, then had petered out—only a couple of pockets on the bank of the creek. He had hoarded the pinches of dust and the few nuggets, but they were about gone now—spent for provisions and clothing.

Other things had gone wrong, too. His nearest neighbor, Bart Stenson, a mile up the tumbling creek, had become his one great enemy. It had not been Dave Roberts' fault, but the fact of the enmity remained. Bart Stenson was the sort to get under a decent man's skin. He had scoffed at Roberts for being a softie, weakling and "sky pilot," because Dave would not swig raw whisky and waste time and money on the dance-hall girls in town.

They had fought once—a brutal fight of fists and boots in the principal saloon, with half the town looking on—but not to a decision. They had been about equally matched, and friends had pulled them apart when both were almost exhausted. The last time he had been in town, Bart Stenson had taunted Roberts until the latter had forgotten his training and the ordinary rules of caution and had threatened his enemy with death.

That had been a foolish thing to do, he knew. A score of men had heard him. He had not traveled up creek since that day. He had not wanted to meet Bart Stenson, or even get in his vicinity. And he had not seen him. If Stenson had gone to town, either he had passed the Roberts cabin during the night, or had used the trail back of the ridge.

In addition to this, Roberts had

experienced trouble with Jed Cumford and Sam Brade. They had a cabin somewhere far out on the trail, and were supposed to be trappers. Creek tramps they were called by most of those who knew them. They were regarded with suspicion. They spent too much money for honest trappers, especially since their deliveries of fur were small, and they won but little over the gambling tables.

Dave Roberts had run afoul of Cumford and Brade when he had been a Mountie. Twice he had searched their cabin, but had been unable to get the needed evidence. Food caches along the creek had been rifled, pokes of dust stolen, claims worked during the absence of their owners. Everything had pointed to the guilt of the pair, but nothing could be proved.

Out of the service, Roberts found that Cumford and Brade had not forgotten. He had no official standing now, did not wear the uniform men dreaded. They were not afraid to talk up to him. Roberts did not fear them face to face, for they were only cowardly scum compared to most. But they were the sort to shoot from ambush or stick a knife into a man's back. . . .

ROBERTS cast his spear again, got another fish, lost his footing and almost sprawled into the white water churning around the rocks. He went upstream twenty feet or so to continue his fishing there. He must get the food supply for his dogs. Already ice was forming in the quiet water and along the shore. The ground was frozen.

Frost was in the air. Soon, the first snow would come.

He cast again, and the barb of his spear caught and would not come free. It was snagged beneath a rock, Roberts thought. He twisted it, and pulled. Something gave. It was not

a rock, then. Perhaps a watersoaked log had drifted downstream and had become wedged. Dave Roberts did not want to lose the spear. So he pulled on it slowly, carefully.

The spear was bringing something to the surface, something heavy. Roberts took better footing and continued to pull. The water swirled around the object he was pulling out. It broke surface, and Dave Roberts caught sight of a watersoaked plaid wool shirt.

He gave a gasp of horror. His spear had struck into the body of a man, which probably had been washed down the creek to wedge among the rocks just above the eddy. Roberts pulled again, and tugged to get the body into the quieter water near the bank.

In the shallows, he bent and removed the spear carefully, and tossed it to the shore. He bent over again, caught the body around the waist and carried it to land. He put the corpse down and turned it over.

The dead face of Bart Stenson stared up at him!

DAVE ROBERTS felt panic surge through him, and fought to conquer it. Here was the man he had threatened to kill—dead—with a fresh spear wound in his back. Here was Dave Roberts alone with the body, and possibly not another human being within miles. There was Roberts' spear on the bank. When he had been a constable in the Mounted, Dave Roberts had arrested many men on less evidence than that.

He tried to think what would be best to do. A swift examination revealed that Bart Stenson had not been dead long, and had not been long in the water. How had he been killed? How had the body become wedged among the rocks?

Roberts picked up his spear and looked at it. Fragments of cloth and flesh and congealed blood were on the

spearhead. He knelt and stabbed the spear into the frozen ground repeatedly to cleanse it.

"Get your hands up!" a voice behind him barked.

Dave Roberts sprang to his feet and whirled, still holding the spear. Two men had emerged from the sparse brush within a few feet of him, and were covering him with their rifles. Jed Cumford and Sam Brade!

"SO you did it, huh?" Jed Cumford said. "Finally settled your little scrap, huh? But doin' it in the back with a spear—that's not good. Is it, Sam?"

"Not so good!" Sam Brade agreed. "Right down cowardly, if you're askin' me, Jed."

Roberts faced them angrily, defiantly.

"Confound you, do you mean to insinuate that I killed this man?" he cried.

Jed Cumford laughed nastily.

"You threatened to kill him," he charged. "You've been quarreling a year or more. Had a fight with him in town. And here you are—Bart Stenson murdered, and you standin' over the body holdin' your spear. We saw you tryin' to clean it."

"I pulled him out of the water dead."

"What a story!" Sam Brade cried, laughing also. "Try to make a jury believe that. He fell into the water when you stabbed him in the back, you mean. 'Course you pulled him out. Afraid the body'd be found right here on your own claim. Prob'ly intended diggin' a grave back in the brush and plantin' him."

"Blast you—!"

"Steady!" Jed Cumford cried.

Their rifles came up swiftly, menacingly. Their faces became masks and their eyes glittered. Nothing would please them better than to shoot him down, Roberts knew—un-

less it would be to give evidence against him which would send him to the rope.

The utterly damning situation stunned him. A feeling of complete helplessness assailed him. Bart Stenson dead—that spear wound in his back—and these two men who hated him the only ones who could give testimony!

"Yep, there's still sich a thing as justice," Jed Cumford was saying. "Him, as used to hound us when he wore that uniform—here we are witnesses to his bloody murderin'—"

The feeling of helplessness left Roberts, and the fighting spirit took its place.

"Shut up, you fools!" he cried. "I didn't kill him."

"We only know what we're seein'," Sam Brade put in.

Yes, that would be enough—for them to tell only what they had seen. Dave Roberts, kneeling beside the dead body of his enemy, cleaning the spear in the ground!

"I was spearin' fish—" Roberts began.

"Aw, tell it in town—and try to make 'em believe you!" Jed Cumford said. "You hit the trail, Sam, and bring back that new Mountie, Constable Jim Harrigan. I'll sit right here on this rock, and Mr. Roberts will sit down there on the ground, and if he as much as blinks, I'll let him have a couple of slugs out of this rifle. Get goin', Sam!"

BUT it was not necessary for Sam Brade to start a hurry trip to town. Through the brush and down toward the tumbling creek came Constable Jim Harrigan at that moment.

"What's all this?" he demanded.

Cumford and Brade began a duet of information.

"One at a time!" Harrigan ordered. "You talk first, Cumford."

Cumford talked; then Sam Brade talked. Their story was the same.

They were on the way to town, and had walked from the brush to see the dead man on the ground, and Dave Roberts cleaning his spear.

CONSTABLE JIM HARRIGAN inspected the body. His face was inscrutable when he arose. He knew all the gossip of the territory, knew of Roberts' quarrel with Bart Stenson, and of his senseless threat.

"Well, Roberts?" the constable asked.

"I know how it looks, Harrigan," Roberts replied. "The truth is this—I was spearin' fish. There they are on the bank. My spear struck some-thin' and stuck, and I pulled out that body. I was kneelin' beside it when these men came out of the brush. I'll admit I was cleanin' my spear."

"Looks bad," Harrigan admitted. "I'd hate to take you in, Dave—an old constable. You were pretty good when you were in the service. Solved some tough ones. I'm going to give you a chance, Dave. If you're innocent, prove it."

"What?" Cumford cried. "Ain't it plain enough? Any other man'd be taken to jail. Just because he was a Mountie once—"

"That's enough!" Harrigan snapped "Get busy, Roberts. You're not armed, I notice. If you try to make a break—"

"Don't be a fool, Harrigan! I won't try to make a break."

"Get on the job, then, like you were still a constable and this suspect, Dave Roberts, was another man. Prove him innocent."

"And find the guilty," Roberts added. "First, let's see how Bart Stenson was killed."

"The wound in his back tells that," Cumford sneered.

Roberts started his examination, cutting off the stiffening shirt and baring the torso of the dead man. He found a bullet wound.

"Here you are," he said. "He was

shot, then put into the water. Bullet hit his heart. Dead long before my spear touched the body."

"Yeah, and who shot him?" Brade put in.

"Got a gun, Roberts?" the constable asked.

"Got both a rifle and revolver, up at the cabin. I'll turn 'em over to you, Harrigan. But let's look around here, first."

"Waste of time," Cumford said. "Why don't you take him in, Harrigan? Plain to us. Bart Stenson came along the creek on his way to town. Met Roberts and they quarreled. Roberts shot him. Then he tried to wedge the body in the rocks in the creek. The freeze-up is comin'. He'd be safe until the ice went out—"

"Shut up!" the constable ordered. "Go ahead, Roberts."

"Look at his boots," Roberts said, pointing to the feet of the dead man. "Look at those peculiar cleats on 'em. Now, look at the tracks in the soft ground near the water. My tracks are there, and maybe Cumford's and Brade's and yours—but not tracks made by Stenson's boots."

"You might have killed him elsewhere, and carried him to the creek on your shoulders," Harrigan suggested.

"Right! Let's go to my cabin and check on my guns."

THEY covered the body and left it, and marched through the brush to the cabin a short distance away. Roberts stood aside to let them enter. It was a neat cabin, such as would be expected from a former member of the Mounted.

"There's my rifle," Roberts pointed out. "The revolver's in the holster over there in the belt hangin' from a peg in the wall."

Constable Jim Harrigan inspected the rifle and returned it, giving a grunt which expressed that it held no evidence. He took the six-gun

out of the holster and examined that. His face was a mask again when he turned toward the others.

"One exploded shell," the constable said.

"What?" Roberts cried. "I cleaned and loaded that gun last night—"

"One exploded shell," the constable repeated. Retaining the gun, he showed it to Roberts. Then he extracted all the shells and put them into a pocket, and handed Roberts the weapon.

ROBERTS examined it. A peculiar expression came into his face. He thrust the empty gun back into its holster again.

"Well?" Harrigan asked.

"Let's go outside."

They walked around the cabin. In some soft earth beneath a south window were boot tracks, and they went around to the front door.

"We made them," Jed Cumford was quick to say. "Yelled at the cabin and nobody answered. Wanted to have Roberts go down to town with us. We looked through the window, went around to the door and peeked in. Didn't see him, so we drifted down to the creek, thinkin' he might be fishin'—and you know what we found."

"Why go to all that bother to ask me to go to town with you?" Roberts demanded. "You'd be about the last men on earth I'd want for trail companions."

"Yeah?" Cumford snarled. "We were aimin' to settle our trouble. No sense in hard feelin's, now that you're not a Mountie. We know you haven't been makin' a go of it here—wanted you to come in with us on a trappin' line."

Roberts looked straight at him.

"We'll go to Bart Stenson's cabin now," he suggested.

They went a mile up the creek, Cumford and Brade marching ahead and Constable Harrigan walking be-

side Roberts. The latter called a halt as the cabin was neared.

"Let's be careful and not muss up boot tracks," he said, "in case any are here."

They found tracks enough. And the interior of Bart Stenson's cabin had been ransacked. Supplies had been dumped upon the floor. A cupboard had been ripped open. A section of the log wall had been removed, and disclosed a yawning aperture.

"I'm bettin' that's where Stenson kept his gold, if any," Cumford said. "And somebody sure got it. Made a good thing out of it, didn't you, Roberts? Your own claim has petered out. Plannin' to get square with an enemy, then take his gold and clear out of the country, huh? That's the way it looks to me."

"**W**ERE you men here today?" Roberts snapped.

"We passed here, sure," Brade said. "Yelled at Stenson and didn't get any answer. Thought he was in town. Our boot tracks are outside the cabin, runnin' up to the hard ground in the brush."

"Sure you didn't kill Stenson and rob him?" Roberts asked, softly.

Cumford laughed.

"Can't turn it on us," he said. "Our guns are clean."

"You've had time to clean 'em."

"And yours ain't," Brade reminded him.

"Harrigan, ask for their pokes," Roberts said.

"Oh, we've got a little dust and a few nuggets," Cumford replied, as he pulled a poke out of his pocket. "Generally do have, when we go to town. We wash out a little up our way between trappin' seasons."

The constable emptied the poke on the table and spread the dust and nuggets with a grimy forefinger. He asked for Brade's poke, and did the same with it. Nothing suspicious

there. Dust and nuggets that could not be identified, and not much at that.

The pokes were returned.

"What now, Roberts?" Harrigan asked.

"Aw, take him in!" Cumford exploded. "No sense in this. He quarreled with Stenson and shot him. Robbed the cabin. Carried Stenson's body to the creek and tried to hide it there. Couldn't make a go of it, so he hauled it out again with his spear, and prob'ly was plannin' to bury it when we came along. We saw him cleanin' his spear, and there's an exploded shell in his gun. What more do you want?"

"Were you men near the creek?" Roberts asked.

"Not till we went there and found you," Cumford replied. "We came over the bridge, found Stenson gone and the cabin shut, and went on through the brush to your cabin. Went from there to the creek, like I said, and found you—like I said."

"Come on," Roberts said.

They closed the door of the cabin and followed him. He went to the shore of the tumbling creek—over the hard frozen ground, and started along the edge of the water. A hundred yards above his own cabin, he stopped abruptly.

He pointed to the ground. Tracks showed where somebody had walked across the wet sand and dirt and gone into the creek. But the tracks were blurred, and the boots of almost any man might have made them.

Roberts led the way on, to where he had taken out the body.

"I want to look at your boots," he said quietly.

"**W**HAT'S all this—" Cumford began.

"Sit down and stretch out your legs!" Harrigan ordered. His right hand was resting on the butt of his service gun.

The two men sat down, glancing at each other, grumbling.

"They say they haven't been in the creek, Harrigan," Roberts reminded the constable. "Dig out the packed dirt in front of the heels of their boots, and take a look at it."

"Say, what—" Brade snarled.

But the constable was already busy, using his jackknife.

"Black dirt mixed with sand, isn't it?" Roberts asked. "You couldn't get that on your boots except in the creek bed. Ground outside is frozen. That black dirt is streaked all along the creek here—"

"**S**PEAKIN' of boots," Constable Harrigan interrupted, "how many pair you got, Roberts?"

"Two. These I'm wearin' and another pair in town gettin' fixed. Left 'em last week and intended to get 'em next time I went in."

Cumford and Brade were getting to their feet. They glanced at each other again, and now acted in concert. Their rifles were jabbed suddenly into the middle of the constable's back.

"Hands up!" Cumford cried. "Mountie or no, we'll blow you to hellangone if you make a move. Get his gun, Sam!"

"You know what this means—" Harrigan began.

"We know right well that we ain't goin' to stand by and let you try to pin this thing on us, just 'cause Roberts was in the Mounted once. Not by a long sight! We're goin' on to town and tell what we know, and send a bunch of men out this way."

Brade had taken Harrigan's gun. He stepped back. The constable put down his arms and turned to face them.

"You men are under arrest! Anything you may say—"

"The devil!" Cumford cried. He swung his rifle by the barrel. Harrigan threw up his arms, but not

quickly enough. The stock of the rifle crashed against his head, and he crumpled to the ground. Brade fired one wild shot at Dave Roberts as he lurched forward. Roberts tripped and fell, and Brade and Cumford thought he had been shot.

They did not hesitate, then. Through the brush they crashed, going, not toward the town, but back toward the hills.

Harrigan moaned, and Roberts got up and cupped water and dashed it into his face. "Come out of it Harrigan!" Roberts barked. "I'll get my guns. Wait here!"

He ran to the cabin, and returned with his rifle and revolver. Harrigan was on his feet, shaking his head. He bathed it; then they started.

"If they're plannin' to leave the country, they'll make for their cabin first," Roberts said. "This Stenson thing can wait. Can't let an attack on a constable pass unpunished."

"Realize what you're doin', Roberts? If we bring 'em back alive, they'll be witnesses against you."

"Maybe so. But an attack on a constable—"

"You belong back in the service," Harrigan said.

"Maybe I'll try to get back, when this is cleared up."

THEY hurried on, traveling as men of the Mounted know how to travel, watchful and alert, fearful of ambush. In time, they came near the cabin of the pair, and watched through the brush. They had passed them. Cumford and Brade appeared, and hurried into the cabin.

Down through the brush, Roberts and Harrigan crept upon their prey. They could hear the two talking wildly as they got against the cabin wall.

"—rotten fool! Now we've got to beat it."

"—get to the American side—"

Roberts slipped around the cabin

in one direction and Harrigan in the other. They took station at either side of the door. They could hear the men inside as they made up trail packs.

"Hustle it up, Sam! We've got to get goin'."

"I'm ready."

The door was jerked open, and Brade stepped out. Roberts lurched for him, jabbed his six-gun into the man's ribs.

"Don't shoot!" Harrigan yelled at him.

Cumford darted back into the cabin; slammed the door and bolted it. Harrigan snapped handcuffs on Brade's wrists.

"I'll get Cumford—"

"Watch him, Roberts. You're not in the service now, and I am. This is my job. And don't shoot that revolver of yours!"

Harrigan pounded on the side of the door. Inside the cabin, a gun cracked, and a bullet splintered through.

"Come out with your hands in the air, Cumford," Harrigan called. "First and last order."

"To the devil with you!"

There could be no argument after that. Harrigan crept around the corner of the cabin toward a small window.

"Cumford—window—" Brade shouted, before Roberts was able to smash him on the head with the butt of his gun.

HARRIGAN went on. Standing close to the door, Roberts heard the bar withdrawn cautiously, and stood ready.

And suddenly the door was jerked open, and a blast of fire came out, and Jed Cumford with it, his revolver blazing.

Roberts felt a hot streak across his right arm as he lunged forward. He grappled with Cumford, and threw him.

He seized his wrist and kept the gun turned away. Harrigan came tearing back around the corner of the cabin.

"I've got him, Dave!"

Roberts got up and reeled back against the cabin. Cumford's bullet had only scratched his arm.

"Take us in," Cumford snarled. "We'll have a yarn to tell. You can get us hard labor for assaultin' a Mountie, maybe, but you won't pin a murder charge on us to shield Roberts. He'll swing, all right! We'll tell how you let him try to frame us, didn't put the irons on him, let him fight us—"

"Oh, shut up!" Harrigan said. "You're not under arrest for assaultin' me, but for the murder of Bart Stenson."

"Yeah? Try to make it stick!"

DAVE ROBERTS stepped forward quickly.

"Want evidence, do you?" he asked. "Fair enough! Here's what happened: You killed Stenson and robbed his cabin. Then you carried the body through the brush and to the creek. One of you waded down stream and wedged the body in the rocks where you knew I'd be fishin' a little later. Then you went back into the brush and waited until I left the cabin. One of you watched me while the other slipped into my cabin and put an empty shell in my gun—"

"Why would we do that?" Cumford snarled.

"To make it look like I'd shot Stenson. You were afraid actually to fire my gun, for I'd hear the shot and investigate. You didn't want to disturb me—wanted me to keep fishin' until my spear struck the body. Then you'd be on hand to walk out on me. You'd got Stenson's gold—and you'd be square with me. You've hated me since I was in the Mounted, because you knew right well I was close on your heels."

"That's a pretty yarn, but how are you goin' to prove it?" Cumford asked.

Roberts turned to Harrigan.

"Why did you yell at me not to shoot my gun?" he asked. "I'll tell you. My gun's clean, isn't it? Hasn't been fired since I cleaned it last night. Which shows that the empty shell wasn't shot from my gun. And the boot tracks tell the rest of the story. Cumford and Brade had been wading in the creek—and they said they hadn't been in it. Their boot tracks are all around Stenson's cabin—"

"**W**YE said we'd stopped there, and found the cabin shut," Brade answered immediately.

"And my tracks—" Roberts began.

"In all that mess of tracks around Stenson's cabin, some of 'em might be yours," Cumford interrupted. "Why not?"

"I'll tell you that," Constable Jim Harrigan put in. "You heard me ask Roberts about his boots, didn't you? Look at the tracks around here. Roberts has repaired one of the soles of his boots. Got a funny strip of leather across it between the cleats. See the tracks? And there are no tracks like that around Stenson's cabin, except what Roberts made when we were there a short time ago. I was watchin' that particularly."

"Yeah? Seems to me you've sure gathered evidence to clear Roberts," Cumford admitted. "All right! We'll make a deal. Forget our assault on you, Harrigan, and we'll forget what we've seen. Is that what you want? For all we care, you can bury Stenson and let everybody think he pulled out of the country."

"I don't make deals like that,"

Harrigan said. "I'm takin' you in for Stenson's murder."

"No evidence against us," Cumford persisted. "A few tracks, but we admitted we passed Stenson's cabin. The empty shell in Roberts' gun—how can you prove we put it there? Maybe he cleaned the gun without removin' the empty shell and reloadin'."

"Yeah, he could have done that," Brade put in.

"Roberts has been in the Mounted. He knows how to care for a gun. If he'd shot Stenson, his first act would have been to get rid of that empty shell, clean the gun and reload it. And there's no stain of fresh blood on the front of Roberts' coat—like there is on yours, Cumford!"

He snapped the last sentence at Cumford. And the man, his eyes suddenly bulging, glanced down quickly at the front of his coat. He lifted his eyes again, to find Constable Jim Harrigan and Dave Roberts smiling at him.

"Blast you!" Cumford cried. "I didn't kill him. We were lookin' for his cache, and he came up from the creek—"

SAM BRADE lurched wildly at his partner, lifting high his manacled hands. He brought them down with terrific force. But Dave Roberts crashed against him and knocked him aside in time.

"Brade shot him! Sam did it!" Cumford was crying.

"Won't take me but a few minutes to get ready, Harrigan," Roberts said, a moment later. "I'll feed the dogs and shut the cabin; then I'll help you take 'em in. Guess maybe I'll try to get back into the service. Got a feelin' that's where I belong."

NEXT MONTH: THE TREASURES OF TARTARY, A Gripping, Action-Packed Complete Novelette of India by Robert E. Howard!

The GLOBE-TROTTER

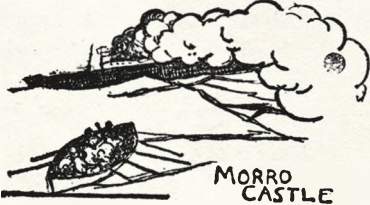


“**T**RUTH is stranger than fiction—any old day of the year!”

The Big Chief leaned back in his chair and regarded the latest newspaper accounts of the *Morro Castle* disaster.

“Here the captain dies seven hours before his ship takes fire and is destroyed within three or four hours of her home port. His own vessel is his funeral pyre. If we tried to do things like that in fiction nobody would swallow it.”

“Wouldn’t be a chance in the world of selling us a yarn like that,”



Ye Olde Globe Trotter agreed. “Too coincidental—too strange—not sufficiently convincing.”

“Hmm—strange, eh?” the Big Chief considered. “I wonder if, right there, we haven’t got the answer to what really makes adventure what it is? When a man does the same thing every day of his life—even if it’s something as exciting as taming lions or jumping out of aeroplanes—that’s not adventure for him. Give him something unusual—something strange—and it’s adventure for him, whether it’s fact or fiction.”

Strange Adventure

That was something to mull over, all right. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that he was right. Strangeness sure makes for adventure, all right—and, generally speak-

ing—the stranger the more thrilling the adventure.

If a man—

The telephone interrupted just then. It was Captain John Powers—whoever he was—and he wanted to see me about that “Secret of Easter Island” story. Ye Olde Globe Trotter has had some mighty interesting interviews since that Easter Island yarn appeared—so the door was open to Captain John Powers.

And a Strange Man

And a mighty unusual gent he turned out to be, as he plumped himself down tiredly in the deep chair beside my desk. His face was striking—sort of pale, but far from sickly. He had the build of a big, strong man, but he wasn’t filled out anywhere near to capacity just then.

Somehow, he seemed out of place sitting there in a New York City office. He seemed—

Then I had it! He looked like many a big, strapping fellow I’ve seen in the hot countries, just after he’d had a tough bout with tropical fever. The impressive frame was still there, but the fever had wasted away much of his flesh; much of the



lithe muscle that must have corded that big frame at one time.

It had taken the color from his cheeks—washed the tropical sunburn

(Continued on page 148)

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(Continued from page 146)

off his face—but it hadn't been able to take the sparkle out of his piercing grey eyes.

Eyes That Held

Those eyes were almost hypnotic. They gripped me as soon as he fastened them upon me. Eyes that demanded attention—and got it.

"John Powers is the name," he introduced himself. "Captain—cavalry—retired. I've been around a bit—guess there's only about a dozen countries left on the map I haven't been in. Some strange places, too—That's what I came in to see you about—one of those places.

"Why do I want to tell you about it? Because—well, because you listened to that tale of Captain Hoyt's, about Easter Island. I've been there—stood beside one of those big monoliths and wondered what was underneath it. Didn't have time to dig—though I wanted to."

"Oh, so you want to corroborate Captain Hoyt's story, eh?" I suggested. But I was wrong.

"No," he corrected, "I want to tell you about a place that is far more



amazing than Easter Island. The strangest place on the globe—the Garden of Eden!"

Strange Indeed

Ye Olde Globe Trotter was prepared for most anything, but that sorta took the wind out of my sails. The Garden of Eden! That was strangeness with a vengeance!

"Yes, sir," John Powers pressed on, despite my amazement. "I think I've been there—to the Garden of Eden. I think I've walked in the city that stands in the Garden—and stood before the woman who is a first daughter of Mother Eve!

"Of course, you think I'm a nut—but listen."

I listened—and heard what is perhaps the strangest tale of all time. An incredible tale? Perhaps—but as I sat there, under the spell of those grey eyes, I believed it.

Certainly he believed it himself, and his earnestness compelled belief—even though what he was saying staggered the imagination.

Fact or Fiction?

"What proofs can I give you?" he concluded. "Look at these hands. The callouses and scars I got from those rocks will be with me till my dying day. Look at my back," as he took off his coat and lifted his shirt. "The marks of the flaming swords are graven on it to stay. Aside from these I have only the flaming sword that hangs above my fireplace. If you can find another like it—or locate the forge where it was cast—I'll eat it!"

His grey eyes became greyer then; greyer with the far off haziness of a great distance.

"Or, if you want more proof than that," he said musingly, "perhaps I can give you that, too. Somehow, I feel it in my restless bones, I am going back there. Perhaps I'll be able to show you Mené's city!"

Judge for Yourself

Well, whether or not Ye Olde Globe Trotter ever casts his eyes on the Garden of Eden, the story Captain Powers unraveled seemed too good to be missed. It was the sort of yarn we want to pass on to you for what it's worth—to form your own conclusions.

So, before John Powers got away, we brought in a stenographer and had him spin the tale all over again. She took it down word for word—and you have it in this issue as "The Lost Treasures of Eden."

How much actual truth is there to it? Well, we have verified that Captain Powers led an expedition into Yucatan, and it seems entirely probable that he discovered the lost city he describes. Whether or not

(Continued on page 150)

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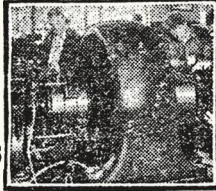
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(Continued from page 148)

it was the Garden of Eden even he is not sure—or so he says—though that light blazing in his eyes is the light of conviction.

But if strangeness is the measure of adventure, certainly John Powers has had the greatest adventure of all time!

Hard to Understand

"Superstition" is just another term for strangeness, after all—and even the toughest of us get a little something of the thrill of adventure when we fly in the face of superstition, don't we? We laugh at it, of course—and assure ourselves that it doesn't mean anything to us—and yet when we break the taboos and meddle with those things which are hard to understand, the adventure has a kick in it!

Perhaps that is part of the kick behind Joe Archibald's story, "The Thing that Flew at Night," in this issue. We've asked him what he thinks—and here's his reply:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Superstition is part of the make-up of every human being. How many of you would walk under a ladder! How many of you would accept the third light from a match? Why do those very ones who scoff at superstition select a group of numbers containing a seven when they gamble on a lottery?

Superstition is strongest among the peoples of southern Europe, especially among the Slavic race.

The story, "The Thing That Flew at Night" was suggested to me at a party given in New York by a group of White Russians two or three years ago. It was with Nickolas Agonsky, once a member of the ill-fated Czar's Imperial Guard. Also present was one Kaisaroff, an exile from Lenin's turbulent domain. Vodka flowed freely.

Kaisaroff was a master story-teller. In his broken English he spun tales of the Russian steppes, wove blood-chilling Slavic old wives' tales. They believe strange things, some of those peasants, Kaisaroff assured us. Vampires? Certainly. Then he told a strange tale, the scene of which was laid in a little village in the shadow of the Carpathians.

"The same old story," he began. "Two men in love with the same woman. She could not have both. Koless was the lucky one's name. The unlucky fellow was called Jauer. He was a soldier. He went

(Continued on page 152)

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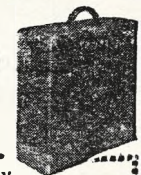
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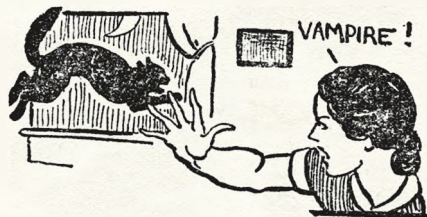
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away sick at heart, swearing that Koless would never marry his sweetheart. Two weeks later the remains of a man were found in the woods. Wolves, my friends. Scraps of clothing were identified as part of the belongings of Jauer. Several months elapsed and then something strange became amiss with Koless.

"Each morning he awoke looking like a ghost, as if all the blood was being sucked out of his veins during the night. Pale and wan he became. Eyes haunted, fear gripped his heart. One night a shadow fitted across the field outside Koless' farm. A black shadow. He told his sweetheart of this thing and the woman whispered a name. Jauer! The whisper was caught up by the villagers. It swept over the town. Jauer was back, keeping his black promise.

"For days it went on until it seemed that Koless would surely fade to a corpse. The shadow was seen again. One or two peasants saw a black shape in the sky, heard the whirr of wings. Remember in those days there were very few airplanes. The peasants' minds, ridden by superstition, could only think of a giant bat that was sucking the life out of Koless' throat. And then one night something crashed out of the sky. Peasants ran out into the fields. They found the wreck of an airplane. The pilot had been thrown out. He had landed on an old fence. A stake had been driven through his heart. It was the body of Jauer!

"To this day they believe Jauer was a vampire in spite of the thing that occurred two days later. Koless, recovering, had been removed to a bed out on the porch of his farmhouse. His sister slept in his room. In the middle of the night she awoke screaming. The family ran to her



room. She was sitting up in bed, her hands clasped to her throat and in the middle of the room, about to bolt for the window, was a big grey cat.

"Gentlemen, it is a fact that cats will suck blood from the throats of human beings. That is the story. Just a cat. Poor Jauer had simply gone away—back to service under his country's flag. Jauer was an aviation enthusiast. Perhaps he flew over the home of the woman he could not have. They called him a vampire. Wasn't a stake driven through his heart?"

There was a great story in that. I tucked

(Continued on page 154)

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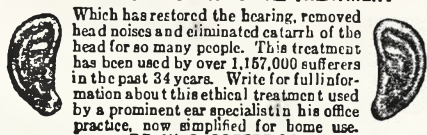
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SPECIAL: ALL FOR \$1.00
PARIS IMPORT CO.

4158 Park Ave. Dept. THA New York City

(Continued from page 152)

the idea away until the occasion came to weave a yarn around it.

Joe Archibald.

Pearls—Sharks—Chinese

There is a combination that spells strange, exciting adventure at a glance. Pearls — those curious growths which have taken so many lives. Sharks—those mysterious killers of the sea. Chinese—strange, inscrutable, seeming to prefer devious ways to accomplish their aims.

Out of these excellent materials Johnston McCulley has built a fine yarn in "The Lagoon of Monsters." He has this to tell us about it:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Pearls, sharks and crafty Chinese—those three seem to be associated always in both fact and fiction. The treasures of the deep are often seemingly guarded by its monsters, and after being acquired by man go with the greatest profit to those best versed in guile.

Personally, I think the Chinese often are maligned. They are basically honest. Those of higher intelligence are clever in their reading of other men and adapting them to their uses. Confronted with dishonest opponents, the Chinese will maneuver in the same style as his adversary. With an honest man he will deal honestly. He never forgets an affront, nor a kindness.

Sharks often are maligned, too. They are little understood. Not all are voracious man-eaters. Theirs is a stern fight for survival from the day of birth. They fight for life and for food, have plenty of enemies, and become ruthless through necessity.

Pearls are beautiful, but after all they are only disease scabs. Nothing for human beings to lie and steal and kill for—yet they do. Their false value is more false than even that of gold. For purpose of adornment, pearls are women jewels. Men die to get them because other men will pay fabulously for them at the behest of some woman.

Shall we say, then, that women are to be blamed for all the misery, lies, swindles, killings that go with the gathering and marketing of pearls? You say it. I'd rather not, being acquainted with several ladies who have pearls.

Pearls, sharks and Chinese! The combination forms a background for good and exciting fiction, at any rate.

Regarding the mysterious body dressing which allows a character in the story to swim unmolested among the monsters, the incident is based on fact. Old South Sea traders testify to it. Native divers admit it. The recipe for the mixture is a sort of mystery, like some of our own Indian coloring matters which defy analysis.

Can a shark smell? Nobody knows but

a shark. But those who know say that the mixture sends from the body upon which it is smeared a queer phosphorescence which keeps sharks away, whether or not through fear is not known.

Johnston McCulley.

Letter Wanters

Time now to turn this department over to the Globe Trotters. First of all, here are some members who have the writing bug and are anxious to start corresponding. As long as we've been talking about Chinese, suppose we start off with a Chinese Globe Trotter:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am a Chinese, 35 years of age, and have traveled very extensively both in China and abroad. As I feel that there may be other members who would like to correspond with me on the subject of travel, especially in China, I am writing to inform you that I shall be very pleased to take up such correspondence.

Fung Chung.

c/o Engineering "A" Dept.,
Asiatic Petroleum Co., S. C. Ltd.,
Hongkong, China.

And, now, here is one of the ladies whom Friend McCulley came mighty near to libeling in that pearl discussion:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have traveled, not too extensively, but
(Continued on page 156)

LIST OF MEMBERS

The Globe Trotters' Club

(Continued)

- Michael Carbone, 2436 Stillwell Ave., New York City.
- N. Fingerhood, 3803 Pennsgrove St., Philadelphia, Pa.
- James D. Soule, P. O. Box Westwood, Coatesville, Pa.
- William Woods, 96 Lake Ave., Yonkers, New York.
- Irving Wallace, 6103—18th Ave., Kenosha, Wisconsin.
- Francis Lucier, 335 Hobart Ave., Daytona Beach, Fla.
- Robert Weir, Box 97, Mayfield, Pa.
- George C. Smith, W. Exeter Ave., Middleboro, Ky.
- John R. Morse, 1742 No. Taylor Rd., Cleveland, Ohio.
- Richard H. Bryant, 1107 Hacienda Place, Hollywood
- Captain F. J. Young, Mono Lake, Calif.
- Robert G. Smith, 929 Bank St., Waterbury, Conn.
- Valentine J. Lech, 106 Silver St., New Britain, Conn.
- A. Miller, Old Bridge, New Jersey.
- Cletus Diggs, R. D. 4, Cumberland, Md.
- G. W. Ray, Arrington, Tenn.
- N. A. Haas, Box 31, U. S. S. Pennsylvania, Bremerton, Washington.
- Walter Grapen, 629 Holly Hills, St. Louis, Mo.
- Ludwig George, 207 West 87th St., New York City.
- Edward H. Lonergan, 20 Argy Place, Cortland, N. Y.
- R. D. Van Loven, 338 Church Ave., Crula Vista, Calif.
- David S. Proper, Box 92, Gilman, Vt.
- Ace Hilton, 182 11th St., Oakland, Calif.
- Robert Thompson, Moccasin, Mont.
- Larry Wayne, 513 W. 5th St., Winona, Minn.
- Robert Gebhart, Barnegat, New Jersey.
- Jack Shannon, Travis Hotel, Wichita Falls, Texas.
- Roy Lorch, Rocky Point, Long Island.
- Matthew Kontek, 4840 S. Loomis St., Chicago, Ill.
- Chalmers Smith, 2016 Phoenix Av., Jacksonville, Fla.

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Now You Can Have the Strength and Physique the Equal of the Strongest Professional!

Become the center of attraction wherever you go! Decide now that you are going to have muscles that not only look good but are good! Get sinews of steel! The iron shoe will develop them to a super-state that cannot be equalled. Some of our pupils have put four inches on their biceps and increased their shoulder spread six inches.

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CONCORD NOVELTY CO.

154 Nassau St. (Opp. City Hall), Dept. L., N. Y. C.

(Continued from page 155)

some, through the Southern and Eastern parts of the U. S. At present we are living in New York, until the wanderlust hits the family again. Can tell many interesting tales, and can usually give the lowdown on loads of things, for I have two brothers in the Navy, a brother-in-law in the Army, and the head of the house was a rip-roaring, hell-raising, nail-chewing sergeant of Marines.

If a female is eligible for membership in your *Globe Trotters' Club*, I'd like to be enrolled.
Edith Mark.
2716 Neptune Avenue,
Coney Island, N. Y.

There are plenty of ladies among the *Globe Trotters*, Edith—and, by unanimous vote, you're in!

Next comes an old Leatherneck who is on the trail of some of his old pards:

Dear *Globe Trotter*:

I served four years in the Marines, and was stationed for nineteen months during the last revolution. Perhaps some of my "gold-bricking" bunkies will see this and contact me. Then we can relive the mud patrols we've made and the liberties we enjoyed.

I've also visited Panama, Haiti and Cuba, and will be glad to answer questions on them.

J. E. Mitchell.

Cairo, Georgia.

Climb Aboard!

Who are these *Globe Trotters*? One of the finest bunches of red-blooded, itching-footed, two-fisted adventurers you'll run across anywhere on this little old globe. An organization with members in all walks of life, in all parts of the world.

What is the requirement for membership? An interest in adventure—red blood that thrills to the call of the far places—a willingness to give the other fellow what help you can in the line of such information as you may possess.

If you haven't already gotten lined up with the *Globe Trotters*, here is your chance to get aboard today. Clip the coupon which appears on Page 152, fill it out and send it in with a stamped and self-addressed envelope—and we'll do the rest.

We'll send you a handsome membership card and enroll you as a

full-fledged member of this world-wide organization. And there will be no other expenses: no dues or initiation fee.

So, if you haven't already climbed aboard, we'll expect you today, eh?

Advice Needed

What can Globe Trotters do for one another. Much—plenty! Here, for example, is a member who is looking for dope which lots of our radio operator members can give him:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Just a year ago I passed my examination for a radio operator's position. I hold a second class radio-telegraph license and also a first class broadcast license, but to date cannot find anything in this line of work. Have been to Norfolk, Philadelphia and Chicago trying to line up with a ship, but no luck. Perhaps there are some experienced operators in the club who can give me some dope on getting started in radio?

William R. Jex.

2328 California Avenue,
N. S. Pittsburgh, Pa.

All in the Day's Work

Whenever Ye Olde Globe Trotter is a bit down-in-the-mouth—wondering what fellows do for a thrill these days—he jabs his hand down into a basket of letters from the Globe Trotter gang. Don't have to read very far in them to get the thrill of going places and doing things.

Adventurers Still Aplenty

Yeah—it looks like there are still plenty of thrills left, even on a quiet day. Globe Trotters somewhere or another are having a fling at things which would make the hair of most of us stand up on our heads. There are still plenty of adventurers left—rolling stones, soldiers of fortune, call them what you will.

Take this one, who is resting up at the Century of Progress:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Compared to many of the real he-man adventures in your outfit my experiences may seem mild, but, believe me, they kept me plenty busy for the last seventeen years.

Graduate of a famous military academy,

(Continued on page 158)



Do You Realize The
POWER
that Hypnotism will Give You!

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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(Continued from page 157)

I disgraced myself by socking my commanding officer and immediately became a wanderer of the far places. Served a splendid hitch with the Leathernecks, and to remember them by, they pinned a Navy Cross and several campaign bars on my bare chest.

Next came a hitch in a crack State Police outfit, and then came the call of the tropics. Spent five years in South America, where my military training stood me in good stead, and was creased twice when I failed to duck at the proper time. Rode range for a year in Argentine and finally covered S. A. from stem to stern on horse-back.

Moved north into Nicaragua and points thereabouts, and finally said *adios* after I planted a promising young bandit chief six feet under. Next came China, where after twenty months of "killing" work I was made a major in the Chinese army.



Fought all through the Japanese mix-up and was the only white man in the Chinese front lines when they were coming over. Took time out to take a hundred pictures of the actual fighting, which are beauts. To end it all, I got mixed up with a shell just as it was going off and got a smashed foot for my carelessness.

Honolulu next, where the Waikiki sunshine made me forget the wound and the cares of the world. Now I'm in Chicago at the World Fair.

Little man, what next? I don't really kn w. The Southwest or northern Mexico seem most promising.

I have lectured in many large cities and over the radio. I have a splendid collection of native weapons taken in actual combat which I prize highly and only need a cozy cabin in God's open country to mount them in.

Chicago, Illinois. Major Wm. J. Murphy.

Well, Major, *maybe* some of us have had experiences that make yours seem mild, but it sorta looks to me as if that program of yours is wild and woolly enough to keep the average gent adventure-satisfied for a couple of natural lives!

Ye Olde Globe Trotter has been receiving plenty of letters from am-

(Concluded on page 160)

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until you learn about

POSTAL LIFE'S \$1⁰⁰ A MONTH POLICY

DUE to conditions many people have been forced to give up their insurance, and many others feel that they can't afford any. To meet this situation Postal Life Insurance Company has designed this special Dollar-A-Month policy.

It is a unique policy in that it costs only \$1.00 a month, no matter what your age may be, from 18 to 50 years. The amount of insurance that this dollar a month will buy, however, varies with the age. For example, at age 18 it will buy \$1275 worth; at age 25, \$1085; at age 30, \$948; at age 35, \$813. To find out what it will buy at your age see table below.

The rate of \$1.00 a month—less than 25c a week—is just one-half the permanent premium rate. In other words, because most men who have wives and families to support want to give them the utmost protection, at a rate they can afford during the next five years while conditions are improving, the premium for the first five years has been modified to one-half the permanent premium. From the sixth year on this policy costs you only the low rate permanent premium of \$2.00 a month. This premium may be still further reduced by the dividends Postal pays you as earned and declared by the Company.

This exceptional policy, therefore, has a two-fold advantage. First, it costs you less during the next five years of transition to better times; and Second, at the beginning of the sixth year you start paying the \$2.00 premiums—but based on the lower rates of your present age, not what it will be five years from today. Thus from the beginning you receive Old Line LEGAL RESERVE Insurance with cash values and standard policy provisions at a price you can afford.

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Only Postal can give you a life insurance value like this, for Postal sells direct by mail and has no agents—you save on agents' commissions. You buy this policy *direct* from Postal at its home office in New York.

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WHO HAVE
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INSURANCE
LAPSE OR
WHO FEEL
THEY CAN'T
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A Safe, Sound Company

For the past 29 years Postal Life Insurance Company has been providing insurance direct-by-mail to thousands upon thousands of thrifty, sensible people in every State in the Union, and has paid out more than \$40,000,000 to its policy holders and their beneficiaries.

Postal Life does business under the strict supervision of the New York State Insurance Department and is subject to the United States Postal Authorities everywhere.

Mail Coupon Now— We Have No Agents

It's easy to buy this Dollar Policy by mail from Postal. The table below shows how much insurance a dollar will buy at your age. If you feel you can afford to spend \$2.00 a month, you can buy twice as much, or \$3.00 will buy three times as much, etc. Then fill in the coupon below and send it with your first month's premium to the Postal Life Insurance Company. That's all you do. You get your money back if your application is not accepted. You take no risk.

Don't turn over this page until you have clipped the coupon below—it may be the most important thing you have ever done. Tomorrow may be too late.

-----TEAR OFF-----MAIL TODAY-----

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Dept. 686, 511 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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My exact date and year of birth was.....

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Nationality

I wish to pay a premium of \$1. \$2. \$3. \$....

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Street & No.....

City..... State.....

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19	1248	35	\$813
20	1221	36	786
21	1194	37	759
22	1167	38	734
23	1140	39	708
24	1112	40	682
25	1085	41	657
26	1057	42	632
27	1030	43	607
28	1003	44	583
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- ❑ Bring home a copy of **THRILLING LOVE**—10c—to sis and mom. They'll find it delightful.

—THE PUBLISHER.

(Concluded from page 158)

bitious boat builders, like the following:

Dear Globe Trotter:

My friend and I have saved up enough money to buy materials to build a two-masted schooner. Can you tell me the name and address of a firm that sells blueprints for this kind of boat? I want to build a boat about thirty-two feet long.

Robert Wahlberg.

New York, N. Y.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Can you tell me where I can get plans for a yawl, twenty-six feet long? The boat I have in mind has two masts and a small cabin, gaff-rigged—a neat looking boat for two men.

Harry Corbin.

Steffenville, Missouri.

Ye Olde Globe Trotter has been on the hunt for blueprints of this kind for some time, and they're not easy to find. However, the Rudder Publishing Company, 9 Murray St., New York, N. Y., can supply them for boats up to thirty feet long. They will be glad to send you their catalog on request. For boats longer than this I do not believe blueprints are available; a job that size is one for marine engineers and architects to tackle.

Next Month's Issue

Adventurers, be on hand for next month's gala issue! First, there's Arthur J. Burks' great book-length novel of an American soldier of fortune in distant climes—**BLOOD OF THE DRAGON!** It's action-packed from start to finish—a humdinger! Then, there's a scientific yarn of the future by Ray Cummings—**WORLD OF DOOM**—a novelette of a thousand thrills! Also a Whirlwind story by Johnston McCulley—a novelette of India by Robert E. Howard—a short story by our old friend, Capt. Kerry McRoberts and many other stories and features. Including another chat with

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

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What to Allow a Lover
to do
Fetters of Feminine Hygiene
Prostitution
Birth Control Chart

HOMOSEXUALITY...SEX ABNORMALITIES

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Lost love... scandal... divorce... can often be prevented by knowledge. Only the ignorant pay the *awful penalties* of wrong sex practices. Read the facts, clearly, startlingly told... study these illustrations and grope in darkness no longer.

You want to know... and you *should* know *everything* about sex. Sex is no longer a sin... a mystery... it is your greatest power for happiness. You owe it to yourself... to the one you love, to tear aside the curtain of hypocrisy and learn the *naked truth!*

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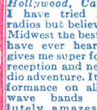
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